

Joan Roís de Corella's Profiling of Caldesa (Valencia, 1458): A Prototype of the Self-Fashioned Woman¹

Peter Cocozzella
Binghamton University

The *Ars Memoriae* and Its Generative Instruments

Joan Roís de Corella (1435-1497) is duly regarded as a major literary figure in Valencia, his native city, where he spent his life, and in the entire Catalan-speaking domain.² On this occasion, I hope I will be able to show that an author of his caliber clearly deserves a far-and-wide recognition of an international extent. In 1458 Corella wrote *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, a compact composition, which, despite its short text—it encompasses only a few pages—should establish, aside from his large and varied production, his

¹ The present essay follows on seven other studies, in which I argue that Corella's *Tragèdia* is eminently suited for representation on stage. See: Cocozzella, Peter. "From the Perspective of a Narcissistic Lover: Joan Roís de Corella's *Tragèdia de Caldesa*." *Catalan Review* 22 (2008): 229-61; *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella's Tragèdia de Caldesa, a Fifteenth-Century Spanish Tragedy of Gender Reversal: The Woman Dominates and Seduces Her Lover*. Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2012; "Dramatic Monologue and Isidorian Paradigm: The Latent Theatricality of Spanish Love-centered Literature of the Fifteenth Century." En Tiziano Pacchiarotti & Lenke Kovács eds. *La scena materiale: Oggetti e pratiche della rappresentazione nel teatro medievale*. Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2015. 405-423; "Joan Roís de Corella's *Inventio* of Tragedy: A Valencian Writer's Dramatic Monologue of the Early Renaissance." *Lemir* 19 1 (2015): 475-508; "The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* by the Valencian Humanist, Joan Roís de Corella (1435-1497): The Rhetoric of Perspectivism and Theatricality." *eHumanista IVITRA* 14 (2018): 794-824; "The Theatricality of the Narrator-Expositor in Two Exemplary Monologues of the Renaissance in the Catalan Domain." En Robert G. Sullivan & Meriem Pagès eds. *Art and Violence in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020. 130-148; and "Performable Monologue: Profiling the Unconventional Theatricality of *Tragèdia de Caldesa* by Joan Roís de Corella, a Valencian Writer of the Fifteenth Century." *European Medieval Drama* 25 (2021): 33-64.

² The precise dates of Corella's birth (September 28, 1435) and death (October 6, 1497) are provided by Cantavella ("On the Sources of the Plot of Corella's *Tragèdia de Caldesa*", 75) and Martos ("La revaluació crítica de Joan Roís de Corella. Notes", 1). See, also, Chiner, "Aportació a la biografia de Joan Roís de Corella." For an updated overview of Corella's career, see the chapter ("Joan Roís de Corella") that Martos contributes to the recently published *Història de la literatura catalana*. In that chapter Martos provides a brilliant critique of Corella's signal accomplishments. The essential orientation on Corella's life and works may be found in Riquer, *Història* 3: 254-320. Useful updates on the latest scholarship on Corella are available in Badia, "L'ascensió irresistible de l'astre literari de Joan Roís de Corella: cinc anys de bibliografia (1993-1997)," and "Materiales para la interpretación de la obra literaria de Joan Roís de Corella;" Cingolani, *Joan Roís de Corella: La importancia de dir-se honest*; Martines, "Comentaris a la bibliografia sobre Joan Roís de Corella"; and Martos, "La revaluació crítica de Joan Roís de Corella." Particularly commendable are the following collections of essays: Hauf, *Joan Roís de Corella i el seu temps*; Martines, *Estudis sobre Joan Roís de Corella*; Martínez, "Lo gentil estil fa pus clara la sentència:" *De literatura i cultura a la València medieval*. (See Wittlin's review of these three collections). Of great interest is, also, *Multilingual Joan Roís de Corella. The Relevance of a Fifteenth-Century Classic of the Crown of Aragon*, ed. Antonio Cortijo and Vicent Martines. This volume contains various essays and translations of Corella's masterpiece into various languages. For an overview of the intellectual life in the Valencia of the 1400s, see Fuster, "Poetes, moriscos i capellans." A useful orientation on the medieval history of Valencia in particular and the Catalan-speaking world in general is found in Delgado-Librero, 7-13. Delgado-Librero complements her succinct, lucid account with extensive, up-to-date bibliographic references. For the text of *Tragèdia de Caldesa* see Gustà's edition in "Works Cited", below. See, also, the transcription by Romeu & Figueres, "*Tragèdia de Caldesa*, de Joan Roís de Corella: Una aproximació textual", 82-86.

reputation as a world-class author.³ A number of scholars have devoted seminal studies to Corella in general and his tour de force in particular. These studies have sparked and sustained for many years my interest in what I would consider Corella's landmark legacy to Western culture.

Not unlike the proverbial dwarf standing on the shoulder of giants, I measure the validity of my insights by the solidity of the foundation laid by the scholars in question. Some may consider it ironic that the giants themselves have granted me an advantageous position, which allows the projection of my vision a small step or two ahead of the prevailing trend of criticism on Corella. A keen observation I gratefully borrow from Josep Lluís Martos, one of the leading exponents of that trend, will suffice to illustrate the support I rely on for my own hypothesizing and theorizing on the Valencian luminary. The observation climaxes a meticulous review of the main sources of *Tragèdia de Caldesa*. While highlighting Corella's wholehearted commitment to originality and innovation, Martos lays emphasis on “un momento álgido” (‘a crucial moment’), at which Corella “desde la yuxtaposición de fuentes, ha evolucionado hasta el cambio de perspectiva en el uso de motivos, argumentos y géneros, a través de un proceso de reflexión que busca clara e, incluso, obsesivamente la innovación” (‘has progressed from the juxtaposition of sources to a change in perspective regarding the use of motifs, arguments, and genres. He accomplishes this change thanks to an act of reflection, by which he strives for innovation with a clear and even obsessive purpose.’) (“March en Corella”, 33).⁴

A close look at the text reveals, I believe, that the fulfilment of Corella's ambitious quest for innovation is at hand: Corella's crowning achievement beckons us just a small step ahead of Martos on the trail blazed by this sagacious and erudite critic. In fact, it is Corella himself—actually, to be precise, his auctorial persona in the guise of first-person narrator—that leads us straightaway to the crux of an impressive literary feat. No subtlety shall we find in the way Corella's artistic alter ego introduces himself by jolting us into attention. His very first statement of what proves to be a prolonged, incessant lamentation alerts us to his presence by a startling outburst of emotion:

A tan alt grau l'extrem de ma dolor ateny, que de present me dolc en algun temps
sia ver ma tristor finar puga; en acó passe los infernats, que l'èsser trist me delita, e
só content ma dolor eternament coldre. (25)

(‘The pain that afflicts me has come to the breaking point: right now the prospect
that, sooner or later, my sadness may come to an end causes me to grieve. My

³ As for Corella's multifarious literary production, Martos outlines an essential chronological survey with the attendant bibliographic annotations. See Martos, *Estudi preliminar*, 19-28. While lamenting that writers of Corella's rank have been neglected and marginalized for so long, Alan Deyermond does not hesitate in grouping the Valencian master with “els gegants de la literatura tardomedieval i del primer Renaixement” (‘the giants of the literature of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance’) and is confident that the latest scholarly publications on Corella, including Martos's critical editions, will establish Corella's works as “un dels majors èxits de la literatura catalana de la segona meitat des segle xv” (‘one of the greatest achievements of Catalan literature of the second half of the fifteenth century’) (Deyermond, *Prefaci*, 7-8).

⁴ This comment comes on the heels of a similar observation: “La construcción de la *Tragèdia de Caldesa* ilustra cómo Corella reelabora sus referentes, en general, a fin de crear un producto completamente nuevo...” (‘the structuring of *Tragèdia de Caldesa* illustrates how, in general, Corella re-elaborates his sources in order to bring about a completely new creation’) (“March en Corella”, 33).

misery surpasses that of the souls accursed in Hell: I feel joy in being sorrowful and gladness in nurturing my sorrow till kingdom come.’⁵

Corella devises a narrator, whose speech foreshadows, in abruptness, though not in the tone of restrained, surreptitious, and malicious calculation, one of Shakespeare’s most haunting opening lines: “Now is the winter of our discontent...” (*The Tragedy of Richard the Third*, 1.1.1) (Shakespeare, 252). A fitting match for that narrator’s depressing rhetoric would be Gerard Manley Hopkins’s bone-chilling verse: “No worst, there is none. Pitched past pitch of grief...” (Hopkins, 100). The outcry does not let up. The tension builds up to the moment when the question to be asked becomes inevitable: What is the cause of this *de profundis*? The auctorial persona is quick to oblige us with the answer. He reveals that, during his most recent tryst in the house of his beloved Caldesa, she suddenly interrupted their carefree dalliance and left him locked up in the bedroom, explaining that she had to attend to a compelling transaction with a certain unidentified individual. Despite her solemn promise of a prompt return, she abandons her devoted lover to languish in the dark room for hours on end throughout the afternoon. Eventually, the exhausted prisoner, prompted by some suspicious noises, positioned himself the best he could behind a minuscule window, the only one available in the room, and decided to look out onto the adjacent courtyard. He was shocked by a scene he will not never forget. Here is a memorable sample of his impassioned account:

[L]os meus plorosos ulls mereixqueren veure la tan estimada donzella, que partint-se d’una cambra, gest, paraules, abraçar, ab altres mostres d’amor extrema, d’honestat enemigues, a un enamorat presentà la figura... E, per cas de més adversa fortuna mia, lo darrer comiat al terme de ma oïda arribà, en estil de semblants paraules: “Adéu sies, manyeta!” tancant la darrera síl·laba un deshonest besar... (27)

(‘[M]y tearful eyes were rewarded with the sight of my beloved damsel. I saw her come out of a room just as she was surrendering her body to a lover, exhibiting all the while the gestures, words, embraces, and other manifestations of passion, wanton to the extreme, offensive to all common decency... And to aggravate the adversity of Lady Fortune toward me, the act of their leave-taking came within the range of my hearing with the sound of the following words: “Good-bye, my little hussy!” The last word was sealed with the smack of a disgusting kiss.’)

True to a lifetime artistic quest, perceptively described by Martos, Corella programs his speaker to dwell with narcissistic voyeurism on the lurid details of an unforgettable, extremely painful experience. The narrator functions as an instrument that Corella uses to draw attention to an egregious scene, fraught with severe consequences on the mental state—both conscious and subconscious—of someone, who finds himself deeply involved as the primarily affected viewer. The horrified, self-absorbed contemplator becomes, in effect, the fountainhead of an anecdote that unfolds with the incisive exemplarity of a parable. By exploiting to a maximum degree the generative potential of that anecdote, Corella attests to the parable’s pedigree that harks back to the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium* and Quintilian’s *Institutio oratoria*.

⁵ Throughout this essay, the translations are mine, unless indicated otherwise.

What is at play at the heart of Corella's *Tragèdia* is the germinal function of a factor that the two aforementioned stellar exponents of classical Roman oratory identify with the technical term of *imago agens*. For a precise definition we may rely on Amaranta Saguar García, who refers to all *imágenes agentes* as icons "of what and how the speaker [wants] to say" and adds:

Not all mental images qualified for this task, only those with a durable effect on the observer, that is, those that adhered to memory because of their strangeness, their positive or negative emotional impact, and/or their exceptional nature. (247)⁶

Worthy of close attention is, likewise, the complementary implications provided by Sol Miguel-Prendes as she broaches an illuminating discussion on those "shocking, active images, with a theatrical quality to trigger recollection" (15).⁷ This scholar shows that by the end of the fifteenth century the *imago agens* had taken secure holding throughout the Spanish domain in the methodology of both preaching and devotional writing that inspired private, prayerful meditation and contemplation, focused primarily on the passion of Christ. The modes of meditation or, to use Miguel-Prendes's term, "the rhetorical craft of contemplation" that thrived in the Spanish monastic (especially Franciscan) communities eventually came to bear on the composition of Diego de San Pedro's *Cárcel de amor*, *novela sentimental* par excellence, and on the layout of the numerous altar pieces (*retablos*). Miguel-Prendes aptly describes this momentous shift from religious to secular literature in the following terms:

Vernacular humanists practiced contemplation, the craft associated with literary composition, as a recollective journey through other texts or places stored in memory to retrieve subjects and to create original compositions (the two meanings of the word *inventio* [Latin *invenire*: to find and to invent]). (15)

As particularly pertinent to an overview of the generative power of the *imago agens*, I will add the following observation by Saguar García:

This term [*imago agens*]... defines the recourse to mental places (*loci*) and images (*imágenes*) to improve memory, basically using a mental reconstruction of a real or imagined place—for instance, a building or a landscape—to organize and store some mental images of the contents to be remembered. (247)

Miguel-Prendes's and Saguar García's statements may serve as evidence as to how the *imago agens* activates the techniques of the so-called *ars memoriae* or *memorandi*. In fact, the insights made available by both scholars are tantamount to an invaluable introduction toward an appreciation of Corella's masterful handling of the *ars*. There is, it bears noting, the contribution of another outstanding scholar—namely, Jody Enders—to be taken into account. In her landmark publications focused on the origins of European theater, Enders formulates a comprehensive theory regarding the evolution of classical Roman oratory into stage-worthy texts that she designates as "protodrama" or "inchoate psychodrama." In the process, Enders displays an appropriately wide historical context in which to envisage the

⁶ To illustrate these very points, Saguar García segues with the quotation of the seminal passage: *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, 3.37 (247-248).

⁷ For some basic information about the *imago agens* see the general discussion in Saguar García, 247-250.

full impact of Corella's innovative artistry. In her informative exploration of the transition from an orator's forensic performance to an actor's playacting on a stage, Enders sheds considerable light on the numerous issues that come to bear on the genetics of Corella's *Tragèdia*. According to Enders, that transition may be appropriately classified as a process of *letteraturizzazione* or "aestheticization."⁸

Among the factors that, as I intend to show, exercise a great impact on Corella's creativity, the following three clearly stand out: (1) the avatars of the *imago agens*; (2) the metaphysical function that Enders identifies as *actio*; (3) the gestation and full-fledged concretization of the dramatic monologue. A natural starting point, factor 1 is a reminder of the illustrious rhetoricians, Corella's predecessors, who may well have modeled for him the morbid mulling over the torrid embrace scandalously enacted in the courtyard of Cadesa's residence.⁹

The second factor, which, as I have indicated operates at a metaphysical level, consists of the notion of *actio* which Enders defines in a carefully crafted statement:

As a significant conduit between rhetoric and literature, law and drama, orality and literacy, *actio* offers paradigms for performance which restore the lost dynamism of early performative discourses wherever they may have appeared. At the same time, however, its attendant dramatic orality highlights a more general fluidity of medieval genres as apparently varied as the morality play and the fool's play; the dialogue, the *tenso*, and the interior monologue; the *sermon joyeux*, the dialogic sermon and liturgical troping... (*Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*, 9-10)

This passage invites a preliminary analysis of some analogues of *actio*. These are indicative, as is *actio*, of the unquestionable presence and tangible sense of an instinctive *vis dramatica*, which manifests itself in a variety of ways. We do well for a start to turn our attention to a primary impulse or primordial thrust that, apropos of literature kindred to Corella's text, the critics Elisa Aragone and Dorothy Clotelle Clarke label, respectively, "forza icastica" and "display."¹⁰ We have just come upon some prima facie evidence that

⁸ Enders borrows *letteraturizzazione* from George Kennedy, who defines the term as a shift of rhetorical focus "from persuasion to narration, from civic to personal contexts, and from discourse to literature, including poetry" (Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*, 5; qtd. in Enders, *Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*, 5).

⁹ Enders identifies *Ad Herennium* 3.37, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, 6.2.29, Vinsauf's *Poetria Nova* 2022 for, respectively, *imagines agentes*, *visiones* or *phantasmatae*, and *imagines peregrinae* and complements her commentary by adducing Cicero's and John of Salisbury's respective meditation on the visualization of thought (*De Oratore*, 2357-2358) and the effective blending of visualizing and hearing (*Metalogicon*, 200) (see Enders, "Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue", 10-13).

¹⁰ *Icastico* is defined as "Rappresentativo con vivace evidenza" (Zingarelli) and "Che ritrae la realtà così come appare, con grande evidenza rappresentativa" (Gabrielli). Aragone employs the designation in reference to the style of Rodrigo Cota (died ca. 1498), who is considered a distinguished pioneer of early-modern Spanish theater (Aragone, 54; Lázaro Carreter, 73-75). The Italian Hispanist intends to underscore the performative qualities and overall "sostanzioso affiato drammatico" ("substantial dramatic verve" [Aragone, 14]) that Cota's *Diálogo entre el Amor y un Viejo* shares with one of the landmark masterpieces of world literature: Fernando de Rojas's sixteen-act *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*, published in 1499 and republished a few later as the twenty-one-act *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*. According to this critic, the *forza*, in connection with a strain of pessimism, reflects in each work the author's foremost preoccupation with the lover's aberrant behavior (Aragone, 54). For her part, Clarke focuses on the dramatic dimensions of some outstanding antecedents of Rojas's *Comedia*, examines the transformation of allegory into a theatrical

helps us appreciate the intrinsic theatricality of Corella's composition. What we find in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* is, primarily, the compacting of an abundance of language—the language of suffering—into the vessel of a small text. The operation brings about a special effect of the kinetics of compression. This mimicking of the principles of basic mechanics segues with the process of creating a good deal of pent-up energy, which naturally exerts pressure to be released. The released energy is precisely the primary impulse that manifests itself in the *forza icastica* in question. Consequently, operative in Corella's *Tragèdia* is the process of intensification and compression, symptomatic of the rhetoric of grief, which informs as well, we may add, the *cancioneros*, Ausiàs March's poems, and the *novelas sentimentales*. In his recent essay on *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, Antonio Cortijo Ocaña presents a well-documented account of an obsessive idiom of sorrow. Following is an excerpt from Cortijo's opening paragraph:

As the work begins, the narrator depicts in first person the *extreme pain* that aggrieves him... This doleful pain is characterized in the original Catalan by the repetition of the words *tristor / dolor* (sadness / pain) which serve as a leit-motif for the whole composition: *extrem de ma dolor, me dolc, ma tristor, l'èsser trist, ma dolor, ma dolorida pensa, tanta dolor, ma dolorosa pensa, la dolor que raona, trists e sollicitis pensaments, semblant dolor, adolorit pensament, la tristor que... ma trista pensa combatia, la meva Trista presó, extrem de ma dolor, adolorit estil*. It is also accompanied by an abundant array of tears and sighs: *ab moltes llàgremes, sospirs e sanglots*. Around this theme, numerous words belonging to the same range of aggrieved emotional pain describe the inner tragedy experienced by the protagonist. (11)

At the same time, Enders's fertile meditation on *actio* is a gateway of sorts to a vast field of signification, which encompasses, at a sub-textual level, the entire evolutionary process of *letteraturizzazione*. Enders undertakes a well-planned and thoroughly executed project of "revitalized understanding of how the mnemonic image was translated into the linguistic and performative patterns of delivery" (*Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*, 54). To illustrate the "paradigms of performance" and the "performative discourses" mentioned in the passage, Enders appeals to Frances Yates's lofty description of "the magic of celestial proportion [flowing] from his [the orator's] world of memory into the magical words of his oratory and poetry" (Yates, 172) and concludes that "the orator might thus have called upon the mnemonic image of the morphology not only of the physical stage but of drama itself; not only for the conceptualization of theatrical space but also for the actual production of an inchoate psychodrama" (*Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*, 46).¹¹

representation, and finds the following technique of paramount significance: "the device I shall term display, which is also common to both the earlier moral allegory and the *Comedia*" (108). Clarke argues that the "display" is evidenced especially in some allegorical poems of Juan de Mena (1411-1456), another prominent figure of Spanish fifteenth-century literature.

¹¹ In keeping with these shrewd observations, we may well see mirrored in Corella's text a late evolution of a process of *letteraturizzazione*, which Enders envisages in its embryonic state:

Each time classical and medieval orators used their voices to mediate between their mnemonic mental pictures and their audiences, they created a protodrama that was no longer latent within the memory but actualized in language and action before spectators. They discovered in the *ars*

The last factor on the list, the most complex of the three, is the object of Enders's ample commentary. Enders formulates a lucid explication of how the monologue born of reflective recollection mutates into a dramatic mode. The crowning achievement of Enders's theory on the gestation, birth, and theatricalization of the monologue resides in her painstaking reading of some key passages of *Cligés*, the well-known *roman* by Chrétien de Troyes (Enders, "Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien's 'Cligés'"). There can be little doubt that our appreciation for Corella's sense of the dramatic is considerably enhanced by the parallelism we discover between the salient traits of Corella's monologue and the counterparts that Enders underscores in Chrétien's text. The "dramatic orality" that Enders contextualizes within the "interior monologue" becomes manifest in the mechanics of impersonation evidenced in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* as foreshadowed in *Cligés*. What emerges from this process of contextualization is the full-fledged portrait of the poetic self as an icon of the self-knowledge or, as we may infer, the self-consciousness concomitant to the role of an author. The perception of that role occurs as a reflection on the various esthetic devices (*imagines agentes*, *personae*, *memoria*, *mimesis*) that, in their fertile interaction, trigger the creation of an organic, artistic composition: the interior monologue in *Cligés*, say, or Corella's *Tragèdia*. It is well to ponder one of Enders's particularly suggestive comments on this complex meta-textual operation:

At the hands of an author like Chrétien, mnemonic *imagines agentes*, came to be employed, less as symbols of the rhetorician's proof and more as exemplary literary *personae*. In the interior monologues of *Cligés*, the focus of *memoria* shifts from persuasion to *mimesis* as that art becomes a way of knowing and, in particular, a way of knowing one's authorial self. ("Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien's 'Cligés'", 12)

By applying these remarks to *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, we may see firsthand how the speaker's introspective meditation engenders the workings of psychodrama and the impersonation of a living individual consciousness—that of the auctorial persona.

Now we may turn to specifics: for instance, Enders's suggestive interpretation of Fénice's bittersweet musings prompted by the departure and absence of her beloved Cligés.¹² Enders reviews step by step the main esthetic factors that Chrétien sets in operation. Let us ponder the general tenor and esthetic implications of Fénice's introspective diction:

As Fénice attempts to understand her [own] feelings, Chrétien prefaces her monologue with explicit references to the key features of memory theory: we see her retrieving and inscribing the image of Cligés within a memory *locus*; we see her replaying in the "secret places" of her mind the visual and auditory features of their sad parting; and, finally, we witness the whole delightful process engendering the literary speech of her monologue. As Fénice transforms the two sides of her psyche into the *imagines agentes* of her own internal debate, Chrétien simultaneously

memorandi a cognitive process that constituted an early form of literary invention. (*Rhetoric and the Origins of Medieval Drama*, 51).

¹² For the recounting of the entire episode of the knight's trip to England, see *Cligés*, vv. 4170-4528 (pp. 123-33 in Harwood's translation).

transforms her into an *exemplum* of a creative process that is both generative and iterative. (“Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien’s ‘Cligés’”, 16)

It goes without saying that there are points of substantial difference between Fénice’s psychological status and that of the auctorial persona in Corella’s *Tragèdia*. In the latter there is no sign of the “delightful process” that can be attributed to the former. Nor are two conflicting sides easily recognizable in the psyche of the person that Corella puts on stage. Indeed, it is very unlikely that Corella would ever attribute a pleasant, comforting, even edifying effect to the *imago agens*, regularly depicted as shocking. This notwithstanding, there can be no doubt that, all differences aside, the French and the Valencian writer champion the same creative process prompted by the fundamental mnemonic devices they both share. All in all, Corella abides by the paradigm already established by Chrétien: the *imagines agentes* stemming, in Corella’s case, from a highly disturbing spectacle (Caldesa locked in a passionate embrace with the “other man”) are stored in a “memory locus” within some “secret places” in the speaker’s mind.¹³ Corella follows the paradigm to its climactic point: the obsessive reminiscence of the *imagines* in the speaker’s imagination plays out to a full extent through the stage-worthy verbalization of Corella’s *valenciana prosa*.

Besides the gestation of psychodrama in tandem with the deepening sense of self-consciousness incarnated in the auctorial persona, Enders discovers a psychic space at the heart of the monologue. In that space Enders envisages the locus of an internalizing/externalizing interplay. Borrowing Kenneth Burke’s terminology, she distinguishes “between the ‘confessional’ function of the image, which ‘internalize[s] the external’, and the ‘incantatory’ function, which ‘externalize[s] the internal’ (Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, 116; qtd. in Enders, “Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien’s ‘Cligés’”, 23). Enders’s elaboration upon Burke’s criterion is worth quoting in full because it sheds further light on the affinity between Chrétien’s and Corella’s creativity:

Cligés constitutes a fascinating testimonial to both [functions]: in the interior monologues, Soredamors, Alexandre, and Fénice internalize external events by consigning them to mnemonic imagery which, in turn, assists them in ‘confessing’ their love (both to themselves and to the objects of their affection). At the same time, however, Chrétien himself externalizes their internal imagery in his conception of his own literary project: he “translates” preserved, memory visions into literary speech (Enders, “Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien’s ‘Cligés’”, 23).

By the mere mention of “memory visions” Enders automatically calls attention to a paramount phenomenon, to which she refers in the very last statement of her illumination essay:

By supplying to the medieval artist *visiones* that spoke, the hermeneutic frameworks of memory assisted immeasurably in the reinvention of the rhetoric of romance

¹³ The metaphor of the “secret places” is borrowed from Geoffrey of Vinsauf’s notion of “circinus interior mentis” (see Enders, “Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien’s ‘Cligés’”, 6, n. 4).

itself. (“Memory and the Psychology of the Interior Monologue in Chrétien’s ‘Cligés’”, 23).

The phenomenon to be reckoned with may be regarded as the flip side of the *ars memorandi*. It may be called the *ars videndi* manifested in the “text of visualizing” I myself have analyzed on another occasion (Cocozzella, *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation*, 111-149).

Enders’s notions of “memory visions” and “visiones that spoke” lead to an appreciation of how Corella presents his own adaptation of the esthetic of contemplation, eminently illustrated in the portrait of Leriano, the protagonist of the aforementioned *Cárcel de amor* (see p. above). As I try to show elsewhere (*Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella’s Tragèdia de Caldesa* 6, 115-120), Corella, not unlike San Pedro, employs to remarkable effect the rhetorical device called ekphrasis, which Stephen G. Nichols succinctly defines as “the description of a visual art work” (134).¹⁴ This is how Miguel-Prendes explains the evolution of ekphrasis out of the description of the castle’s tower (“una torre de altura tan grande que parecía llegar al cielo” [‘a tower so high that it seemed to reach the heavens’] [84]), in which Leriano, the incarcerated lover, languishes:

San Pedro paints the prison building and expands the ekphrasis into his own interpretation, or literary creation, by making the prisoner Leriano explain the meaning of its components and the shocking images located in it—the *imagines agentes*—to the apprehensive narrator. (21)¹⁵

I will add my previous commentary in which I highlight Corella’s rendition of the same ekphrastic process displayed in San Pedro’s passage:

¹⁴ See, also, the informative article by Ryan Welsh. Of great interest is the following definition that Elizabeth B. Bearden proposes as the basis of her extensive study:

A rhetorical term originating in the grammar school exercises or *progymnasmata* of the Second Sophistic (c. first to second centuries CE), ekphrasis has been defined as broadly a vivid description, and as narrowly as the description of an extant work of visual art. Ekphrasis is defined here as the verbal representation of visual representation. (3)

A survey of the pertinent scholarship and salient representative views on ekphrasis is found in Bearden’s introduction (3-18). From the very start of her discussion, Bearden addresses some rather broad issues:

Renaissance imitators of the Greek romance employed ekphrasis to represent and question socially determined hierarchies of ethnic, gender, and religious difference. (3)

By contrast, in keeping with the rather narrow scope of Miguel-Prendes’s analysis on the *Cárcel de amor*, I focus strictly on the phenomenology of the lover’s introspection into his own dysfunctional psychological condition. An outstanding example of ekphrasis is found in *La noche* by Francesc Moner: see Cocozzella, “Ekphrasis and the Mirrored Image: The Allegory of Despair in *La noche* by Francesc Moner, a Catalan Writer of the Late Fifteenth Century.” In his perspicacious essay Thomas C. Connolly sheds light on various dimensions of ekphrasis. Worth noting is especially Connolly’s exploration of the analogy as shown in the role of perspective, respectively, in a painting (*Adoration of the Mystic Lamb* by Hubert and Jan van Eyck, completed in 1432) and a literary text (Arthur Rimbaud’s prose poem “Mystique,” dated c. 1872).

¹⁵ For the text of Leriano’s explication, see San Pedro 88-89. Miguel-Prendes perceptively points out the parallelism between the exegetical method employed in this passage and St. Jerome’s “spiritual interpretation on Ezekiel’s heavenly city (mentioned in Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 33-34)” (21, n. 32). For another useful explication of San Pedro’s accomplished use of the ekphrasis, see Kurtz, 127-128.

Strictly speaking, in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* there is no “visual art work” as such. There is, nevertheless, a fit substitute for that artifact in the lurid scene..., which exposes what the speaker, in his jaundiced mind-set, interprets as Caldesa’s disgraceful act of transgression and infidelity. The speaker’s quite graphic description of that act attests to the healthy survival of an age-old ekphrastic tradition... Actually, in his exemplary adherence to the mechanics of ekphrasis, Corella reaches beyond the level of circumscribed spatiality, enhanced localization, and condensed action attained by San Pedro and the authors of the outstanding specimens of the *infierno de los enamorados*. (*Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella’s Tragèdia de Caldesa*, 6)¹⁶

In short, in Corella’s and San Pedro’s respective masterwork, the protagonist mulls over, masochistically, the excruciating visual details that provoke his mental torture and unending nightmare.

Particularly pertinent here are, also, Martos’s suggestive comments concerning Corella’s frequent use of ekphrasis with remarkable dramatic effect. Martos dwells on the exemplary passage of Thisbe’s narrative, which he contrasts with the kindred monologue that each of the other two characters—Narcissus and Myrrha (aka Smyrna)—presents in Corella’s *Lamentacions*:

Corella fa que Tisbe individualitze la seua tragèdia i la carregue de major dramatisme. Aquesta i Píram arriben al suïcidi per amor, a diferència dels altres dos enamorats. El fet que la imatge dels seus cossos ja demostre *per se* la fi tràgica d’ambdós amants és perfectament coherent amb l’ús sovintejat d’ècfrasis al llarg de l’obra corellana. El gust per la descripció minuciosa d’elements escultòrics o plàstics, en general, com a factor que *mou a pietat els miradors*—pensem, per exemple, en la *descriptio* de la *sepultura* o dels vestits de les deesses de *Lo johí de Paris*—, és paral·lel al detallisme i l’estil ampul·lós amb els quals reconta històries, que commouen els seus lectors-oïdors. Tisbe, que pensa que una imatge val tant com mil paraules—tampoc necessàriament més—, no s’excusa, finalment, de contar la seua història... (*Fons i seqüència cronològica*, 95-96)

(‘Corella brings about Thisbe’s individuation of her tragedy, which he endows with a high degree of dramatic potential. In contrast with the other two characters [Narcissus and Myrrha], Thisbe and Pyramus commit suicide out of love. The evidence that the very image of the body of both Thisbe and Pyramus foreshadows the tragic end of both is perfectly congruent with the frequent use of ekphrasis throughout Corella’s *oeuvre*. Generally, the penchant for the meticulous description of sculptural or plastic aspects, conceived as a factor that inclines viewers toward a sympathetic reaction—witness, for example, the *descriptio* of not only the *sepultura* [burial ceremony] but also the garments worn by the goddesses in *Lo johí de Paris* [*The Judgment of Paris*]—runs parallel to the attention to minute detail and to the lofty style by which Corella recounts his narratives—precisely those that his

¹⁶ In his *Medieval Spanish Allegory*, Chandler R. Post classifies the *infiernos* under the general heading of “erotic Hell” (75-102). A broad discussion on these compositions is found in Cocozzella, *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella’s Tragèdia de Caldesa*, 21-40. For a recent bibliography on the subject see: Deyermond, “Santillana’s Love Allegories, and the studies by Pérez Priego, Recio, and Rohland de Langbehn.

readers-viewers find especially moving. Thisbe, who believes that a picture is worth a thousand (but not necessarily more than a thousand) words does not refrain from telling her own story at long last...')¹⁷

Inverse Equivalence / Perverse Inequity

The interaction between the two *artes* (*memorandi* and *videndi*) attains a symbiotic quality which, in turn, ushers in an insightful perspective into the very heart of Corella's notion of the tragic condition. Corella probes into the dire consequences to be expected from the bitter resentment of a man that considers himself victimized. For this man, who turns out to be the auctorial persona, there is no doubt that he has caught *in flagrante delicto* the woman for whom he professes the deepest affection. Small wonder, then, that his jeremiad should pivot on an obsessive query he feels no need to voice explicitly, though it resounds stridently in the recesses of his wounded soul ("las galerías del alma," to borrow a term from the poet, Antonio Machado): How could she do "that" to me?

Corella's consummate artistry steers clear of the stale, if readily available, platitude: "After all, *la donna è mobile!*" What constancy and faithfulness can one expect from a creature fickle by nature? Corella does not subscribe to mindless, derogatory slogans. On the contrary, he himself, in his own imaginative elaboration on the myth of Medea, has this formidable woman unburden herself of a scathing rebuke that spares no male specimen of the human species:

Aquesta ès la comuna condició dels variables e fictes hòmens. D'on se sdevé que res cert de ses promeses sperar és, en vanes e folles sperances, cerquar repòs en la mar furiosa. (*Medea*, 229).

('This is the common condition of unstable, fickle men. It follows that to put any trust on the reliability of their promises is tantamount to seeking, with vain and foolish hopes, calm in the furious ocean.')

Well in accord with its multiple source, Corella's reimagining of Medea's vitriolic harangue is fully justified in view of Jason's treacherous deeds, which she does not hesitate to expound at great length.¹⁸ Is the male protagonist of Corella's *Tragèdia* equally justified as he inveighs with sound and fury at the shocking manifestation of an obscene liaison? From his point of view, he is confronting a woman's ultimate transgression. Any attempt at answering this direct simple, and legitimate question proves to be the cause of considerable puzzlement. There is a close correlation between the riddle and the inscrutable aura of

¹⁷ Another outstanding example of ekphrasis consists of Corella's depiction of the sunset in its wondrous display moments before Pyramus and Thisbe enact their fateful plan of escape from the city to the surrounding woodland. Following is Martos's informative commentary on this key episode in Corella's rendition of the myth:

Acordat tot, els enamorats s'acomiaten i cadascun besa la part del mur que els separa i Corella ens hi descriu la posta de sol detingudament, seguint l'estil d'aquestes ècfrasis d'arrel clàssica que tant sovintegen en altres composicions de l'autor. (*Fonts i seqüència cronològica*, 99)

('Having come to an agreement, the two lovers take leave of each other as each kisses the spot in the wall that separates them. At this point Corella describes the sunset at a slow pace: he follows the style of the type of ekphrasis that is rooted in the classical tradition and appears so frequently in other compositions authored by him.')

¹⁸ For a painstaking review of the numerous sources of Corella's *Medea*, see Martos, *Fonts i seqüència cronològica de les proses mitològiques de Joan Roís de Corella*, 190-213.

Caldesa's motivation. Does she act out of love or out of the spite of wounded pride? Even while we wonder if she is genuinely enamored of the other fellow, we cannot discard the possibility that her infraction is born of the disappointment, resentment, and animosity of vindictiveness.

The author keeps us in doubt about Caldese's intentions. We are in the dark about the fundamental issues raised by the first-person account integrated into the speaker's monologue because we are obliged to watch Caldese through the distorted vision of a highly prejudiced individual: the auctorial persona embodied in the male protagonist. The intricate network of interactive and mutually complementary factors—the monologue of the first-person narrator, the exclusive purview of the male protagonist, Caldese's enigmatic initiative—may be interpreted as the textual instrument by which Corella maneuvers his artistic strategy. The main point around which the strategy revolves has to do with a distinctive dramatization of gender roles. Corella capitalizes on the dramatization of an ingenious interplay of equivalence and contrast.

The performance of the two protagonists in Corella's *Tragèdia* bespeaks the degree of participation or involvement in the two domains of human expression: action and rhetoric. It does not take long for a dispassionate analyst of that performance to become aware of an intriguing if odd counterbalance that substantiates the criterion of a primordial interaction: the male protagonist, who is in absolute control of the rhetoric, contends for dominance with the female counterpart, who is left with no alternative but to resort to stealthy action. We may configure the contention in the guise of an equation of inverse proportionality: prevailing rhetoric matches, in reverse order, preponderant action. On the one side, a man in a privileged position of first-person observer and narrator indulges in a self-serving profusion of language but remains in a state of abulia with no concern for negotiating an escape from his forced confinement—his own *càrcel de amor*. On the other side, Caldese, a veritable force of Nature, is obliged to assert her presence in the demeanor of a transgressor.

From the primordial conflict adumbrated at the heart of his masterful creation, Corella allows us to derive the following corollaries that enhance our insight into the tragic consequences of that conflict: (1) the motivation behind the behavior of the female protagonist cannot be explained either clearly or fairly because it is perceived only through the first-person, jaundiced narrative of a biased observer; (2) Caldese has every reason to consider her relationship with the auctorial persona as abusive because it stems from an inherent inequity—that is, from the position of the “silenced woman;” (3) the auctorial persona condemns in the strongest terms Caldese's escapade as transgressive because, according to him, it counters the norms of propriety that govern a well-ordered society.

Apropos of corollary 3, we may bring up a comparison with the case of Thisbe expounded in Corella's *Lamentacions (Les proses mitològiques, 191-198)*. In his commentary, Martos points out that Corella would look askance at Thisbe's ill-conceived, if bold and resolute, plan of escape in the company of Pyramus from the city to the woodlands. Martos notes that Corella would find particularly reprehensible Thisbe's scoffing at the provisions made on her behalf by her aged parents. Thisbe's obstinacy, then, is a clear sign of her flouting of the *lleis humanes* ('human laws'), especially those that have to do with the exigencies of *honestedat*, the Catalan semantic equivalent of the English terms “decency” and “decorum” (Martos, *Fonts i seqüència, 97*).

Aside from the moralistic disapproval, applicable to Caldese's no less than to Thisbe's misconduct, Caldese's exemplum spells out, emphatically, her propensity for an irresistible

impulse—her innate disposition, that is, toward the infraction of both the lleis humanes and the sacrosanct mores that Martos calls attention to. Consequently, a full appreciation of Corella’s ingenious artistry calls for the contextualization of Caldesa’s impulse into the airtight coherence of Corella’s literary text—precisely the text of the aforementioned equation of inverse equivalence. Upon further analysis, an insight into Corella’s integrative textuality hinges on the argumentation generated by a two-pronged hypothesis, which may be enunciated as follows:

- (1) As the sole master agent that pulls all the strings, Caldesa purposefully hatches a plot that, as she has every reason to expect, will provoke her avowed lover into excruciating fits of jealousy and play havoc with his peace of mind.
- (2) Caldesa’s implementation of that plan constitutes an exemplary epiphany of the phenomenon that Stephen Greenblatt, in his landmark study on the Renaissance, designates as “self-fashioning.”

Some comments are in order regarding each of the two distinctive aspects of the hypothesis. For no. 1 I propose a straightforward exercise of *explication de texte*. As for no. 2, I intend a comparative analysis between Corella’s focus on the *imago agens* and the analogous techniques operative in some episodes of *Tirant lo Blanc*, the celebrated novel coauthored by Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba, fellow contemporary Valencians with whom Corella was well acquainted.

For a start, then, let us take a close look at some key passages, circumstantial indicators of Caldesa’s suspicious—that is, purposeful and provocative—strategy, which, as I hope to show, turns out to be a subterfuge. First in the order of appearance among the indicators I have just made reference to is the knock at the door. The passage reads as follows: “tocant a la porta de la casa, dix l’avisada senyora (26) (‘knocking at the door of the house, the shrewd lady said’)... Here I advance the interpretation, which, to my knowledge, remains unexplored, though clearly supported by the syntactical agreement of the participle (“tocant”) with the subject “senyora.” It is, we may well deduce, Caldesa herself, who, one way or another, produces, or has someone produce for her, the resounding striking of the door. There are some points that remain open to question: the when, how, and to what effect such a startling, sonorous incident rises to the surface level of the narrator’s consciousness. The speaker brings up another door in reporting what may be interpreted as the second meaningful iteration of his beloved’s machinations. Accordingly, he does not fail to mention “la porta de la qual [cambra] ella [Caldesa] no s’oblidà, ab fel tancadura, segellar” (26) (‘the chamber door she took great care to lock securely behind her’). Upon producing the obnoxious result, which, in my judgment, the willful lady intends, the inescapable enclosure enhances the wretched man’s overall impression of being in jail. His impatience and anxiety are reflected in a mood of deep depression: “fón-me forçat, passejant, seguir la varietat de mos trists e sol·lícits pensaments” (26) (‘I felt the compulsion to walk about to and fro, pursuing the multitude of my unhappy, vexatious thoughts’). In its sinister attributes, the mood in question is connatural to the extremely harsh and gloomy ambiance of the *infierno de los enamorados*. In this type of composition or *dezir*, well represented in the numerous *cancioneros* of the fifteenth century, the

auctorial persona, invariably of the male gender, either bemoans the ills of his own condition or sympathetically countenances the afflictions of other star-crossed lovers.¹⁹

A third detail that may be listed as a telltale intimation of Caldesa's furtive action is the function of the small window (*poca finestra*), through which the speaker is able to inspect what is going on in the adjacent courtyard. One would reasonably presume that, as the only source of light, the window, minute as it is, should bring some relief to the hellish atmosphere of the inexorable lockdown. But that is not the case. There can be no comfort in the view that the *finestra* discloses. In the courtyard a man, whom some critics have compared to Leporello in Mozart's opera, *Don Giovanni*, moves about in cautious steps ("suauos passos") in the attitude ("ab continença") of waiting to be joined by another man ("algum altre"). Can the anxiety of the woebegone beholder be ever allayed by the ominous presence of this shady sidekick of a Don Juan poised to carry out his handiwork? At this moment, the specter of a rival looms up in the beholder's consciousness.

As the vehicle for conveying the understated but highly suggestive participation of a "leporcello" in gestation, the *poca finestra* attains a semiotic prominence all its own. Naturally, the limited size of the aperture framed in the wall of the dark chamber is indicative of a narrow range of vision. Let us bear in mind that it is precisely and only within that range that the observer confined in the dark space is able to catch a glimpse of the sinister character outside pacing to and fro as he awaits the arrival of "the other man." The same may be said apropos of the selective visibility that affects the devastating visual impact of the noisy and noisome lovemaking, which constitutes the *imago agens* discussed above. Indeed, the *imago*, though fourth in line, is of foremost in relevance in the list of circumstantial indicators that has been accruing here all along.

The list highlights Caldesa's tactics that correspond to the first aspect of my hypothesis. In other words, that aspect rests on the evidence of a plan of action cleverly masterminded by none other than Caldesa herself and rigorously executed with clockwork accuracy in collaboration with two libertines, prefigurations of the notorious Don Juan and his accomplice. To sum up: Caldesa locks up and abandons for hours on end the miserable man that claims her affection; aggravates his loneliness by motivating his compulsion of peeking from behind the window at the outside world; arouses his suspicion about an intruder that lurks nearby; lastly and climactically, drives the captive beholder to distraction by her shameless erotic display. I hasten to point out that Caldesa herself, according to plan, ingeniously factors a strict correlation of her deeds with the optics of the *finestra*. Notably, she could avoid without any difficulty the in-your-face exhibitionism that maximizes the impact of the insult brutally inflicted by the *imago agens*. The most elementary observance of discretion and circumspection would dictate, at the very least, keeping her demonstrations of offensive wantonness out of sight and out of mind—under the radar, so to speak. Evidently, she chooses to defy precaution and, rather than remain invisible in the ample space available in the courtyard, makes a spectacle of herself in broad daylight and within the bounds entailed by the perspective determined and encompassed by a narrow opening in the wall.²⁰

¹⁹ Elsewhere I undertake an extensive discussion of the *inferno*. See Cocozzella, *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation*, 21-40; and *From Misa to Mise en Scène*, 6-13.

²⁰ Complementary to my argument concerning Caldesa's deliberate plot are the following comments I make elsewhere:

In light of the circumstantial evidence I adduce in support of the first aspect of my hypothesis, I submit that Caldesa, as the masterful conceiver and resolute initiator of the plot, is the creator of the devastating *imago agens*. It is time now to look into the second aspect of my hypothesis and proceed to the analysis of an exemplary analogue of *Tragèdia de Caldesa*: the rendition of a comparable “inverse equivalence and perverse inequity” integrated into *Tirant lo Blanc*.

The Dialectic of Proportional Counterbalance: The Theatricality of a Woman’s Self-Fashioning

Worthy of special attention are the characteristics that highlight the analogy illustrated with striking dramatic effect by both the plot of *Tragèdia de Caldesa* and the narrative of ch. 283 of *Tirant lo Blanc*. The chapter details one of the most critical incidents of the fraught relationship between the eponymous hero and Princess Carmesina, the love of his life, whom he woos tenaciously and eventually gets to marry in a secret ceremony.²¹ Within the vast panorama of the novel, the vicissitudes of the Tirant-Carmesina love story mesh seamlessly, at various intervals, with the minute account of the superhuman exploits undertaken with singular valor by the knight in the service of the Greek Emperor. The latter happens to be Carmesina’s father engaged in a protracted war against two Muslim potentates—namely, “el Soldà i el Gran Turc” (“the Sultan and the Grand Turk”).²²

Evidently, she [Caldesa] capitalizes on the coincidence of two crucial events: the visit from her lover and the tryst with the latter’s rival. . . . The fact that, even under the most precarious circumstances, she does not take the simplest precautionary measures to prevent her captive audience, the lover “imprisoned” in the dark room, from witnessing that extremely disturbing scene can only be taken as a sign that she calculates with utmost precision every move of her plot. Hence, her strategy spells out her intention to bring about deliberately the onlooker’s predictable reaction of shock and bewilderment. (Cocozzella, “Joan Roís de Corella’s Inventio of Tragedy”, 482)

It may be argued that she actually arranges that coincidence. For a broad discussion of Caldesa as conceiver of the plot, see Cocozzella, *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella’s Tragèdia de Caldesa*, 85-97.

²¹ For this secret marriage see chs. 271-272 (2: 182-5). In this and the subsequent references to the text of *Tirant lo Blanc*, the colon separates the number of the volume and the pagination of Riquer’s edition. See bibliography below.

²² The conflict constitutes the leitmotif of the longest section of the novel (chs. 115-298). For a detailed summary of this section, see Riquer, *Història 2*: 677-82; and Pujol, 115-117. In ch. 186 the Emperor introduces himself as “Nós, Enric, per la divina gràcia emperador de Contestinoble e de tot l’imperi grec” (2: 13) (“[W]e, Henry, by divine grace the Emperor of Constantinople and of the entire Greek empire” [trans. La Fontaine, 420]). La Fontaine adds the following note: “Henry I was emperor of the Latin Empire of Constantinople established after he capital’s conquest in 1204 by the Fourth Crusade” (trans. La Fontaine, 395, n. 2). Pertinent to this context is the following notation by Martí de Riquer:

Al costat d’aquest ambient de contemporaneïtat i de versemblança, apareix un emperador de Constantinoble que tan aviat es diu Frederic com Enric, que és fill d’un emperador Albert—noms tot ells que res no tenen de bizantins—i que afirma que és net de Constantí. (*Història 2*: 685)
 (“Side by side with this ambiance of contemporaneity and verisimilitude, an emperor of Constantinople makes his appearance. He calls himself now Frederick, now Henry—there is nothing Byzantine about these names—and says he is the son of Emperor Albert and grandson of Constantine.”)

The monarch that appears in the novel as Carmesina’s father corresponds to Constantí XI. In identifying this historic figure Pujol adds the following poignant remark:

The spirit of euphoria that crowns Tirant's glorious feats in the battlefield comes to a devastating crash against the overwhelming grief and desolation that the critical incident I have alluded to has in store for the victorious cavalier. In this case, as in many others, the course of true love, as Shakespeare would remind us, does not run smooth. Indeed, ineffable grief and utter desolation are visited upon the unsuspecting knight as a consequence of a pernicious scheme set in operation by a malicious middle-aged woman, known as Viuda Reposada ('The Easygoing Widow'), foremost among Carmesina's ladies-in-waiting.²³ The third-person narrator localizes Viuda's machinations in the imperial palace in Constantinople. Being in love head over heels with Tirant, she, wallowing in self-pity, perceives unduly usurped from her the passionate and tender attentions that the nonpareil warrior, turned amorous courtier, lavishes upon the coy princess. Not unlike Iago in Shakespeare's *Othello*, Viuda acts out of envy and proceeds to sow the seeds of jealousy—that "green-eyed monster"—in Tirant's mind, while carrying out her despicable plan with consummate expertise.²⁴

Viuda knows very well that, in order to consummate her self-absorbed lustfulness, she must deceive Tirant and hoodwink Carmesina. Determined to follow through with her devilish undertaking, she marches straight to Carmesina's quarters and persuades her to forgo the customary siesta for the day and walk down to the garden so that, in an idyllic setting, she may seek relief from the torpor of a sweltering summer afternoon.²⁵ No sooner do they both set foot in the garden than Viuda coaxes Carmesina to entertain herself by taking center stage in a carefree frolic. It does not take long to gain the lady's wholehearted assent to put on a veritable show: an invigorating erotic romp, in the performance of which she is joined by another trusted confidant, a young coquette, residing in the palace, who bears the flamboyant name of Plaerdemavida ('Pleasure-of-my-life'). Previously enlisted for the occasion by Viuda Reposada, Plaerdemavida takes on, enthusiastically, the male role, which she enacts brilliantly. Following Viuda's directives, she disguises herself as the black gardener called Lauseta.

Carmesina and Plaerdemavida have no way of knowing that Viuda, in a long conversation with Tirant, has already confronted him with the vilest report of her own fabrication, aimed solely at besmirching Carmesina's reputation. Compelled by an

El soldà otomà Mehmet II prengué per assalt la capital de l'antic imperi Romà d'Orient, després d'un setge de prop de dos mesos el 31 de maig de 1453, i l'emperador Constantí XI morí en la defensa de la ciutat, sense tenir ajuda rellevant de cap regne occidental. (Pujol, 127)

('On May 31, 1453, the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmet II, took by assault the capital of the Eastern Roman Empire at the end of a siege that lasted about two months, and the Emperor Constantine XI died while defending the city. He did not obtain any help to speak of from any European ruler.')

²³ For the anglicized name of Viuda and Plaerdemavida, also mentioned in my essay, I am indebted to David Rosenthal's translation.

²⁴ With masterful sophistry and oblique intention, Viuda declares her love to the hero: see *Tirant lo Blanc*, ch. 266, 2: 172-173.

²⁵ In her sycophantic show of concern, Viuda delivers a warning nothing short of alarming:

[L]o molt vetlar que heveu fet en la nit passada, venint ara lo molt dormir després dinar, i en temps de calor, engendren-se moltes malalties qui durien dan en la vostra delicada persona. (Ch. 283, 2: 204)

('You stayed awake too long last night, and excessive sleep in hot weather, especially after having eaten, can cause numerous ills to your delicate constitution.' (Trans. La Fontaine, 550))

unrestrainable propensity for sheer slander, Viuda stoops so low as to accuse the princess of an adulterous affair “ab lo Lauseta, que es nomena, esclau negre, comprat e venut, moro per sa natura, hortolà que l’hort acostuma de procurar” (see ch. 268, 2: 176) (‘with Lauseta, so-called, a black slave bought and sold, a Moor by birth, a man whose normal task is to keep up the Emperor’s garden.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 532).’ And this is not all! The falsehoods include a reticent reference to Carmesina’s purported pregnancy.²⁶ Viuda portrays herself as a reluctant accomplice to a supposed ensuing abortion, by which she pretends to be utterly scandalized:

¡[Q]uantes e de quines herbes só anada a collir, e ab ardida mà les hi he posades per destruir lo prenyat del seu ventre, de molta infàmia digne! ¡Ai trista, que lo mesquí és punit per lo meu pecat! E lo seu cos, no soterrat, sinó per lo riu avall, ha fet son viatge. ¿Què podia jo altra cosa fer que millor fos, perquè tal nét no pervengués davant la vista de l’Emperador, son avi? (Ch. 268, 2: 176)
 (‘How many different kinds of herbs I went to gather, and how I had to apply them with my subtle hand to destroy that pregnancy in her womb, so deserving of infamy! How sad, that the unfortunate creature was punished through my sin! His body was not buried, but had to make its way down the river. What else could I have done that would have been better? I could not let such a grandson come before the Emperor, his grandfather. (Trans. La Fontaine, 532)

Viuda does not miss the opportunity to take full advantage of Tirant’s sympathy and good faith blended with a hefty dosage of credulity. For good measure, she overstuffs her mendacious tale with an ominous promise:

E tot lo que jo us he recitat no pense la senyoria vostra que sien faules, car si me’n deveu haver grat e ho teniu secret, ab los vostres ulls corporlas vos ho faré veure. (Ch. 268, 2: 176)
 (‘Your lordship should not think that I have made all this up, for if you value what I have said and keep it a secret, you will witness it with your own eyes. (Trans. La Fontaine, 532)

The demoniacal woman makes good, also, on her promise in ways that Carmesina and Plaerdemavida could never expect or imagine. That fiendish individual makes sure to provide an engrossed and shocked spectator for the zestful masquerade, apparently innocuous, exhibited in clear sight. Little do Carmesina and Plaerdemavida know that they are being watched by none other than Tirant himself, whom Viuda has made meticulously calculated arrangements to lodge in the upper room of the cottage that abuts the garden. High on one of its walls the room features a narrow opening, which the text describes as *petita finestra*—a term, we may recall, similar to the one used by Corella—which, as in the case of Corella’s *Tragèdia*, allows a full view of a pernicious episode. Since the *finestra* is very hard to reach, Viuda situates two large mirrors, one near the widow, the other next to

²⁶ To underscore Viuda’s wickedness the narrator recurs to a particularly graphic metaphor:

[A]b lo seu enteniment diabòlic que tenia deliberà de semblar en la cort d’una molt bona llavor que es nomena sisània mesclada ab mala voluntat perquè millor esplet ne pogués exir. (Ch. 264, 2: 169)
 (‘[S]he resolved with her diabolical mind that if this was not acceptable, she would sow the seed of discord in the court and sprinkle it with her ill will.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 527)

Tirant. Thanks to the complementary interplay of a primary and secondary reflection, Tirant is able to follow without difficulty, either in a sitting position or while lying in bed, the action in the garden. One may well surmise that, in normal circumstances, Tirant would enjoy watching a captivating spectacle by means of a device that functions pretty much like a television screen.²⁷ Viuda's scheme, however, is anything but normal or true to fact. Needless to say, there is no joy or comfort for Tirant, who ends up witnessing his ladylove apparently cavorting with a slave. In a situation not unlike that of the first-person speaker in Corella's aforementioned *Tragèdia*, Tirant, faced with the lurid scene, reacts in a frenzy of lamentations:

¡Oh fortuna, enemiga de tots aquells qui rectament en lo món viure desigen! ¿Per què has permès que los meus desaventurats ulls hagen pogut veure cosa que tots los vivents no han vist, ni porien pensar que un tal cas fos possible qui fer-se pogués...?" (Ch. 283, 2: 205)

(‘Oh, fortune, enemy of all those who want to live virtuously in this world! Why have you allowed my wretched eyes to see this thing which no other living beings have seen, or can even deem possible...?’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 551-552)

Let this excerpt suffice as an eloquent sample of a rather long tirade.

In sum: What chapter 283 of *Tirant lo Blanc* highlights is the theatricality of an operatic ensemble that entails action at two levels as in a play within a play. The scene that unfolds in the upper room with the conversation between Viuda and Tirant serves, in accord with the symbolism of the finestra, as a frame for the speechless, though boisterous and ultimately obnoxious, vaudevillian routine improvised by Carmesina and Plaerdemavida.

A close look at the phenomenon that Greenblatt defines as self-fashioning provides a solid base for the validation of the second aspect of my hypothesis listed above. A comparative analysis between *Tragèdia de Caldesa* and some key passages of *Tirant lo Blanc* brings to light two propositions: on the one hand, a fully personalized female protagonist such as Caldesa, Viuda Reposada, Carmesina, and Plaerdemavida stands out as a signal exponent of the self-fashioning in question; on the other hand, the role of each of these dramatis personae informs, to a degree distinctive to each of them, the overall effect of an impressive theatrical representation. Evidently, what is at play here is a strict correlation between self-fashioning and the art of acting on a stage.

We detect, then, in the common esthetic field inhabited by both Corella and the Martorell-Galba duo, the principles that govern the integration of psychological and dramatic factors. These are the very factors that make up “proto-drama” or “psycho-drama” in Enders’s sense of the term. It is fair to say that Corella harbingers the stereoscopic perspective determined by the process of holistic composition that Martorell and Galba capitalize and elaborate upon. In the final analysis, Greenblatt’s landmark publication

²⁷ The television effect is heightened by the description of Viuda’s ingenious setting:

La Viuda hagué dos espills grans: l’u posà alt en la finestra, l’altre posà baix en dret de Tirant i en dret de l’altre, e tot ço que es mostrava en lo de l’alt, tot resplandia en lo de baix, puis l’una lluna de l’espill estava en dret de l’altra. (Ch. 283, 2: 203)

(‘The widow had two large mirrors, and placed one opposite the window, and the second down in front of Tirant and directly beneath the other mirror. The image of the garden reflected in the first mirror was directed downward toward the second mirror, which in turn reflected the image to Tirant.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 550)

provides an invaluable pragmatic approach to the common undertaking of three contemporary fifteenth-century writers, citizens of Valencia—namely, Corella, Martorell, and Galba. That undertaking, I propose, consists of the pioneering exploration of female self-fashioning.

Greenblatt's innovative theory pertaining to the multifaceted ambience of the Renaissance calls to mind José Ortega y Gasset's well-known metaphysics of the *yo* and *circunstancia*.²⁸ At the heart of the *circunstancia*—specifically what may be considered, for want of a better term, the *Zeitgeist* of the Renaissance—Greenblatt recognized the following distinctive characteristic:

What *is* central is the perception... that there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social, psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities. (Greenblatt, 1)

In defining what may be regarded as an analogous version of the *yo* component of Ortega's seminal formula, Greenblatt states that "fashioning an identity" results from the gestation and maturation of selfhood manifested, ultimately, in "a distinctive personality, a characteristic address to the world, a consistent mode of perceiving and behaving" (Greenblatt, 2).

Greenblatt's productive insights readily blend with two esthetic modes eminently exemplified by the interface between the distinctive, though mutually complementary, literary texts I have just reviewed: (1) Corella's shocking exposé; (2) the passages authored by Martorell in collaboration with Galba. On the basis of the data gathered from my preliminary review, these modes may be defined in terms of the techniques of *rifacimento* and the overall impact of what I intend to call the dialectic of proportional counterbalancing.²⁹

Various indices of *rifacimento* are quite easy to spot in the general tenor of Tirant's profuse mournful remonstrance documented in ch. 291 (2: 219-225) of the novelistic account. In that chapter expressions crop up that echo the very first words uttered by Corella's auctorial persona—"A tan alt grau l'extrem de ma dolor ateny..."—not to mention the attending conceits formulated in the frequent hyperbolic turns of Corella's intricate syntax. Take, for instance, the mention of "l'extrema passió," and "extrema dolor" (2: 222-223) attributed to the persons profoundly afflicted by Tirant's pitiful state:

Après pregà a tots que no li diguessen res. Los metges no li podien fer ni dar remei negú: tanta era la dolor que suportava. (Ch. 291, 2: 224)
(‘Having said this, he [Tirant] begged them all not to address him further and the physicians could not do anything for the Capità, so great was his suffering.’ (Trans. La Fontaine, 564)

Some passages exhibit additional verbatim coincidences. In the aforementioned ch. 291 we hear Tirant voice the following lamentation:

²⁸ For a comprehensive definition of *yo* and *circunstancia*, the well-known mutually complementary principles in Ortega y Gasset's metaphysics, see Borel, 37-76. Díez Taboada (17-18) provides an enlightening discussion of Ortega y Gasset's terminology together with Américo Castro's notion of *vivencia*.

²⁹ "Rifacimento" is defined as "rielaborazione di un'opera letteraria" (*Dizionario Garzanti della lingua italiana*) or "a recast or adaptation, as of a literary or musical work" (*The Random House Dictionary of the English Language*).

Oh piadosos oïnts, escoltau lo que diré! Transportau les vostres penses ab dolor e trist pensament. Mirau la tristor qui en aquest cas me combat, esperant quan serà la fi de tan dolorós principi. (2: 221)

(‘Oh, merciful listeners, listen to what I say! Give me your sympathy and observe the sorrow that engulfs me as I await to see how my end will come.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 562)

Readily recognizable are the lexical items—”piadosos oïnts,” transportau,” “trist pensament,” “la fi de tan dolorós principi”—lifted directly from a similar complaint expressed in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*:

O piadosos oïnts! Transportant vostres misericordes penses en mi, diga cascú si semblant dolor a la mia jamés ha sofert, e ab adolorit pensament mirau la tristor que a tal hora ma trista pensa combatia, esperant quina seria la fi que de tan dolorós principi esdevendria. (27)

(‘I ask all those who may be inclined to listen to me in sympathy: turn to me your merciful attention! Tell me if any of you has felt a pain as intense as mine. Put yourselves in a cheerless mood and consider the sadness that on that afternoon assailed my wretched heart as I wondered what would be the outcome of such a woeful beginning.’)

The pattern of word-for-word repetition attains a special significance at the most intense moment of Tirant’s firsthand revelation of his own reaction to the farce that takes place in the garden:

A la fi los meus adolorits ulls mereixqueren veure la tan estimada senyora, la qual de mi en aquell cas poc pensament tenia, ab lo Lausetà, negre hortolà. Primerament viu un deshonest besar, lo qual los meus ulls e los sentiments ofené, e majorment après entrant en una cambra, ab gest e paraules d’infinida amor abraçats, mostraven aconseguït tot aquell plaer e delit que entre enamorats s’acostuma. (Ch. 295, 2: 233) (‘But finally my agonized eyes were presented with the sight of this highly esteemed lady at a time when I could not have been greatly on her mind; for she was with Lausetà, the black gardener. First I saw them kiss dishonestly, and the offense to my eyes and feelings increased as they went together into a room, exchanging words and glances of infinite love. They emerged looking like creatures who had attained all the delights and pleasures available to lovers.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 570)³⁰

³⁰ For this passage, see Aguilar & Montero’s commentary (27). Garriga claims to provide an exhaustive list of unquestionable coincidences between *Tragèdia de Caldesa* and chs. 268-305 of *Tirant lo Blanc*. He adds that, among these passages, which he considers plagiarized by the authors of *Tirant*,

el més important és, evidentment, el del capítol 295. També és el més necessari. Tirant ha de saber que les seves sospites eren infundades, cosa que s’esdevé en el capítol 296, amb la rèplica de Plaerdemavida a la lamentació del protagonista. (26)

(‘evidently, the most important is the one found in chapter 295. It is, also, the most needed. It becomes necessary for Tirant to know that his suspicions are unfounded. In chapter 296 Tirant comes to this awareness after listening Plaerdemavida’s response to his lamentations.’)

Here textual details like “los meus adolorits ulls mereixqueren veure la tan estimada senyora” and “deshonest besar” serve as incontrovertible evidence of an unmediated provenance: the pained confession concerning the shocking experience that the *imago agens* visits upon the speaker of Corella’s monologue.³¹

Critics like Miguel Aguilar i Montero, Carles Garriga i Sants, and Carles Miralles take the abundant data illustrative of *rifacimeno* in *Tirant lo Blanc* as evidence of plagiarism. Be that as it may, there is no denying, nevertheless, that, in view of the Corella-Martorell-Galba interaction, the shared textuality betokens the inner workings and various facets of a genuinely creative enterprise. From a comparatist perspective, what really matters is that the three writers manage to appropriate and integrate a number of textual items into distinctive literary holistic compositions. This means that the plots hatched by Caldesa and Viuda Reposada attest to a high degree of assimilation of identical or analogous components. In each case, the result of that assimilation commands an appreciative reading on its own merit.

For a full appreciation of the outstanding achievements of the three Valencian authors that do not cease to pique our interest, it is well, at this point, to hark back to the aforementioned esthetic mode I have identified as “the dialectic of proportional counterbalance”. The domain of that dialectic may be seen as an iteration of the equation of inverse equivalence. In *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, the first-person narrator prevails as the vehicle of a reaction to inscrutable dramatic action; to the same extent but in contrasting order, in *Tirant lo Blanc* the third-person narrator becomes the predominant factor of a full accountable chain of events.³² To put it differently, the easy flow of the story-telling and

³¹ To the list of repeated items we may add the “poca finestra” (*Tragèdia*, 26), which matches very closely the “petita finestra” in *Tirant lo Blanc* (ch. 83, 2: 203). Corella’s monologue includes some grumbling about “més adversa fortuna mia,” which becomes an unrestrained reproach in the mouth of Tirant:

“¡Oh fortuna, enemiga de tots aquells qui rectament en lo món viure desigen! (Ch. 283, 2: 205)
(‘Oh, fortune, enemy of all those who want to live virtuously in this world...’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 551-552)

Not to be overlooked is the parallelism manifested in the essential portrait of the respective ladylove. Caldesa is presented as follows:

una ínclita donzella, en bellea sens par, en avisament passant totes les altres, ab gràcia e singularitat tan extrema que seria foll qui en sa presència alguna altra lloàs en estima de tanta vàlua... (26)
(‘an illustrious young woman of unequalled beauty. In wisdom she surpassed all other maidens. Unmatched she was in her graceful demeanor... so much so that, in view of her merits, it would have been foolish to praise the virtues of any other damsel.’)

The encomiastic terminology is recycled in the description of Carmesina:

La sua bellea e avisament passa totes leas altres del món ab singularitat tan extrema que seria foll qui en sa presència alguna altra lloàs d’èsser de tant estima. (Ch 295, 2: 233)
(‘In beauty and discretion she surpasses all other damsels in the world to such an extent that one would have to be mad to consider, in her presence, someone equal to her.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 570)

³² A full account is evidenced in the conscientious report of Plaerdemavida. The sympathetic maiden tries her best to comfort Tirant by providing a clear explanation of the playful performance that she and Carmesina put on in the garden:

clear-cut denouement in *Tirant lo Blanc* foil and underscore, by contrast, the distinctive trait of *Tragèdia de Caldesa*: the reflective churning and psychological turmoil generated by the transgressive woman in her lover's mind. Thus, by virtue of the dynamics of inverse equivalence or proportional counterbalance, the esthetic factors that inform the narration of the entire episode of Viuda Reposada's sordid, maleficent intervention shed considerable light on the counterpart of that episode: Corella's elaboration of a distinctive *vis dramatica* in his *Tragèdia*. Elsewhere I attempt to explicate the remarkable achievement of Corella's ingenious artistry in the following terms:

Corella generates and develops a keen sense of theatricality out of compacting an abundance of language—the language of the speaker's suffering—into the vessel of a small text. The operation brings about a special effect of the kinetics of compression. This curious mimicking of the factors of basic mechanics segues with the process of creating a good deal of pent-up energy, which naturally exerts pressure to be released. The released energy is precisely the factor that manifests itself in the *vis dramatica* in question. (Cocozzella, "The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, 797)

To sum up, Corella represents in an ultra-condensed dramatic mode what his artistic cohorts, Martorell and Galba, expatiate upon through a narrative that still retains distinctive dramatic features. The same factors, evident in the *mise en scène* illustrated narratively in *Tirant lo Blanc*, are operative in an intensively dramatic fashion in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*. Martorell and Galba recognize in their source the theatrical qualities that they make sure to preserve in their own version of a love relationship vitiated by the machinations of a malevolent individual.³³ They bear witness to the authenticity of the genre to which Corella devotes his creative genius and, thus, end up attesting to the theatrical features inherent in Corella's work.

By profiling an esthetics of intertextuality we gain a perspective from which we can visualize an overarching equation of proportional counterbalance. The very nature of the novelistic discourse in the Martorell-Galba side of the equation sets in relief, in utter contrast, the dramatic forces unleashed, on the other side, by the sheer compressed formulation of Corella's artistic medium.³⁴

E posat cas que ho hajau vist, és estada cosa que s'és fet per joc e burles, per dar consolació e alegria a la senyora Princesa. La Viuda Reposada hagué dels entramesos de festa de Corpus Crist, e jo em vestí de forma del nostre horolà. (Ch. 296, 2: 235)

('If you really saw such an act, it was done as a joke and farce, to comfort and amuse the princess. The Widow Reposada had some garments for the interlude of the feast of Corpus Christi, and I dressed as our gardener.') (Trans La Fontaine, 572)

³³ Appropriately, Aguilar i Montero perceives Viuda as a masterful deceiver "enginyant tota una funció teatral" ('who contrives a full-fledged theatrical performance') (1).

³⁴ Here I reiterate a point I have discussed on a previous occasion:

Martorell and Galba expand, novelistically, the textual core that Corella encapsulates in a compact plot, quintessentially dramatic and potentially theatrical. In keeping with the equation's overarching parallelism that subsumes obvious contrasts and differences, Martorell and Galba retain a great deal of Corella's dramatic mode. In fact, Aguilar i Montero, and Grilli review the theatrical features evidenced in the acting and staging of Reposada's malicious machinations. What we learn from these scholars is that those features are a clear reflection of kindred qualities inherent or latent in Corella's

I have gathered evidence in an effort to show that the *rifacimento* in *Tirant lo Blanc* confirms two aspects of Corella's landmark achievement: (1) a deep probing into the psychology of Caldesa's self-fashioning and (2) the principles of inverse equivalence and proportional counterbalance inherent in the projection of the roles of the male and female protagonists onto a stage-worthy representation. Ultimately, Martorell and Galba shed considerable light on the dramatic qualities of the action—*actio* in Enders's terminology—that in Corella's rendition attains a climactic epiphany in a full-fledged theatrical performance. In their own recast or remake of Corella's ultra-condensed plot, Martorell and Galba translate, within a totally different context, Caldesa's enigmatic, dramatic, and ultimately tragic motivation into a literary counterpart that recaptures their own insights into a woman's holistic psychological portrait. All in all, what is implicit in the first-person narrative that informs the monologue—that is, the totality of *Tragèdia de Caldesa*—becomes explicit in the third-person purview that governs, in *Tirant lo Blanc*, the excerpts I have just analyzed. A case in point is Viuda's conduct, which, in diametric contrast with Caldesa's action, is fully explained in its malevolent intentions. In all fairness, by relying solely on the account of a less than impartial observer, one is hard put ascribing, point blank, perversity to Caldesa's behavior.

Aside from the esthetic factors that underlie the rather substantial difference between two masterpieces—*Tragèdia de Caldesa* and the comparable sector of *Tirant lo Blanc*—the transition from one to the other captures the evolution of a single, memorable phenomenon: the consequences of a powerful impulse of woman's desire. The third-person omniscient narrator in *Tirant* makes it quite clear that, as the matrix of Viuda's self-assertion, impulsive desire prompts her to conceive and implement her ill-begotten plan to seduce the exemplary knight and slander his faithful ladylove. Also, desire is very much in operation in Carmesina's and Plaerdemavida's risqué mimicry of fondling and embracing in unison with the attending erotic poses, postures, positions, and gesticulations. The relish with which the two damsels vie with each other in their pastime—*esbargiment*, to use the apt Catalan term—of mutual titillation betokens the surge of spontaneous passion from the labyrinthine depths of the subliminal self. Indeed, this is an exemplum of instinctive self-fashioning in the expression of which no words need to come out of their mouths. In the context of a woman's self-fashioning as it unfolds progressively from Corella's vision expressed in a monologue to Martorell's and Galba's rendition spelled out in the third-person narrative, we witness a performance meticulously staged and imbued with gripping dramatic tension and a veritable theatrical impact.

Besides Viuda, Carmesina, and Plaerdemavida, there is, vividly portrayed in *Tirant lo Blanc*, another outstanding exponent of the self-fashioned woman. Now enter Princess Ricomana, who, as I explain in one of my previous essays, appears prominently in her

Tragèdia, the main source of the two novelists. In the final analysis, Martorell and Galba end up attesting to the stage-worthy features embodied in Corella's idea of a theater... The notion of the equation we have sketched out entails the principle of proportional counterbalancing. Probing into that principle, we may easily verify the complementary contrast evinced by the two-pronged phenomenology we have referred to: intensity, compression, compactness on Corella's side of the equation; expansion and amplification on the side of the Martorell-Galba duo. (Cocozzella, "The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*", 807)

For an additional commentary on the parallelism between the monologue in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* and its novelistic *rifacimento* in *Tirant lo Blanc*, see Aguilar i Montero's essay and Cocozzella, *Text, Translation and Critical Interpretation*, 136-149.

impressive headstrong characterization in two episodes integrated, within the narrative of *Tirant lo Blanc*, into the sequence of events that take place in the islands of Sicily and Rhodes.³⁵ It is convenient to quote some details included in that essay concerning the starring role of the Princess:

Described by the narrator as “d’ineestimable bellea” (‘indescribable beauty’) and “donzella molt sabuda e de moltes virtuts complida” (100, 1: 307) (‘a discreet damsel, possessed of many virtues’ [trans. La Fontaine, 184]), Ricomana is the daughter of the king of Sicily. The *donzella* is greatly conflicted in her feelings toward her suitor, Felip, the youngest of the five children of the king of France (99, 1: 303). She acknowledges a certain attraction toward the prince (“los meus ulls contents són de la vista d’ell” (100, 1: 309) (‘my eyes are satisfied with Philip’s appearance’ [trans. La Fontaine, 186])) but harbors serious concerns as to whether he is worthy of being her husband. To Tirant, Felip’s loyal friend and staunch defender, Ricomana feels the compulsion to confess: “lo meu cor se combat amb mi, e l’experiència me manifesta que és, aquell que jo contemple, d’èsser grosser e avar, les quals dos malalties són incurables” (100, 1: 309-310) (‘my heart is troubled and experience warns me that he whom I contemplate is crude and petty, both of which maladies are incurable’ [trans. La Fontaine, 186]). Something about Felip must have given the young lady a hunch about the less than stellar reputation that precedes him. In a casual observation that is hardly gratuitous, the narrator lets us know that the French prince “era un poc ignorant e tengut en possessió de molt grosser, e lo Rei per causa d’açò ne feia poca estima” (99; 1: 303-4) (‘being somewhat ignorant and boorish, was not regarded highly by the king’ [trans. La Fontaine 181]). (Cocozzella, “Joan Roís de Corella’s *Inventio* of Tragedy”, 479-480)

True to character, Ricomana responds with steely resolve and confident dispatch to the challenges posed by her *circunstancia*. Not only does she consult a famous *filòsof* from Calabria, who, after observing the prince pronounces a rather dubious judgment about him,³⁶ but also does not miss the opportunity to form her own judgment about her suitor’s behavior. Two events stand out as clear manifestations of Felip’s gauche manners unbecoming royalty. First, Ricomana watches with bemused embarrassment how the prince, in an unmistakable show of servile disposition, makes a spectacle of himself by

³⁵ According to Riquer (*Història 2*: 667-677), this section of *Tirant lo Blanc*, chs. 98-114, may be considered part II of the great novel. In these chapters, as Riquer explains, “[l]a novel·la ha esdevingut finalment mediterrània, i es pot dir que ja no deixarà d’èsser-ho, amb la qual cosa va adquirint una nova fesonomia, de vegades més realista i més faceciosa» (*Història 2*: 667). (‘By now the novel has become Mediterranean. One may say that from now on it remains Mediterranean. Thus, it displays new features: progressively more realistic and with humorous touches.’)

³⁶ No sooner does the clairvoyant wizard lay eyes on the prince than he pronounces an ambiguous and less than reassuring verdict:

Senyora, lo galant que la senyoria vostra m’ha fet veure porta l’escrit en lo front de molt ignorant home e avar. E dar-vos ha a sentir moltes congoixes. Serà home animós e valentíssim de sa persona e molt venturós en armes e morrà rei. (110, 1: 352)

(‘Madam, this suitor whom you have had me observe carries written on forehead that he is an ignorant buffoon. He will cause you countless heartaches. Yet he will also be a most courageous and valiant man, ready in battle, and will die a king.’ (Trans. La Fontaine, 219)

taking the initiative of slicing a loaf of bread at the very start of a lavish banquet, which Ricomana has prepared in his honor (see ch. 101, 1: 316-317). As for the second of the two events I am referring to, Ricomana puts Felip to the test by confronting him with the choice between two beds, situated one next to the other in a palatial chamber. One of the beds is old, decrepit, and utterly unattractive; the other, a splendid structure, is brand new and embellished with rich ornamentation. It is late in the evening and the prince is ready to retire. From a hidden spot Ricomana sees her French lover rough up in great agitation the old bed until it gets completely dismantled. For Ricomana seeing is believing. What she firmly believes is that Felip has passed the test with flying colors: he rejects, she concludes, the old bed and is ready to jump into the new one. She interprets his action as a clear indication of the magnanimity and attending talents of a fine monarch.³⁷ Appearances, alas, are deceiving. The truth of the matter is that, on both occasions, the prince demonstrates the exact opposite of the genuine virtues of a king. In the first event, Tirant himself saves the day by coming up, in the spur of the moment, with an ingenious explanation for Felip's faux pas (the unsightly cutting and serving of the bread).³⁸ In the second occurrence, cleverly plotted by Ricomana herself, her deft and elaborate maneuvering of the *circunstancia* backfires on her. Ricomana is unaware that the furious dismantling of the shabby bed is due to the most menial of purposes: Felip ransacks the blanket, sheets, and mattress while searching for the needle he has accidentally dropped and lost as he gets ready to mend a hole in his hose.

³⁷ This is how Ricomana confides to the damsels in her entourage her buoyant feelings about Felip's "choice:"

Mirau, per vida vostra, quant és lo saber dels estrangers, en especial lo de Felip. Jo l'he volgut probar així com havia fet les altres vegades, en aquests dos llits; pensí que Felip, si era grosser ni avar no tendria ànimo de gitar-se en tal llit com aquest ans se posaria en lo més subtil. E ell ha tenguda altra art, que ha desfet lo més subtil e ha llençada la roba per terra, e és-se gitat en lo millor per mostrar que és fill de rei e li pertany, com la sua generació sia molt noble, excel·lent e molt antiga. (Ch. 110, 1: 354)

(‘Will you look at the cunning of these foreigners, and of Philip in particular! I had wanted to test him, as I had done other times before, with this matter of the two beds; I thought that Philip, if he were truly coarse and ignoble, would not have the nerve to lie down on such a bed as this one and instead would choose a less substantial one. But he has been of another kind altogether. He unmade the poorer bed and threw the bedclothes to the floor, and this he doubtless did to show that he is the son of a king and that the fine bed alone befits him insofar as he is of a most noble, excellent and ancient lineage.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 221)

³⁸ Here is the made-to-order exculpation that Tirant instantly comes up with:

[L]os crestianissims senyors reis de França, per les moltes gràcies que obteses han de la immensa bondat de nostre senyor Déu, instituïren que tots los llurs fills, ans que rebessen l'orde de cavalleria, al dinar, ans que mengen, lo primer pa que els posen davant ne fan dotze llesques, en cascuna posen un real d'argent e donen-ho per amor de Déu en reverència dels dotze Apòstols; e com han rebut l'orde de cavalleria posen en cascuna llesca una peça d'or. (Ch. 102, 1: 317)

(‘Those most Christian monarchs, the kings of France, in gratitude for the many favors which Our Lord in His mercy bestowed upon them, decreed the following for all their sons who have not yet been knighted: that at the dinner table, before eating, they are to take the first bread placed before them and cut it into twelve slices; and on each slice they are to place a silver *real* and give it to a mendicant out of love for God and in memory of the twelve apostles. After the sons of the kings of France are knighted, they do not place a silver *real* on the bread slices but a gold one.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 191-192)

At this point it is particularly instructive to tally the similarities and differences in the process of self-fashioning pertaining, distinctively, to three women: Caldesa, Viuda, and Ricomana. What is evident is the validation of the premise I stated above. In *Tirant lo Blanc*, the broad scope of the third-person narrative discloses in no uncertain terms the motivation of two individuals: Viuda and Ricomana. Each operates with vastly different intentions: Viuda's are surreptitious and patently wicked; Ricomana's, above board and quite legitimate. Viuda's machinations, hardly redeemed by the mirthful Carmesina-Plaerdemavida caper, cannot but court unqualified disaster. In the glaring tragic tenor of their pantomime, the two damsels cause Tirant's untold grief and the death of an innocent man: duped by Viuda into the belief that the gardener is Carmesina's partner in the indecent erotic scene, Tirant eventually kills him in a fit of rage.³⁹ Needless to say, the trials to which Ricomana subjects Felip have no such dire consequences. Although less than successful in her endeavor to assess the character of her would-be spouse, Ricomana manages, even in her failure, to assert her imposing presence and the strength of her own determination.

In respect of the male-female interaction, the gamut of dramatization, which in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* remains at a primordial level, is, as I have indicated, expanded in *Tirant lo Blanc* by means of explicit motivation and self-evident enactment. The process of expansion goes hand in hand with a complete reversal of the role that Corella consigns exclusively to the male protagonist (the first-person speaker). Viuda and Ricomana appropriate the privileged perspective inherent in Corella's profile of that role. Either woman, thus, becomes the primary spectator of a respective plot that she contrives, in the first place, all by herself. We may add, to be precise, that, as the arch-manipulator that she is, Viuda takes charge of two simultaneous plots. In the first, she confronts Tirant with a scene that shocks him with the horrific recurrence of an *imago agens*. In the second, she shows the aplomb of an accomplished stage director as she makes sure that, with the unwitting collaboration of the two young maidens, the nightmarish scene plays out efficiently in perfect accord with her game plan. Ricomana, also, assumes control of two plots, which, however, are not simultaneous. In the masterly recounting of Felip's unbecoming actions—the slicing of the bread and the “choice” between the two beds—the quasi-comical denouement, which dissipates the possibility of an undesirable setback or stormy complication, proves that the strategy of the Sicilian princess is innocuous and intriguing without the viciousness of Viuda's intrigue.

What is memorable about the story line that either Viuda or Ricomana initiates is the conjoining and articulation of turns or counterturns of serious and lighthearted motifs that, at certain junctures, attain corresponding tragic and comic dimensions. The plots created and controlled by Viuda and Ricomana lead us to reflect on a full-scale semiological

³⁹ The gardener's violent death is described in gory details in *Tirant*, ch. 286 (2: 210) in the following terms:

[Tirant] trobà dins l'hort, que poc havia que era vingut, lo negre hortolà e véu-lo a la porta de la cambra sua, que estava calçant-se unes calces vermelles. Tirant que el véu, mirà a totes partes e no véu negú, pres-lo per los cabells e posà'l dins la cambra e degollà'l.

(‘[Tirant] could see the black gardener, who had not been back long. He was at the door of his hut, putting on a pair of red stockings. Looking all around him and not seeing anyone, Tirant approached the gardener, took him by the hair and dragged him inside the hut, where he beheaded him.’) (Trans. La Fontaine, 554)

orchestration fraught with the resonance of confluent conflicting factors. Viuda, opportunistic controller of *circunstancia* if there ever was one, can only contribute notes of dissonance to that orchestration. By shifting from a musical to a pictorial metaphor, we may well add that a pall of pessimism overshadows Viuda's figure, agent of evil and prime mover of an inexorable progression toward a ruinous outcome. Contrary to the nihilistic tenor of Viuda's destructive handiwork, Ricomana's constructive trial-and-error modus operandi affects the *circunstancia* by creating an atmosphere of wholesome good humor. Thus, Ricomana contributes a bright spot in the mega-text deftly laid out by Martorell and Galba.

By now, we have come to the realization that a simple juxtaposition of *Tragèdia de Caldesa* and the comparable episodes in *Tirant lo Blanc* brings to light an interplay of parallelism and contrast, affinity and diversity in a pattern that evinces significant repercussion in Castilian literature of the late Middle Ages and the early Renaissance. As for the foreshadowing of striking dramatizations in Castilian literature, I would point out two cases that beg to be considered particularly in reference to my foregoing discussion. They exemplify, on the one hand, the absurdity—dead-serious intention at odds with farcical inconsequential result—which Ricomana experiences because of a *circunstancia* beyond her full control and understanding and, on the other hand, a fundamental analogy illustrated both by Viuda, whose *yo* and *circunstancia* attained novelistic *vivencia* in the early 1460s, and by an individual who may be considered Viuda's veritable soul mate in perversity and maliciousness: a go-between, known as Celestina, the namesake of Fernando de Rojas's celebrated masterpiece (otherwise entitled *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea*), first published in the transitional period between the fifteenth and sixteenth century.⁴⁰

The exemplary functions characterized by Viuda and Celestina alike hold in store a verity enshrined at the heart of any morality play: "As you sow, so shall you reap." Viuda and Celestina get what is rightfully coming to them. They both die a violent death.⁴¹ No less important than Viuda, Ricomana also commands meditative attention. Ricomana is impressive in her centrality. Her imposing presence looms halfway between Caldesa, with whom we are quite familiar, and the formidable young woman, Melibea, the other female protagonist (besides Celestina) of Rojas's *Tragicomedia*. There is a strong bond of correlation between Caldesa and Ricomana despite their being separated by a vast difference in social status: Caldesa's bourgeois vs. Ricomana's aristocratic. By means of a

⁴⁰ *Tirant lo Blanc* was written between January, 1460, and the beginning of 1464 (Pujol, 108).

Rojas's masterpiece appeared in two successive versions: the *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea* in sixteen acts and the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* in twenty-one acts. For the *Comedia* there is an extant *editio princeps* of 1499. According to Russell's excellent account, the first edition, now lost, of the *Tragicomedia* is datable around 1502. (Russell, 7-21) See, also, n. 10 above.

⁴¹ Tirant predicts Viuda's death with the following threatening remarks:

[Tirant] coneguè la gran maldat de la Viuda Reposada, e en presència de tots jurà allí que si en aquell cas pogués eixir en terra, que en presència de l'Emperador la feria cremar, o ab les sues pròpies mans faria d'ella lo que havia fet del negre. (Chapter 296; ed. Riquer 2: 236)

("Tirant realized the great wickedness of the Widow Reposada, and he swore, in front of everyone, that if he could return to shore at that moment, he would either have the widow burned in the presence of the Emperor, or, with his own hands, he would do to her as he had done to the black. (Trans. La Fontaine, 572)

Celestina is expeditiously dispatched to kingdom come in Act XII of Rojas's *Tragicomedia* (see Russell's edition, pp. 469-499).

clearly expressed motivation, Ricomana complements Corella's characterization of Caldesa as silenced woman. Ricomana explicates her motives in a robust, down-to-earth speech—the speech of the market place. Her assertive voice and self-assured tone reverberate with abrupt, startling resonance in the rarefied milieu concomitant to the existential *circunstancia* of her royal lifestyle. It is precisely in the speech of the bourgeoisie, discordant with the cultured mannerism to be expected of members of the royal family, that the Sicilian princess confides her innermost thoughts to one of her ladies in waiting:

Lo senyor Rei mon pare ha atorgat lo matrimoni als ambaixadors de França, e jo estic ab tan gran dubte de la grosseria de Felip que no es pot dir, i encara d'èsser avar, car si res de tot açò té no poria estar una hora ab ell gitada en un llit, ans deliberaria de fer-me monja e estar closa en un monestir, car jo he fet tot mon poder en conèixer-lo e veig que la sort no m'hi acompanya ab aquest traïdor de Tirant. Sí prec a Déu lo veja rostit e bollit e en ira de sa enamorada, que aquell dia de les llesques del pa ja l'haguera ben conegut sinó per causa sua. (109, 1: 342-3)

(‘The king my father has given his consent to my marriage with Philip to the ambassadors from France. Yet I have such great fears of Philip’s boorish and petty nature that I can hardly air them. If he is deficient in any such way I could not spend an hour with him in bed; I would rather become a nun and be clapped up in a monastery. I have done everything in my power to study him but I have had no luck because of that traitor who shadows him, Tirant. I pray to God to see him burn in the throes of love, and out of favor with his mistress, for that day of the slices of bread I would’ve found Philip out had it not been for him. (Trans. La Fontaine, 211)

Thus Ricomana flaunts her rebellious temperament and does not hesitate to take matters in her own hands in an unequivocal rejection of any paternal or paternalistic imposition in the arrangement of her marriage. In her defiant talk, Ricomana proves to be a precursor of Melibea, who, in one iconic scene of Act XVI of the *Tragicomedia*, uses unembellished, incisive language to probe the turmoil of her own “psychodrama,” which soon turns into tragedy. In accord with her *circunstancia*, Melibea, in the course of her conversation with Lucrecia, her confidant, is not averse to lay bare the obsession of her life: “Calisto es mi ánima, mi vida, mi señor, en quien yo tengo toda mi esperanza” (Rojas, 547) (‘Calisto is my heart and soul; he is my lord. In him is all my hope’ [trans. Singleton, 217]). Her mind obfuscated by compulsive passion, Melibea goes beyond the point of merely contemplating, as does Ricomana, refusal to marry: “no poria estar una hora ab ell gitada en un llit.” Melibea goes as far as to reject categorically the plans that her solicitous parents discuss at length about her marital prospects:

No quiero marido, no quiero ensuziar los ñudos del matrimonio, ni las maritales pisadas de ageno hombre repisar como muchas hallo en los antiguos libros que leý que hizieron, más discretas que yo, más subidas en estado y linaje. (Rojas, 548)

(‘I want no husband. I will not sully the bonds of matrimony or violate the marriage vows as many have done, I find, in those ancient books which I have read, and many of them were wiser than I, and of nobler lineage and estate.’ (Trans. Singleton, 217)

The *yo-and-circunstancia* metaphysical bound, which confers profound implications to Caldesa's self-fashioning, reaches a climactic point in Melibea's tragic condition.⁴² There is, then, evidence of an intertextual evolutionary trajectory, which begins in Corella's *Tragèdia*, goes through an intermediary phase in *Tirant lo Blanc*, and comes to a denouement in Rojas's *Tragicomedia*. Though highly consequential to the broad outline of that trajectory, the methodical analysis especially of how authors like Martorell, Galba, and Rojas make the tragic mode congruent with occasional ironic-comic nuances, lies beyond the province of the present discussion.

Meta-textual Corollaries

While dwelling on the most bitter and long-lasting effects of the *imago agens*, Corella's narrator calls attention to the immediate aftermath of his nightmarish experience. A literary critic can do no better than to quote an outstanding passage redolent of consummate artistry:

Partint-se de la casa lo tan estimat enamorat, féu-li present la senyora de una tan loçana e humil reverència, que sol la gonella féu estalvi lo seu genoll esquerre no tocàs la dura terra, senyalant ab la sua bella cara tristor no poca de la sua absència. Acompanyà les sues espatles ab piadosa e enamorada vista, acostant-se après a un pou, que poc espai d'ella distava. Ab la freda aigua assajà apartar de la sua afable cara la color e calor que, en la no sangonosa, mas plaent e delitosa batalla de Venus, pres havia... (27)

(‘As the lover that had been so beloved was about to leave, the lady regaled him with such a lustful and seductive curtsy that her gown was the only thing that prevented her knee from touching the hard ground. Her beautiful face showed signs of considerable sadness on account of that fellow’s departure. She trailed the man’s shoulders with a mournful, enamored glance and then leaned against the parapet of a well that could be seen not too far from where she was standing. With dashes of fresh water she tried to erase from her expressive countenance the blotches from the hot flashes she had experienced during the bloodless, that is, pleasurable and exciting battle of Venus.’)

With masterful use of the ekphrastic technique, Corella goes into an exquisite depiction of sensorial and sensual details. In accounting for the lady's hasty and nervous measures to regain composure, the auctorial persona manages to harmonize suggestive glimpses of the female anatomy—the *genoll* half hidden by the *gonella*—with hints of her delicate gestures—*una tan loçana e humil reverència*—concomitant to a somber mood (*tristor no poca*). The profound sadness is not easy to restrain: “Acompanyà les sues espatles ab piadosa e enamorada vista.” Truly impressive is the synesthetic sensation attained by conjoining the *freda aigua* with the sharp stimuli of color and heat (*color e calor*) of the woman's affable face (*afable cara*). The description of Caldesa's unsettled deportment dovetails with telltale references to her less-than-serene attempts at simply saving face. Witness her deceptively calm return to the dark chamber:

⁴² Elsewhere I broach an analysis of Melibea's refusal to marry, symptom of willful self-fashioning. See Cocozzella, “Misogamy as Self-Fashioning: The Transgressive Melibea in the Spanish *Tragicomedia* Better Known as *Celestina*.”

[A]costant-se al carçre de la mia trista presó o cambra, obrint la porta, fengí alegria de la mia vista, tanta com havia mostrat vera dolor, al que en extrem amava, de la sua partida. (27)

(‘Then she came to the cell of my gloomy prison—namely, the chamber where I lingered. As she opened the door she feigned an expression of great joy from seeing me. The joy she feigned was just as intense as was the real grief she had demonstrated at the leave-taking of the man she had embraced so immodestly.’)

As it turns out, Caldesa cannot get away with her intent to keep up appearances. Indeed, her very appearance belies what the distraught narrator interprets as unquestionably sheer hypocrisy. Corella elaborates Caldesa’s plight into the text of a superb metaphor couched in the intricate expressivity of an indelible simile: a bouquet of lilies and roses sullied by the indelicate fingerings of repulsive hands. The passage is worth quoting in full:

Estava, però, la sua delicada persona maculada, semblant a roses ab blancs lliris mesclades, si ab sùtzies mans se menegen; que la persona del galant que ab ella reposat havia, era en extrem no conforme al delicament de tan tendra donzella. (27-28)

(‘Her delicate complexion was, to be sure, all in splashes, looking as if a bouquet of roses commingled with lilies had been put together by dirty hands. The man that had been sporting with her was, I must confess, of a type least appropriate to the delicate nature of such a tender young woman.’)

The nightmarish imagery focused on the indecent manhandling of unadulterated beauty provokes, ekphrastically, in the narrator’s mind excruciating reverberations of the *imago agens*. An overwhelming resurgent wave of emotions causes an unexpected major mutation in dramatic diction. The surprising, sudden mutation manifests itself in the radical shift from prose to poetry. The shift itself with an appropriate reference to its conception in the matrix of intense emotionality is introduced in a rather mundane fashion:

[A]b gran treball, l’extrem de ma dolor, los ulls endreçats a la terra, me llecencià ab tremolosa llengua formàs, en dos cobles, raons de semblant manera... (28)

(‘I felt infinite pain and turned my eyes downward. My grief gave me cause to fashion, in a trembling tongue, the following laments in two stanzas...’)

The versified component of *Tragèdia de Caldesa* consists of three stanzas, each made up of fourteen unrhymed decasyllables. While illustrating, as a whole, an overall considerable enhancement of dramatic tension and theatrical effect, the stanzas reveal, upon close analysis, an appreciable difference in esthetic function and orientation. On the one hand, stanzas I and II unfurl in a full-fledged demonstration of a meta-textual slant and self-referential textuality. On the other hand, stanza III holds in store a veritable feat of inventiveness à la Cervantes *avant la lettre*: an intriguing literary phenomenon, which, borrowing a term from Elias L. Rivers, we may characterize as “quixotic scripture.”

In the first two stanzas the meta-textual slant is evident in a process known in literary criticism as “interior duplication.”⁴³ Here duplication extends beyond the primary level of the author’s projection onto his artistic alter ego—that is, his auctorial persona.

⁴³ In the respective essay listed in the bibliography below, Gerli and Livingstone shed light on the concept of meta-textuality (or metafiction) and interior duplication.

Concurrently, we discern a second level of projection which takes place at the climax of a self-fashioning of Corella's very own: the auctorial persona catches himself in the act of writing a play—a tragedy, to be specific. In the final analysis, Corella, qua auctorial persona, qua tragedian, concretizes in a text, highly poeticized for the occasion, echoes of apocalyptic cataclysms and Senecan sound and fury.⁴⁴

The aforementioned “quixotic scripture” that informs stanza III foreshadows the dialectic that both Lola Badia and Dámaso Alonso recognize at the heart of *Tirant lo Blanc* and describe in terms of the interface of two existential dimensions, which may be defined as follows: reality-as-it-is and reality-as-it-should-be. In dealing specifically with Martorell's and Galba's ingenious handling of their narrative, Badia demonstrates that the two novelists entertain a notion of *ficció* that differs radically from the common acceptance of the English cognate. In common English usage, “fiction” refers to a plot relegated to the domain of the artist's imagination. By contrast, the plot conceived by Martorell and Galba presupposes the substantiality and verisimilitude of a historical account, such as the one provided by the fourteenth-century Catalan chronicler, Ramon Muntaner (1265-1336). To put it succinctly in Badia's words, “els escriptors que per a nosaltres són novel·listes . . . es presenten com a historiadors de la ‘vera veritat’ muntaneriana” (“The writers that, from our point of view, are novelists present themselves as historians of the “truthful truth,” à la Muntaner”) (“El Tirant en la tardor medieval catalana”, 38, n. 9).

Badia recaptures the duality that Dámaso Alonso, in his seminal study on *Tirant*, detects between what he calls “el espíritu unitario caballeresco” (“the unifying spirit of chivalry”) (502) and “la naturalidad cotidiana” (“the natural everyday life”) (515). Simply put, in his reading of *Tirant* Alonso unveils the enthusiastic idealism of the heroic romances of chivalry versus the humdrum pragmatism of the workaday world. Badia, on her part, demonstrates how the idealistic strain of the Martorell-Galba narrative is inspired by “els grans plans apostòlics lul·lians” (“Lull's grand apostolic plans”) (“El Tirant en la tardor medieval catalana”, 46), the project, that is, that the Majorcan polygraph, Ramon Lull (1235?-1315), lays out in his *Llibre de l'orde de cavalleria* in accordance with his visionary intentions of evangelizing the entire Muslim world. Badia does not lose sight of the broad picture that illustrates the wondrous verisimilitude of the *ficció* at hand, kindred to Muntaner's historical discourse.⁴⁵ There is, all along, a bold contrast that may be displayed as a leitmotif of sorts: reality as it is (the fall of Constantinople into the Ottoman domain on May 29, 1453); reality as it should be (the resounding victory of the Christians over the Turks as recounted in the latter chapters of *Tirant lo Blanc*).⁴⁶ Badia extends her analysis to

⁴⁴ For a complementary discussion of the main sources of Corella's first two stanzas, see my “The Role of the Narrator-Expositor”, 800-801, 814, 816-817. In this essay I adduce the invaluable data and insights provided by the aforementioned Josep Lluís Martos (“Sèneca i Roís de Corella”) and J. G. Fitch (editor and translator of Seneca).

⁴⁵ In “*Roques* and Pageantry: *Artifici* as a Function of Joanot Martorell's Dramatic Text,” I identify some outstanding analogues of the duality both Alonso and Badia perceive in *Tirant*. Specifically, I point out the radical contraposition that Antonio Prieto and E. C. Riley discern, respectively, between the “caso normativo” and “caso concreto” in Juan Rodríguez del Padrón's *Siervo libre de amor* and between the “rarefied region of poetry” and “earthly historical existence” in Cervantes's *Quijote*.

⁴⁶ See, especially, chs. 446-449 in *Tirant lo Blanc* 2: 502-511. Riquer summarizes the salient traits of the Catalan *ficció* in the following terms:

En moments en què tota la cristiandat plora la caiguda de Constantinoble i que es fan projectes de croada per tal d'alliberar-la—entre altres, ho intentà Alfons el Magnànim—Joanot Martorell fa que

the level of the characterization of the individual and dwells on the aforementioned esthetic of duality in full operation in the portrayal of Tirant himself both as “immutable cavaller de l’ideal” (‘immutable knight of the ideal’) and as “vulnerable home de carn i ossos” (‘vulnerable man of flesh and blood’) (“El Tirant en la tardor medieval catalana”, 50). Badia helps us understand that there is a strong bond of mutual complementarity in the terms of the contrast she delves into. The esthetic at play in *Tirant* and, as we shall see presently, in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* is the function of a symbiotic blend, best envisaged as a stereoscopic coalescence of two different perspectives: the down-to-earth and the transcendental coming together in the realm of *ficció*.⁴⁷

Now, let us turn our attention to the specifics of stanza III, introduced by a short passage in prose, which lays bare the narrator’s hypersensitive perception of Caldesa’s overt embarrassment and compunction when confronted with his full awareness of her alleged treacherous and scandalous deed:

Conegué per l’adolorit estil de mes paraules, l’inclita senyora, que la granea de sa culpa clarament a mi era palesa; e, ab moltes llàgremes, sospirs e sanglots, ab veu tan conforme, gentil e delicada, que no és possible en semblant manera recitar-la, respòs en rims estramps la seguida cobla, acompanyada de gest no estrany al significat de ses paraules... (29)

(‘By the mournful tone of my words the illustrious lady realized that her egregious deed had come to my knowledge. With profuse tears, sighs, sobs, and a voice fit for the occasion—so gentle and feeble a voice that it is nearly impossible to reproduce it with any accuracy—she responded with the following stanza of unrhymed verses, complementing her words with the usual expressive gestures...’)

l’imperi bizantí sigui eficaçment defensat pel seu porotagonista, no s’està de presentar una visió alegre, divertida i vodevilesca de la cort de Constantinoble, i al final de la novel·la, el perill turc completament esvaït, se’ns dona compte del bon regiment de l’emperador Hipòlit ... (*Història 2: 696*)

(‘At a time when the whole of Christendom laments the fall of Constantinople and a crusade is being planned to liberate that city—Alphonsus the Magnanimous for one made an attempt to implement those plans—in Martorell’s narrative the Bizantine Empire is successfully defended by the protagonist. Martorell does not hesitate to present a happy vision of the court of Constantinople—a vision as entertaining as a show of vaudeville. At the end of the novel the Turkish peril has completely vanished and we are told about the good governance of the new emperor, Hippolytus.’)

⁴⁷ Following is a synopsis that shows the two existential dimensions articulated dialectically according to the criteria advanced by Alonso & Badia.

The Narratology of *Tirant lo Blanc*: The Dialectic between Two Existential Dimensions

Reality-as-it-is

- a) “la naturalidad cotidiana” (‘the natural everyday life’) (Alonso)
- b) “vulnerable home de carn i ossos” (‘vulnerable man of flesh and blood’) (Badia)
- c) historiography according to Muntaner

Reality-as-it-should-be

- a) “el espíritu unitario caballeresco” (‘the unifying spirit of chivalry’) (Alonso)
- b) “immutable cavaller de l’ideal” (‘immutable knight of the ideal’) (‘immutable knight of the ideal’) (Badia)
- c) historiography inspired by “els grans plans apostòlics lul·lians” (‘Llull’s grand apostolic plans’) (Badia)

Such self-referential details as “rims estramps” and deictic determinants as “la seguida cobla” affect not only the meta-textual tenor of the short paragraph but also its clear reflection of reality as it is.

I propose a fresh reading of stanza III, which, at the climactic point of the dramatic shift from prose to verse, turns out to be, as I intend to show, a gigantic leap of the narrator’s imagination onto to realm of the ideal. Throughout the splendid stanza, which is a delight to recite in full, the ideal is emblazoned in the prototype of the repentant, redeemed, and sanctified woman:

Clarament veig que, en la mundana orla,
 Déu no ha fet persona tan culpable:
 jo us he comés abominable culpa,
 tal, que en l’infern no trob pena conforme.
 És-me la mort més dolça que no sucre:
 si fer se pot, en vostres braços muira.
 En vós està que prengau de mi venja:
 si us par que hi bast, per vostres mans espire;
 o, si voleu, coberta de celici
 iré pel món peregrinant romera.
 Déu no farà.que el passat fet no sia;
 mas, si esperau esmena de mon viure,
 jo la faré, seguint a Magdalena,
 los vostres peus llavant ab semblant aigua. (29)
 (‘I clearly see that in this worldly sphere
 in God’s creation I live in sin and guilt:
 with horrid sin I have offended you,
 such that in Hell can’t find a fit redress.
 Now death to me would taste as sweet as honey,
 if I should chance to die in your embrace.
 It is your right to take revenge on me:
 if you so judge, your hands will give me death,
 or, if you wish, I shall be dressed in sackcloth
 and, henceforth, roam the world in pilgrimage.
 God won’t undo my past and make it void,
 but, if you expect of me to amend my life,
 I vow to go the way of Magdalene
 and wash your feet as she herself would wash them.’)

This sudden wondrous mutation of Caldesa into Mary Magdalene through an impersonation of not only of sincere contrition but also saintly resignation and sacrificial atonement (including death) is, indeed, compelling and complete. It is, all the same, a solipsistic vision: a projection of the narrator’s exalted imagination, prompted by a heavy dosage of wishful thinking.

In *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, the captivating, radical conversion of the female sinner exhibits a genetic bond with Corella’s uncommon interpretation of the myth of Narcissus. It is important to declare that Corella does not follow the usual Ovidian source. Rather, he derives his inspiration from Boccaccio’s version, according to which the handsome youth,

instead of recognizing himself mirrored in the limpid pool, mistakenly believes that he sees the reflection of a nymph of incomparable beauty.⁴⁸ I would argue that the bewitching paragon of womanhood that, in the case of Boccaccio's and Corella's Narcissus, stands out as the cynosure of male obsession plays a primary subliminal role in the subconscious of the narrator-expositor enraptured in the contemplation of a potential, though merely imagined, Caldesa sanctified. We may well deduce that Corella, absorbed in his auctorial persona's mind-set, becomes deeply affected by a nymph-fixation of his own invention. It takes but a short step to move beyond the range of this fixation and come within easy reach of the quixotic *idée fixe*, which—to identify a particularly momentous exemplum—impels the metamorphosis of a much-too-earthly peasant woman into the sublime Dulcinea. In the memorable episode recounted in *Don Quijote*, pt. 2, ch 10, Sancho performs a role very similar to that of Corella's narrator-expositor and, not unlike Corella's artistic doppelgänger, substitutes a self-fulfilling, highly imaginative outcome for the rightful expectations germane to a woman's or, for that matter, any human being's feasible, unencumbered self-fashioning.⁴⁹

There is a major consequence to the narrator's obsession, which determines the unexpected vision of Caldesa's canonization. The main result of this alluring portrait of the idealized ladylove is the blurred resolution of Caldesa's self-fashioning. That portrait betokens a distraction from the natural denouement to be envisioned in a process that normally takes place in the realm of reality-as-it-is. Instead, the canonization on which the author rivets his obsessive gaze emerges from the stratosphere of reality-as-it-should-be. What the narrator is left to contemplate is the unresolvable dichotomy that stems from Caldesa's split self. The contemplator seeks comfort and stoical resignation in an ambivalent epiphany he describes in the following terms:

⁴⁸ For an explication of this all-important Boccaccian source, see Martos, *Fonts i seqüència cronològica de les proses mitològiques de Joan Roís de Corella*, 92. Of great relevance is Martos's following comment:

Així, doncs, Ovidi presenta dos moments del procés d'autoenamorament *narcissista*: un primer en el qual l'amant no es reconeix i un segon en què és conscient de l'atracció per si mateix. Corella, que simplifica bastant el final de la història, desenvolupa només la primera idea i ens presenta un Narcís que no sap que està autoenamorant-se i que creu veure una nimfa dins l'aigua, amb la qual cosa modifica aquest aspecte del text clàssic. (*Fonts i seqüència cronològica de les proses mitològiques de Joan Roís de Corella*, 89)

(‘Ovid presents two symptoms in the auto-erotic, narcissistic syndrome: in the first, the lover does not recognize himself; in the second, the lover is aware of the attraction he feels toward himself. By simplifying considerably the ending of the narrative embedded in the myth, Corella develops only the first motif and, thus, portrays a Narcissus that is not aware of his falling in love with himself and believes he sees a nymph inside the pond. By the latter detail, Corella modifies the narrative of the classical myth.’)

In *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella's Tragèdia de Caldesa* 65-82, I attempt to explore a broad context for Corella's version of the Narcissus myth.

⁴⁹ Elsewhere, in an extensive commentary of the episode in question, I adduce the insights of none other than Erich Auerbach, who marvels at Sancho's clever ruse that challenges his bewildered master to believe in the miraculous transfiguration of an ordinary woman. I argue that Auerbach's insights corroborate my judgment on Sancho's “uncanny ability to transpose the nature of *ficció* à la Martorell and Galba to the level of prenatural existence: precisely the existence of the ideal. The result is a key manifestation of reality-as-it-should-be.” There I conclude: “Corella's narrator-expositor transforms Caldesa into Magdalene just as Sancho, more than a century and a half later, metamorphoses the aforementioned peasant woman into Dulcinea del Toboso. (“The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*”, 813)

E fóra més alegre, aquesta bella senyora en parts de singular partida, la sua gentil persona ab tan subtil enteniment fos la part mia; e la sua falla e moble voluntat, de falsa estima guiada, cercàs un cos lleig e diforme, en part d'aquell qui indignament l'havia tractada! (29)

(‘How happy would I be if this beautiful lady could be divided into two parts and her noble person endowed with subtle understanding would be my portion, while her deceitful and fickle will, swayed by misguided preference, would inhabit an ugly, deformed body to be allotted to the man that had dealt with her in such a scandalous fashion.’)

It is appropriate to reiterate here my previous commentary on the dual pattern embedded in this particularly ingenious passage:

- 1) Reality-as-it-is—beautiful body [bella senyora], endowed with good qualities [gentil persona ab tan subtil enteniment] and bad ones [falla e moble voluntat, de falsa estima guiada]
- 2) Reality-as-it-should be—the beautiful body, graced with virtues, remains the incarnation of the auctorial persona’s ladylove, while an ugly body would be created just for the purpose of concretizing the vicious side of Caldesa, destined to “the other man” that has treated her so indecently. (Cocozzella, “The Role of the Narrator-Expositor”, 814)

We notice that the special brand of *ficció* in this passage consists of the wistful creation (*inventio*) of the ugly body conjured up as the existential correlative of the speaker’s disturbing image of a vitiated Caldesa of flesh and blood.

In sum, the shift of rhetorical register from prose to verse brings into effect the meta-textual character of Corella’s “quixotic text.” Such a shift highlights the consequence of the expositor’s Narcissistic perspective in thwarting Caldesa’s self-fashioning. Within the meta-textual context Corella affirms the purview of Senecan tragedy, while asserting the élan of transcendence in the mythicizing contemplation of sanctified Caldesa—his own version of the *donna angelicata*. Corella’s esthetic enterprise comes to a state of tranquility in the very act of writing. In the concluding remarks, couched in the paragraph quoted below, the self-conscious author discovers an edifying cathartic experience in anticipation—it is reasonable to believe—of the bliss to be gained from engaging, eventually, in a genuine spiritual exercise:

Ab diversitat de tan impossibles pensaments, me partí de la cambra o sepulcre a on tanta pena sofert havia. Acceptant la ploma, que sovint greus mals descansa, la present ab ma pròpia sang pinte, perquè la color de la tinta ab la dolor que raona se conforme. (29)

(‘Engrossed in the variety of these wishful thoughts, I left the room, nay the sepulcher, where I had endured such a painful experience. I picked up the pen, which often soothes the severe pangs of grief, and depicted the present story with my own blood. Let the color of this ink conform to the sad episode it recounts.’)

Conclusion

A three-pronged approach highlights the fresh reading I am proposing for Joan Roís de Corella’s *Tragèdia de Caldesa*. I start with an analysis of the *imago agens*, a trope inherited from the age-old tradition that harks back to the heyday of the forensic oratory championed

by the likes of Cicero and Quintilian. As a nightmarish representation of a shocking experience, the *imago* serves as a mnemonic device—an impressive icon of *ars memoriae*—which a writer as gifted as Corella deftly translates into a pictorial counterpart. The result of this wondrous transformation is a text of visualizing endowed with the full dramatic-theatrical effect that illustrates the birth of a new genre. Jody Enders and some other scholars designate this innovative literary creation as proto-drama or psycho-drama. In Corella's *Tragèdia*, the primary factor generated by the male protagonist's reaction to the *imago agens* is the absolute monologue characterized by the first-person narrative in synergy with the exclusive narcissistic purview.

In my second approach, I proceed along the trail blazed by a number of critics, who undertake a comparative study between Corella's *Tragèdia* and its analogue made up of a cluster of interrelated episodes integrated into *Tirant lo Blanc*. As have indicated, Corella was well acquainted with the fellow Valencians, Martorell and Galba, co-authors of that widely acclaimed novel. The comparative study in question sheds light on a pattern of parallelism and contrast in the way the co-authors adapt to their narrative the pivotal constituents—including the *imago agens*—that Corella foregrounds in the relationship of true love. As I have tried to show, that relationship takes a tragic turn as the disastrous denouement is precipitated by the machinations of an opportunistic or envious interloper: the “Don Juan” type intimated by Corella or the wicked Viuda vividly portrayed by the Martorell-Galba duo.

Of paramount importance within the aforementioned pattern are two kindred, though distinctive, cases in point, which I have designated as (1) the dialectic of proportional counterbalance and (2) the interaction of inverse or perverse equivalence. For point 1, I offer as evidence a straightforward contraposition between the extremely tense and compact, prejudiced, less-than-revelatory discourse of the monologue in Corella's psychodrama vs. the clear-sighted, impartial, and patent story-telling of the omniscient narrator in Martorell's and Galba's masterpiece. Thus, by making Viuda Reposada's motivation quite explicit, Martorell and Galba create an effective foil for the conduct of the female protagonist, which in their source—that is, Corella's original portrait of Caldesa—remains hopelessly enigmatic. After all, the foil accentuates Caldesa's presumed act of betrayal, which as insensitive and inscrutable as interpreted from the point of view of the male protagonist, cannot but drive this narcissistic observer to utter distraction.

The double interface—on the one hand, between Corella's auctorial persona and Tirant, and, on the other hand, between Caldesa and Viuda Reposada (with the participation of Carmesina and Plaerdemavida)—overlays the primordial conflict that conditions Corella's insight into the very nature of the tragic mode. That insight validates the second case in point I have just called attention to. The inverse and perverse equivalence I refer to stems from the two factors—rhetoric and action—that, in Corella's *Tragèdia*, inform the confrontation between the male and female protagonist. The former is in absolute control of rhetoric but remains otherwise inactive; the latter takes complete charge of the action but is denied the opportunity to speak (is kept in a state of complete silence). In the final analysis, Martorell and Galba expand the range of a woman's self-fashioning beyond the psychodramatic, embryonic nucleus that Corella challenges us to probe into. Martorell and Galba disclose an entire panorama that broadens our vision of a woman's self-fashioning by riveting our attention on the display of a vicious equation: Caldesa's plight of smoldering, resentful and, perhaps, vindictive silence matches Viuda's multi-dimensional subterfuge

driven by consuming desire, which, at some subliminal level of the psyche, engulfs, as well, Carmesina's and Plaerdemavida's playacting.

Particularly prominent among the multitude of female characters we meet in *Tirant lo Blanc* is Ricomana, another princess, whose imposing presence constitutes a full-fledged exemplar that complements Corella's prototypical portrait of the self-fashioned woman. What is exemplary and, arguably, unique in Ricomana's intriguing characterization is the repudiation of not only the sycophantic sophistries, dispensed profusely à la Viuda Reposada, but also the off-color utterances, verbal or otherwise, spouting from Carmesina's and Plaerdemavida's exhibition of unrestrained, unabashed sensuality. Ricomana opts decisively for the radical transformation of the ultra-refined courtly discourse by adapting it to common workaday speech. Ultimately, she shows how in that speech she attains her personal voice—the voice that confirms the authenticity and verisimilitude of her willful identity.

We are beginning to recognize a certain kinship between some leading characters in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* or *Tirant lo Blanc* and those that appear in Fernando de Rojas's *Tragicomedia*. We would instinctively group Caldesa, Carmesina, Plaerdemavida, and Ricomana with Melibea or we would associate, by the same token, Viuda Reposada with Celestina. That incipient, instinctive recognition and appreciation invites and deserves further analysis, which lies beyond the scope of the present study.

For the moment, there is another issue that comes to mind in this rapid review of Corella's extraordinary artistic achievement. I am referring to the unexpected shift from prose to verse in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*. The momentous consequence of that shift is, as I have tried to show, the author's metafictional meditation on the quintessential role of *écriture*. The first two stanzas show forth an auctorial self-conscious elaboration of a world view inspired mainly by Seneca's tragedies and, to a lesser extent, by other sources, such as the Apocalypse and classical mythology. In the third stanza, the tour de force reaches the highest degree of intensity and complexity. Here Corella shines the spotlight on the auctorial persona's own self-fashioning, activated by the ingenious operation of a "quixotic scripture" of sorts. In the interpretation I put forward, that scripture is of a kind brought to life by the auctorial persona through either a nymph fixation generated by a deviant version of the Narcissus myth or an "idée fixe" conceived in the mindset of an early prefiguration of none other than Don Quijote. It follows that, for a mind completely absorbed, even for the duration of a Don-Quijote moment *avant la lettre*, in a blissful contemplation of reality-as-it-should-be, the flesh-and-blood Caldesa, deemed vitiated and repulsive, should mutate into a supernatural *donna angelicata*, concretized in the icon of a saintly Magdalene.

Much remains to be said about the principles that govern the birth of a distinctive genre: tragedy as a full-fledged stage-worthy spectacle that Roís de Corella harbingers in Valencia at the dawn of the Renaissance. There is evidence that those very principles, especially as they reflect the male-female antagonism and the vicissitudes of a woman's self-fashioning, affect as well other specimens of the tragic genre conceived and reborn beyond the confines of the Catalan domain. A case in point is the first scene of Act I of Rojas's *Tragicomedia*. The passage, which represents the first encounter of the two young protagonists—Calisto and Melibea—proves to be an ominous preamble of a problematic, ultimately tragic, relationship. The scene consists of a dialogue, which is, actually, quite short, even though Calisto's overbearing enthusiasm, inordinate excitement, and bloated diction convey the appearance of a long-winded monologue. A brief excerpt will suffice as a token of his wheedling:

¿Quién vido en esta vida cuerpo glorificado de ningún hombre como agora el mío? Por cierto los gloriosos sanctos que se deleytan en la visión divina no gozan más que yo agora el acatamiento tuyo. (Rojas, 227)

(‘Who in this life below has ever seen a man more glorified than I now am? Indeed, the wondrous saints, who delight to see the Vision Divine, enjoy no greater exaltation than I enjoy on this present occasion in worshipping you.’) (Trans. Singleton, 16)

Melíbea, for her part, puts an abrupt end to her interlocutor’s verbosity with a curt, somewhat snide, and utterly dismissive reply:

¡Vete, vete de ay, torpe: que no puede mi paciencia tollerar que aya subido en coraçón humano el ylicito amor comunicar su deleyte! (Rojas, 228)

(‘Leave, leave instantly with the lasciviousness of your thoughts and deeds, for my patience is worn quite thin thus to see that the heart of any man, invaded by the hope of enjoying illicit love, should thus dare suggest participation in lewd pleasures. Leave instantly.’) (Trans. Singleton, 17)

There can be little doubt that this preliminary, skew dialogue lays bare the same foreboding symptoms—the counterbalanced antagonism of Calisto’s rhetoric vs. Melíbea’s action and the dialectic of perverse equivalence—indicative of the *vis dramatica* intuited by Corella. Evidently, Rojas confronts us with the same challenge posed by Corella: he expects us to stare straight at the horrendous face of tragedy. Concurrent with that challenge is the search of a silver lining in the dark cloud that envelops human existence. As For Corella, we find that, at the very end of *Tragèdia de Caldesa*, he provides a therapeutic means of comfort by suggesting protracted meditation on a literary novelty: an icon of a woman’s self-fashioning and an emblem of Caldesa’s split self. As a reader engaged in that meditation for quite some time, I find it expeditious, if not conclusive, to pause for a brief prayer: *Libera nos a malo* (‘Deliver s from evil’)—the evil of tragedy! And to that, I am sure, we can all reply: Amen!

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