

HOMILY AND HARANGUE IN MEDIEVAL SPAIN: THE SERMON AND CROWDS

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As this paper hopes to show, it is no coincidence that *Danza general de la Muerte* presents itself as fit matter for a sermon¹. It does so by means of a dainty Gothic mind-warping device. The poem opens with the horrible figure of Muerte preaching to the audience («Yo so la Muerte [...] e digo: —Oh omne», etc., ll. 1 & ff.); she then inserts the cameo of a friar also in the act of preaching... about her («ved el fraire que está pedricando», l. 31)². This inset sermon loops back in turn to Muerte's dance («Abrid las orejas, que çedo oiredes de su charambela un triste cantar», ll. 55–56), so we are left with the impression that the

¹ Margherita Morreale, ed., «Dança general de la muerte», in *Revista de Literatura Medieval*, 3 (1991), pp. 9–50, Prólogo «trata cómo la Muerte dize e avisa [...] que vean e oyan bien lo que *los sabios pedricadores* les dizen e amonestan de cada día» (from Escorial Ms. b.iv.21, ff. 109–129, copied in Burgos c. 1465–1480 from an original conjecturally dated 1420–1440 or perhaps earlier). See Ana María Álvarez Pellitero, «La *Danza de la muerte* entre el sermón y el teatro», in *Bulletin Hispanique*, 93 (1991), pp. 13–29.

² That the nested sermon device was «Gothic» is hinted by its omission from the expanded but trivialized recension printed in Sevilla, 1520, now lost, but edited by José Amador de los Ríos, «Sobre la tradición poética de la *Danza de la Muerte* hasta principios del siglo XVI», in his *Historia crítica de la literatura española*, 7 vols, Madrid, the author, 1861–1865, vii: Ilustración 1, pp. 501–540 (see *coplas* 2–7, p. 508). This later version also omits the «Prólogo» and its *predicadores*.

preacher is simultaneously inside and outside the frame of the narrative, like some anamorphic Russian doll³:

—La Santa Escritura con çertenidad
da sobre todo su firme sentençia
a todos diziendo: «Fazed penitençia,
que a morir avedes, non sabedes cuándo». 30
Si non, ved el fraire que está pedricando,
mirad lo que dize de su grand sabiençia.

Dize el pedricador

v —Señores onrados, la Santa Escritura
demuestra e dize que todo omne nado
gostará la muerte, maguer sea dura, 35
que traxo al mundo un solo bocado⁴;
ca papa o rey o bispo sagrado,
cardenal, duque, e conde exçelente,
el emperador con toda su gente
que son en el mundo morir an forçado. 40

Bueno e sano consejo

vi Señores, punad en fazer buenas obras;
non vos enfuziedes en altos estados,
que non vos valdrán ja[qu]eses nin doblas
a la Muerte que tiene sus lazos parados.
Gemid vuestras culpas, dezid los pecados 45
en quanto pudierdes con satisfaçión,
si aver queredes complido perdón
de Aquél que perdona los yerros passados.

³ This imbricated Escheresque architecture is not unfamiliar; the *predicador* is a cipher for the author glossing his own allegory (for parallels of authors inside and outside the frame: Jeremy Lawrance, «Funciones de la glosa en la poética medieval castellana: De Gonzalo de Berceo al Arcipreste de Hita», in *Cahiers d'Études Hispaniques Médiévales*, 31 (2008), pp. 207–20; and see also at nn. 67–68, below).

⁴ The taste of death: Job 8.52 «si quis *sermonem meum* servaverit, non *gustabit* mortem in aeternum» (my italics); and see Roger M. Walker, «“Potest aliquis gustare quod gustatum affert mortem?” (Job vi 6): an aspect of imagery and structure in *La danza general de la muerte*», in *Medium Ævum*, 41 (1972), pp. 32–38.

- VII Fazed lo que digo, non vos detardedes,
 que ya la Muerte comiença ordenar 50
 una dança esquiva de que non podeades
 por cosa ninguna que sea escapar,
 a la qual dize que quiere levar
 a todos nosotros, lançando sus redes⁵.
 ¡Abrid las orejas! que çedo oiredes 55
 de su charambela un triste cantar.

Dize la Muerte

- VIII —A la dança mortal venit los naçidos
 que en el mundo sodes de qualquiera estado;
 el que non quisiere, a fuerça e amidos 60
 le he [de] venir muy toste priado.
 Pues que ya el fraire vos ha pedricado,
 que todos vayades a fazer penitencia;
 el que no quisiere poner diligencia
 por mí ya non puede ser más esperado.

Despite their diminutive size, both these little sermons give a thumbnail of the form’s distinctive features:

(a) the basic ingredient: a biblical verse to be interpreted, though here neither of the *themata* (or: *thema* and *prothema*) actually occurs in «la Santa Escritura», a point to which I return later. Muerte’s «Repent, for you know not when you die» (ll. 29–30) vaguely recalls Christ’s «Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand» or Revelation’s «Repent, for if you do not wake up I will come like a thief»⁶; while the *predicador*’s «Every born man will taste death, which was brought into the world by a single bite» (ll. 34–36) is an even vaguer gesture towards Genesis 3, the story of Adam and Eve’s eating of the forbidden fruit and the Fall.

⁵ Nets of Death: Job 18.8–14 «inmisit enim in rete [= *redes*] pedes suos» («they are thrust into a net by their feet [...]; the firstborn of Death consumes their limbs, they are [...] brought to the king of terrors»); Ps 17.6 «laquei [= *lazos*, l. 44 above] mortis»; Ps 10.7 «pluet super peccatores laqueos ignis et sulphur».

⁶ Mt 4.17 «coepit Iesus *praedicare* et dicere: Paenitentiam agite [= *Fazed penitencia*], adpropinquavit enim regnum caelorum»; Apoc 3.3 «paenitentiam age; si ergo non vigilaveris, veniam tamquam fur et nescies qua hora veniam ad te».

(b) *divisio*, a mesh of further proof-texts, to bring the divine Word into contact with the concrete world of sensation (the imagery of «tasting» death, being «trapped» by death, nn. 4–5 above).

(c) gratuitous descriptive *similitudines* and anecdotal *exempla* drawn from outside Scripture, designed to make its symbolic language immediate and real (*todo omne nado* → *papa, rey, bispo, cardenal, duque, conde, emperador*, all ranks and estates; *jaqueses nin doblas*, worldly wealth; Death's figure of the preacher preaching, the preacher's figure of Death's *dança*);

(d) constant dialogue with an audience (*señores onrados*) whose presence is evoked by repeated apostrophe and exhortation (*ved, mirad, punad, non vos enfuziedes, gemid, dezid, fazed, abrid las orejas, non vos detardedes, venid, que todos vayades a fazer*).

The features are listed in this order because it briefly epitomizes what is conceived to be the basic logic of the sermon: the Word is conveyed vividly to an audience, producing an affect. This is the conclusion to which such an internal parsing of the sermon's rhetorical structure leads, and it is bolstered by external study of origins, sources, and influence⁷. The purpose here is to sketch out a third approach, through analysis of what the formal organization of medieval sermons means in semiotic terms, the ways in which it embodied a way of making sense of the world. I shall argue that, from this standpoint, the reverse order (audience affect first, scripture after) provides a no less pertinent description of the sermon as genre.

At the outset one should perhaps defend the suggestion that the sermon is a genre. We do not now use the term as a generic descriptor like epic, pastoral, novel, but in the Middle Ages sermons were treated as a genre in the classic sense; there were prescriptive handbooks —we know of some 300— on how to write them. As it happens, the *artes* are not illuminating from a generic point of view, but by examining the

⁷ Approaches pioneered by A. Lecoy de la Marche, *La chaire française au moyen âge, spécialement au XIII^e siècle, d'après les manuscrits contemporains*, Paris, Didier, 1868; for a current overview, see Carolyn Muessig, «Sermon, preacher and society in the Middle Ages», in *Journal of Medieval History*, 28 (2002), pp. 73–91.

medieval example I aim to show that «sermon», «homily», «harangue» are potentially useful generic concepts for all kinds of literature⁸.

One mark of the sermon's generic status was that distinctive elements of its style and structure could be identified and imitated or parodied in other genres. Indeed, despite the treasure of several hundred *reportata* of Vicent Ferrer's preaching taken from live delivery, we can hardly discuss the sermon's literary history without recourse to these other kinds of text. *Artes praedicandi* and collections of *exempla* provide a context, but for instances of sermon technique in action we need to survey works that, besides *Danza de la Muerte*, might include *Libro de Buen Amor*, *Arcipreste de Talavera*, and so on⁹. The fact that the sermon spilled into these different discourses is an advantage. It helps us to see what sermons did and did not share with other genres, what could and could not transfer from one kind to another.

To give an example: sermons are by definition, even if not in terms of their transmission, oral (*sermo*, «speech»); yet the premise of their structure is commentary on a written text, the biblical pericope or *thema* upon which the *divisiones* of the body of the sermon were elaborated. This point may seem trivial, but it is key. If the form of the sermon is that of an exposition or allegoresis of a scriptural *auctoritas*, this aligns it with such types as the *glossa*, the *quodlibet*, or the *quaestio* —a fact

⁸ Lecoy de la Marche, *op. cit.*, p. 6 «Tels sont les deux genres de l'éloquence sacrée depuis sa naissance [...]: la *harangue* aux païens et l'*homélie*». Sermon scholars have naturally given definitions of the genre, but these, designed to sweep everything into their discipline (e.g. Beverly Mayne Kienzle, «Introduction», in *The Sermon*, ed. B. M. Kienzle, Turnhout, Brepols, 2000 (Typologie des Sources du Moyen Âge Occidental, 81–83), pp. 143–74, at p. 151), are too formal to fully describe medieval practice (Muessig, *art. cit.*, pp. 75–77) and too vague to serve critical theory.

⁹ Alan Deyermond, «The Sermon and Its Uses in Medieval Castilian Literature», *La Corónica*, 8:2 (Spring 1980), pp. 126–45. The first overview of Castilian preaching, Amador de los Ríos, *op. cit.*, vi: 312–17, 320–21, vii: 179–80, 348–65, could cite no surviving text other than Pedro Marín's MS and two *colaciones* by Fernando de Talavera (vii: 541–61). See now Pedro M. Cátedra, ed., *Los sermones atribuidos a Pedro Marín. Van añadidas algunas noticias sobre la predicación castellana de San Vicente Ferrer*, Salamanca, Universidad, 1990, and his other editions cited below, nn. 20, 43; Manuel Ambrosio Sánchez Sánchez, ed., *Un sermonario castellano medieval. El Ms. 1854 de la Biblioteca Universitaria de Salamanca*, 2 vols, Salamanca, Universidad, 1999; *La primitiva predicación española medieval*, Salamanca, Semyr, 2000. Even so, the extant corpus remains unrepresentative in vital respects (see below, at nn. 24, 32).

that already gives it lineaments pertaining to a specifically cultural, typically medieval way of interpreting the world. But if we press this parallel, does it not become clear that the sermon's orality is a feature that *opposes* it to these other characteristic kinds of medieval hermeneusis? That is to say, orality appears as a distinctive function of the sermon, not an accident. To be precise: the essence of the sermon resides in a specific rhetoric of orality that presupposes an audience receiving the text as a crowd.

True, we might write off this orality as no more than a historical trace of the sermon's origins in the Church liturgy. This, however, would be to obscure the primordial role of the crowd (ὄμιλία, «company, congregation»), and hence the role of power and control, in any full definition of the homiletic genre. Nevertheless, the simple label «oral» tends to elide important distinctions. At times, as Elias Canetti points out, the communal nature of the sermon performance may be organized to minimize the characteristic psychology of the crowd; at others it is orchestrated to achieve the opposite, to arouse the peculiar reactions we associate with the density and expectancy of the pack¹⁰. In the first of these two functions the sermon displays the «deliberation, calm, and spaciousness» that are the Church's distinctive modes of power, and which are characterized by what Canetti calls its «aversion from anything violently crowd-like»:

First of all there is the ritual itself, [...] which is of a sustained and unsurpassed deliberation. The movements of the priests in their stiff, heavy canonicals, their measured steps, the drawing out of their words —all this is like an infinite dilution of lament, spread so evenly over the centuries that scarcely anything remains of the suddenness of death and the violence of grief. [...]

Communication *between* the worshippers is hindered in several ways. They do not preach to each other; the word of the simple believer has no sanctity whatsoever. Everything [...] comes to him from a higher authority. He only understands what is explained to him. The sacred word is

¹⁰ Elias Canetti, «The Pack and Religion [9]: Catholicism and the Crowd», in his *Crowds and Power* [*Masse und Macht*, Hamburg, Claassen, 1960], tr. Carol Stewart, London, Phoenix, 2000, pp. 154–58.

tendered to him carefully weighed and wrapped up; precisely because of its sanctity it is *protected* from him. [...] He stands alone, confronted by the whole priesthood. In exchange for the moderately contented life which they procure for him he delivers himself entirely into their hands. (*ob. cit.*, p. 155)

This kind of sermon, which I shall call homily, is designed to arouse veneration for the hierarchy, like the soft-shuffle religious processions to which it is so closely allied. By contrast, there is the other kind that deals in sulphur, which we may call harangue:

There are times [...] when the Church feels driven to oppose hostile crowds with crowds of its own. In such times monks become agitators who wander about preaching, inciting the people to activities of a kind usually shunned. The most spectacular example of such conscious crowd formation [...] is the Crusades. (*ibid.*, pp. 157–158)

In respect of these different types of relation to the crowd, the contemporary descriptions we have, scant as they are, take on special significance. Instructive, for example, are the reports of the public execution of the child-murderer Gilles de Rais (Retz) on one hand, and on the other of the audiences that flocked to wide fields outside town walls to listen to the «wandering» friar Vicent Ferrer.

In the first case a hostile mob gathered from all over Brittany to see justice done, but the butcher of Sodom underwent a tearful conversion at the court sitting of 22 October 1440. He made an impromptu homily begging the people in God's name to bring up their children «in bonis doctrinis et virtutibus» and keep them from the «malum regimen» of idle leisure to which he attributed his own devilry; then he asked for his blood-curdling confession of rape, torture, and murder be read out «in vulgari» so that his crimes might be an *exemplum* to the audience, «quorum maior pars Latinam linguam ignorabat». Finally he begged his inquisitors to intercede on his behalf with God and the children's parents. At this the crowd was moved with pity for the repentant sinner. Gilles was handed over to the secular arm for execution, and this time, at the request of the bishop, commons and clergy formed a «procession

généralle, où fut grant multitude de peuple pour prier Dieu pour les diz condempnez». After two more hours of lachrymose contrition, as the crowd watched devoutly, Gilles ascended the gibbet, but not without one last edifying homily, «disant au peuple [...] qu'il estoit leur frère cristian, et réquerant au dit peuple [...] que pour l'amour de la Passion Nostre Seigneur il voulseist prier Dieu pour luy»¹¹.

These speeches, with their concomitant procession, we may classify as homilies —not technically *sermones*, perhaps, since we do not hear of Gilles using a *thema*, but complete in other details. Their aspect of crowd-prevention is strikingly caught by a contemporary chronicler who comments that, despite Gilles's «perverse manière et inhumaine volenté, [...] si eut-il sa fin très belle, et dévotte congnoissance et repentance»¹². The tranquillizing effect of this «dilution of lament» and reconciliation to the will of Mother Church was so great that even parents of the murdered children, we are told, vowed to fast for three days for the repose of the *maréchal's* soul (Bossard, *op. cit.*, p. 339).

The opposite, crowd-forming kind of sermon is shown at work in the behaviour of the ecstatic followers of Vicent Ferrer during his evangelical missions in France, Spain, and Italy in the first two decades of the fifteenth century —behaviour which smacked of the excesses of an uncontrollable pack. The charismatic preacher would make a dramatic entry mounted Christ-like on an ass («su edad —says the chronicle of Ferrer's trip to Castile in 1411, with touching naïveté— no le consentía andar a pie») escorted by his company of barefoot, candle-bearing penitents; «por todos los caminos que iba lo siguían tantas gentes que era cosa maravillosa»¹³. Alonso de Cartagena evokes his own and Fernan

¹¹ Eugène Bossard, *Gilles de Rais, maréchal de France, dit Barbe-Bleue (1404–1440), d'après les documents inédits réunis par M. René de Maulde*, 2nd edn, Paris, Champion, 1886, pp. 300–313, 332–37, with phrases from «Pièces justificatives», *Procédure (ecclési.) criminelle*, §16 (22 octobre), pp. xlvii–lix; and P. M[archegay], ed., «Récit authentique de l'exécution de Gilles de Rais et de ses deux serveurs, le 26 octobre 1440», in *Revue des Provinces de l'Ouest*, 5 (1857), pp. 177–79.

¹² Enguerran de Monstrelet, *La chronique en deux livres avec pièces justificatives 1400–1444*, ed. L. Douët-d'Arceq, 6 vols, Paris, Société de l'histoire de France, 1857–1862, v : 425–26 (Livre II, ch. ccxlix).

¹³ *Crónica de Juan II*, Año 5º, xxii, in Cayetano Rosell, ed., *Crónicas de los reyes de Castilla*, 3 vols, Madrid, Rivadeneyra, 1875–1878, II: 340. For Alvar García de Santamaría's original redaction of this passage, and an eyewitness *relación*, see Pedro M. Cátedra, «La predicación castellana de San Vicente Ferrer», in *Boletín*

Pérez de Guzmán's eye-witness memories of the crowds' blasphemous hyperdulia of the preacher, which led people to snatch strips from his clothes in the hope of cures¹⁴. Municipal archives give eloquent testimony of tumultuous commotion, listing the costs of candles, wooden scaffolds, temporary chapels, extra guards to control the throng, «le domage lequel fut fait pour le peuple en la grange, pré, et clausures [...] durant le temps que maître Vincent prescha»¹⁵. After celebrating Mass Ferrer would shout his harangue, which generally lasted three hours; the crowd fell to eyeball-rolling, fits, and loud weeping, transported by a frenzied expectation of miracles, which often duly materialized at the raising of his finger¹⁶. Things might end with the mob turning on the Jewish and Muslim religious leaders who were forced to attend, adding violent threats to the preacher's already none-too-friendly warnings to convert¹⁷.

de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona, 39 (1983–1984), pp. 235–309 (297–309). Pietro Ranzano, *Vita S. Vincentii Ferrerii* (1455) says the company reached 10,000, audiences 80,000 (*Acta Sanctorum. Aprilis*, 3 vols, Antuerpiae, [Societas Bollandiana], 1675, I: 482–512, at p. 494); the true figure was normally, to judge by the archival documents cited above and below, about 10–20% of this.

¹⁴ *Oracional de Fernand Peres*, Murcia, Gabriel Loys Arinyo & Lope de la Roca, 1487 [written 1455], c. xviii, f. c7^r «bien vistas, si vos miembra, [...] la honor que se fazia a maestre Vicente, [...] cortarle del hábito para salud e yr con candelas encendidas, de pie, en derredor dél, [...] reverencia de los sanctos», of the visit described by Cartagena's uncle Santamaría (n. 13). The veneration is confirmed by Ranzano, *op. cit.*, Lib. II, cc. 2–3, pp. 493–96; Giorgio Stella, a witness in Genova 1405: «Sanctus putabatur a multis; [...] multisque valde viris, mulieribus, et puerorum numero multis cum luminaribus per urbem tetendit plorans» ([Pierre-Henri] Fages, *Histoire de saint Vincent Ferrier, apôtre de l'Europe*, 2 vols, Paris, Maison de la Bonne presse, 1894, I: Pièces justificatives [= PJ], Appendice ii.E, pp. lvi–lvii).

¹⁵ Fages, *op. cit.*, I: PJ docs ii.1, 3–4, 7–9, 11–12, pp. xxxi–xlix; II: PJ docs iii.5, 14–15, 17, pp. vi–viii, xxiii–xxviii; Ángel Luis Molina Molina, «Sermones, procesiones y romería en la Murcia bajomedieval», in *Miscelánea Medieval Murciana*, 19–20 (1995–1996), pp. 221–32.

¹⁶ Hence Ferrer's soubriquet, *el del ditet*, and the raised finger in iconography, e.g. *Sermones sancti Vincentii de tempore. Pars estivalis*, Venetiis, Lazarus de Soardis, 1496, frontispiece; Francesco del Cossa altarpiece, 1473 (London, National Gallery).

¹⁷ A letter of Prince Alfonso to Fernando I of Aragon in 1414 tells of coercion: «los jueus e moros [...] foren ajustats a oír lo seu sermó per manament meu, [...] et los hi faré continuar daçí avant» (Fages, *op. cit.*, II: PJ doc. iii.7, p. xi). See Manuel Ambrosio Sánchez Sánchez, «Predicación y antisemitismo: El caso de San Vicente

After Ferrer's canonization icons portrayed listeners seated quietly on benches, a fiction that betrays a concern to tame the crowd-forming aspects of his preaching, rendering it deliberate, calm, and spacious¹⁸. The sources reveal a different reality: mass flagellation, visions, resuscitations, rolling on the ground, tearful howling which even Ranzano admits smacked of «vana superstitio», immense throngs whose ability to hear could only be supernatural¹⁹. In their wake Ferrer's fearsome crowd left a puritan desert —no more cakes and ale, only an odious atmosphere of sanctimonious sabbatarianism, as the *jurats* of Oriola boasted after a visit in 1411²⁰. In the end Jean Gerson was instructed by

Ferrer», in *Proyección histórica de España en sus tres culturas: Castilla y León, América y el Mediterráneo*, ed. Eufemio Lorenzo Sanz, 3 vols, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 1993, III: 195–203; Antonio M^a Claret García Martínez, «El acoso a las comunidades judías en los milagros bajomedievales: El caso de S. Vicente Ferrer», in *La Península Ibérica en la era de los Descubrimientos (1391–1492): III Jornadas Hispano-Portuguesas de Historia Medieval, Sevilla, 25–30 de noviembre de 1991*, ed. Manuel González Jiménez, 2 vols, Sevilla, Junta de Andalucía, 1997, I: pp. 301–19; Pedro M. Cátedra, «Fray Vicente Ferrer y la predicación antijudaica en la campaña castellana (1411–1412)», in “*Qu'un sang impur...*”: *Les conversos et le pouvoir en Espagne à la fin du Moyen Âge*, ed. Jeanne Battesti Pelegrin, Aix-en-Provence, Université, 1997, pp. 19–46; M^a de los Llanos Martínez Carrillo, «La crisis judaica de 1411: Aportaciones a la predicación murciana de San Vicente Ferrer», in *Scripta: Estudios en homenaje a Éliida García García*, Oviedo, Universidad, 1998, pp. 343–66; David J. Viera, «The Treatment of Jews in Vincent Ferrer's Vernacular Sermons», in *Fifteenth-Century Studies*, 26 (2001), pp. 215–24. On violence — which Ferrer did not espouse— we have only sporadic reports (Martínez Carrillo, *art. cit.*, p. 351) and tendentious later Jewish sources (e.g. Shlomo Ibn Verga, *Shebet Yehuda* §50; Samuel Usque, *Consolação às Tribulações de Israel* III.22), but the sinister number of conversions —over 25,000, claims Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 495— leaves little doubt that terror was a factor (Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, tr. L. Schoffman, 2 vols, Philadelphia, Jewish Publication Society of America, 1978, II: 166–70).

¹⁸ E.g. *predelle* of altarpieces by Giovanni Bellini, c. 1465 (Venezia, Basilica SS Giovanni e Paolo); Andrea da Murano, 1478? (Venezia, Gallerie dell'Accademia).

¹⁹ Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 494D–E. His account mirrors the depositions in the cause for canonization (e.g. Fages, *op. cit.*, II: PJ doc. iv.4, pp. lxiv–lxvi).

²⁰ Fages, *ibid.*, I: PJ doc. ii.13, pp. xlix–l «toltes totes les festes jovials [...] cascú se té per dit de avisar als altres que cauràn en qualsevol dels peccats; [...] les iglèsies ara són chiques, que les gens no caben; [...] del tot nos ha dexat christians». For all this see Pedro M. Cátedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura en la Edad Media: San Vicente Ferrer en Castilla (1411–1412). Estudio bibliográfico, literario y edición de los textos inéditos*, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 1994, pp. 223–75.

the Council of Constance to reprimand some of these excesses, especially flagellants, in a letter to Ferrer of 9 June 1417:

Existi quidem ut vinceris, o Vincenti gloriose; sed [...] quibus armis, quo apparatu bellico? [...] Multi multa loquuntur super praedicationibus tuis, et maxime super *illa secta se verberantium*, qualem constat praeteritis temporibus fuisse pluries et in variis locis reprobata; quam nec approbas [...] nec efficaciter reprobas. Iactantur inde varii rumores per populos; [...] mittimus querelas aliquorum quae in manus nostras devenerunt²¹.

The *reportata* of Ferrer's sermons leave no doubt of his extraordinary facility for fire-and-brimstone rhetoric; he was a tub-thumper without peer. Ranzano's epithet is «*terribilis*» (*op. cit.*, p. 494F); despite the preacher's well publicized role as peace-maker, the icons that proliferated when he was beatified (1455) portray him as the Second Angel of the Apocalypse, a title which he arrogated to himself as the result of a vision to reflect his unhealthy obsession with the imminent advent of Antichrist, and which Pius II expressly mentions in the bull of canonization (1458)²². The images show the saint with symbolic flames issuing from his hand, or holding a banner inscribed «*Timete Dominum et date illi honorem quia venit hora iudicii eius*», from Apoc 14.7:

I saw a second angel flying through the midst of heaven,
having the eternal gospel to preach unto [...] every nation
and tribe and tongue and people, Saying with a loud voice:

²¹ *Joannis Gersonii Opera omnia*, ed. Lud. Ellies de Pin, 5 vols, Antwerpiae, sumptibus Societatis, 1706, II: cols 658–60.

²² For Ferrer's use of the passage from Revelation (quoted below) see his Salamanca *alocución* (Cátedra, «La predicación castellana de san Vicente Ferrer», pp. 237 & n. 9, and 305–6, text); another case, Fages, *op. cit.*, II: 253 n. 2. Verbatim in Pius II's bull: *Bullarium Romanum. Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum Romanorum pontificum Taurinensis editio*, ed. Aloysius Tomassetti, 25 vols, Augustae Taurinorum, Seb. Franco & al., 1857–1872, v: 144–49 (p. 146a, §2); and cf. Gerson, *ob. cit.*, col. 658 «Tanta de virtutibus tuis accepi [...] ut mihi videaris recte figuratus secundum nomen tuum per illud Apocalipsis quo ait, *Vidi, et ecce equus albus, et qui sedebat super illum habebat arcum et data est ei corona, et exiit vincens ut vinceret*, Apoc 6.2».

Fear the Lord and give him honour, because the hour of
His judgment is come²³.

All these icons also show the preacher holding a copy of Scripture: fire in one hand, «eternal gospel» in the other. The book was a standard attribute of Dominican saints; nevertheless, it recalls a detail from the description of Ferrer's entry in *Crónica de Juan II* (*loc. cit.*):

anduvo por diversas partes [...] guardando siempre su costumbre de decir todos los días misa e predicaciones, el qual no traía consigo otros libros salvo la Biblia y el salterio en que rezaba.

We may conclude that the Bible figured as an ostentatious stage-prop in Ferrer's performances. It is no coincidence that the object itself, a fine thirteenth-century parchment MS some 19×14 cm. in size, supposedly with Ferrer's own marginalia, has been preserved as a relic in Valencia cathedral (Archivo-Biblioteca Catedralicio Ms. 304).

The extant texts of medieval preaching mostly belong to the soft-shuffle, crowd-preventing homily kind that tenders the sacred word to its listeners «carefully weighed and wrapped up», tessellated with Latin *auctoritates* and swaddled in scholastic divisions; yet the historical records invariably foreground the other, pack-forming harangue kind²⁴. Therefore, despite the peculiar assymetry in transmission, we surmise that the latter were just as important. Chroniclers had no doubt, for example, that the pogroms that brought about the end of religious

²³ See Mark J. Zucker, «Problems in Dominican Iconography: The Case of St Vincent Ferrer», in *Artibus et Historiae*, 13:25 (1992), pp. 181–91. Flames from hand: centre panels by Bellini, Andrea da Murano (n. 18, above). Banner: Joan Reixach, c. 1468 (Dallas, SMU Meadows Museum), Miguel de Prado, c. 1520 (Valencia, Museo de Bellas Artes), Juan de Juanes, c. 1550 (Sankt-Peterburg, State Hermitage).

²⁴ For such records see, for example, Lecoy de la Marche, *op. cit.*, pp. 193–219, 294–98; Alan Deyermond, «'Palabras y hojas secas, el viento se las lleva': Some Literary Ephemera of the Reign of Juan II», in *Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies on Spain and Portugal in Honour of P. E. Russell*, ed. F. W. Hodcroft *et al.*, Oxford, Society for the Study of Mediaeval Languages and Literatures, 1981, pp. 1–14; Manuel Ambrosio Sánchez Sánchez, «Vernacular preaching in Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan», in *The Sermon* (n. 8, above), pp. 759–858.

convivencia in Spain in 1391 were inspired by the sermons of the archdeacon of Écija Ferran Martínez, who whipped up crowds to rampage through local *aljamas* in a fury of pillage and murder:

predicaba por plaza contra los judíos, e todo el pueblo estaba movido para ser contra ellos [...] e la codicia de robar los judíos crecía cada día. [...] Las gentes estaban muy levantadas e non avían miedo de ninguno²⁵.

So too we hear of a preacher who stirred up unrest by denouncing the *valido* Álvaro de Luna in Burgos cathedral on Good Friday in 1453:

Formó [...] un muy atrevido e muy agro e muy sobejo e desenfrenado razonamiento contra el ynculto Maestre, [...] oponiéndole tantas e tales orribilidades de crímenes e de maleficios [...], escandalizando contra él todos los oyentes por una estraña manera e exortándolos a su destruyçión²⁶.

This chronicle gives an arresting image of such tumultuous sermons, for which Passion week was so propitious (n. 30, below). The preacher, a Dominican, «gordo e bermejo e mundanal», bribed by traitors, «no nombraba expresamente el Maestre, [...] mas dezía en general: —Uno, uno que todos conosçéis, e aquí está dentro en la yglesia». Juan II sat invisible «dentro de sus cortinas», biting his lip at this «desacordado palabrear», until finally «le fizo señas con el bastón que en las cortinas tenía, mandándole que callase». The friar ran off, but was arrested. Similarly, Alfonso de Palencia tells of preachers hostile to Enrique IV in 1458 «regis potentiam [...] sermonibus atque contionibus publicis ante oculos audientium exponentes, asseverantesque ex depravatis moribus excidium proculdubio futurum horrendum»; Francisco de Toledo

²⁵ *Crónica de Enrique III*, Año 1º, c. v (Rosell, *ed. cit.*, II: 167), on the Seville *motín* of 6 June. Martínez was a fanatic of the most opportunistic kind, playing as much on class hatreds as on greed and envy of Jews: Henry Charles Lea, «Ferrand Martinez and the Massacres of 1391», in *American Historical Review*, 1 (1896), pp. 209–19. Violence raged all through Castile and Aragon: Philippe Wolff, «The 1391 Pogrom in Spain: Social Crisis or Not?», in *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), pp. 4–18.

²⁶ *Crónica de don Álvaro de Luna, Condestable de Castilla, Maestre de Santiago*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1940, c. cxiv, pp. 347–350 (347).

in 1464 «*frequenti populo in publicis sermonibus [...] prae flagrantia predicationis audebat recensere multitudini innumerabilia Henrici delicta*»²⁷. As Canetti noted, the Crusade offered specially spectacular occasions for crowd-formation. In 1456 —at Easter again— Calixtus III's bull for a war against Granada was received in Castile with great pomp «*necnon praecedentibus theologorum sermonibus*», but there was open unrest at Enrique IV's misuse of the funds; Alfonso de Espina denounced the king from the pulpit, telling him the money could not be spent «*salvo en la guerra de los moros [...], sin caer en descomuni6n mayor*». Enrique ignored the warning, «*de lo qual todos los grandes del reyno fueron mucho turbados*» —the start of the process that led to his deposition in 1465²⁸. Again, in 1464 a charter of the same Enrique IV describes official dismay at the antics of *bulderos* sent out to preach another crusade, Pius II's bull for the recapture of Constantinople, when packs —or herds?— of yokels were moved to abandon their fields to take up the Cross, leaving whole villages deserted and wives and children destitute, in deluded confidence of rescuing Christendom from the Turk with their pitchforks²⁹.

Three and a half centuries before, it had been boasted in the Rhineland that Peter the Hermit's sermons had the same startling effect on farmyard poultry, so that a squadron of German geese was among the troops that embarked upon the First Crusade. A century after, *Lazarillo de Tormes* would retell an anticlerical jest about more humdrum manifestations of credulous piety caused by the tricks of an *echacuervo* or pardoner. Yet despite the fact that for half a millenium everyone railed and scoffed at the conmanship and self-serving hypocrisy of these charlatans, the efficacy of their harangues seems never to have waned. Luis de Pinedo tells of a Renaissance mountebank whose Good Friday ser-

²⁷ *Gesta Hispaniensia ex annalibus suorum dierum collecta. Libri I–X*, ed. & trans. Brian Tate & Jeremy Lawrance, 2 vols, Madrid, Real Academia de la Historia, 1998–1999, Lib. v.4 §5 (I: 181 & nn. 30–31), VIII.8 §5 (II: 361 & n. 90).

²⁸ Palencia, *op. cit.*, IV.8 §2 (I: 152 & nn. 56–57); Diego de Valera, *Memorial de diversas hazañas: Cr6nica de Enrique IV*, ed. Juan de Mata Carriazo, Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1941, pp. 41–42.

²⁹ Eloy Benito Ruano, «Granada y Constantinopla», in *Hispania*, 79 (1960), pp. 267–314. Palencia portrays the rustic frenzy, *op. cit.*, Libro VII.2 §4 (vol. II: 290 & n 22–23).

mon on the Passion inflamed his congregation to such dangerous ecstasies that even he got frightened and retracted:

como los oyentes llorasen y lamentasen y se diesen de bofetones y hiciesen mucho sentimiento, dijo [...]: —Señores, no lloredes ni toméis pasión, que quizá no será verdad³⁰.

In 1603 a French visitor, Barthélemy Joly, expressed spleen at the «véhémence extrême, presque turbulente» of Spanish preachers. Quoting the preface of a printed collection of sermons on «predicadores vocingleros que hazen gestos y meneos provocativos a risa, que lloran y piensan que imitan a Christo», he observed that the crowd behaved with no less indecorum, and in particular that «les soupirs continuelz des femmes [...] perturboient toute l'attention»³¹.

As I have said, we do not have many texts of the sorts of sermon mentioned in the previous paragraphs³². What we nonetheless deduce about the functional orality of medieval preaching from these records

³⁰ *Liber facietiarum et similitudinum Ludovici de Pinedo et amicorum*, compiled for a Madrid academy c. 1550 (BNM MS/6960), in *Sales españolas, ó agudezas del ingenio nacional: Primera serie*, ed. A. Paz y Mélia, Madrid, M. Tello, 1890, pp. 253–316 (p. 285); such emotional transports were traditional in Holy Week.

³¹ L. Barrau-Dihigo, ed., «Voyage de Barthélemy Joly en Espagne (1603–1604)», in *Revue Hispanique*, 20 (1909), pp. 459–618 (p. 554).

³² Latin sermons are relatively well preserved (Johannes Baptist Schneyer, *Repertorium der lateinischen Sermones des Mittelalters für die Zeit von 1150–1350*, 11 vols, Münster, Aschendorff, 1969–1990 lists ca. 100,000 items, whereas pre-1500 romance texts in Iberia do not even reach four figures), but most are either erudite, or models. The latter —the majority— are not sermons, but patterns to aid preachers to make sermons (D. L. D'Avray, *The Preaching of the Friars: Sermons Diffused from Paris before 1300*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1985); as for the former, the further they recede into abstruse scholasticism the less they function as sermons in a generic sense —«armchair» preaching, lectures in a simulacrum of sermon form only marginally conceived for oral delivery, let alone as epideictic oratory. Finally, retroversion of *ad populum* sermons into Latin for devotional reading was very widespread (Amador de los Ríos, *op. cit.*, VI: 313–14 n. 3 «ceden a la erudita tentación de trasladar sus oraciones a lengua latina», citing as indubitable the cases of Alfonso de Oropesa, Juan de Torquemada, Alfonso de Espina). In all these kinds, crowd-like features are much reduced; they merely compound our catastrophic loss of the sermon's evanescent essence, «el naufragio de la oralidad» in Catedra's memorable phrase («La predicación castellana de san Vicente Ferrer», p. 269).

of performance and reception is that, though intellectually sermons formed part of the general medieval tendency to make the world «scriptural» by interpreting all nature through the lens of transcendent texts, in practice they represented a distinct generic type. If it were not so —if sermons simply functioned like scholastic *glossae*— we may be sure they would have secured scant attention from German geese.

The element that distinguished the sermon's form of exegesis was, then, its particular way of interacting with crowds. It is tempting to call this popularism; but even if it were not the case that there existed explicitly learned forms of medieval preaching, it would be rash to apply the term «popular» without due caution. Evidently sermons did not originate from the milieu of the unlettered folk; equally, we may reject any imputation that they were designed only for consumption by the masses, since, on the contrary, sermons were savoured by all estates³³. Furthermore, though they certainly played a part in social conflict (nn. 17, 25–28, above), sermons did not *per se* represent the viewpoint of the commons, as proven by the Crown's constant hijacking of preaching for its own ends³⁴. The sermon, though indelibly related to power and control, is structurally apolitical, a form disjoined from any ideological precondition and, despite its ostensible link to religion, capable of literally any content. The fact that preachers sometimes expressed dis-

³³ The inadequacy of the epithet «popular» in any social sense is shown by the enthusiasm for Ferrer's preaching of Santamaría, Cartagena, and Guzmán (nn. 13–14, above) —three well-known intellectuals, a royal counsellor, bishop, and aristocrat. Though the saint's sermons were unmistakably demagogic in their hounding of Jews, women, etc., he was a conformist tool of the establishment, often called in to bolster its power: M. Teresa Grande Esteban, «Las raíces de la eficacia del discurso homilético de fray Vicente Ferrer en la campaña de predicación castellana de 1411–1412», in *Revista de Historia Medieval*, 15 (2006–2008), pp. 165–88.

³⁴ In Aragon sermons were regularly made to serve royal interests, and could even be delivered by the monarch himself: Suzanne F. Cawsey, «Royal Eloquence, Royal Propaganda and the Use of the Sermon in the Medieval Crown of Aragon», in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999), pp. 442–64. So too, after a hurricane struck Seville on 18 February 1464, Castile's Enrique IV ordered Antonio de Alcalá to restore royal authority with a sermon (Palencia, *op. cit.*, VI.9, II: 251 & nn. 116–121 «ut restingeret civium admirabilitatem, persuaderetque eis haec et eiusmodi prodigia minimum divini imperii, sed omnino naturalis potentiae impulsum habere»); see further Jussi Hanska, «Late Medieval Catastrophe Sermons: Vanishing Tradition or Common Custom?», in *Medieval Sermon Studies*, 45 (2001), pp. 58–74.

sident views implies only that the religious, notably Franciscans, were expected *ex officio* to propound the Church's orthodox doctrines on poverty and pride. As such they could be tolerated, even humoured; Fernando el Católico, after hearing the preacher Juan Marqués (d. 1499) in Zaragoza, «poniéndole la mano en la cabeza, dixo para explicar *el gusto con que le avía oído*: —¡Qué buenas pedradas nos ha tirado oy el Padre!»³⁵. Conversely, in 1419 Alfonso V of Aragon revoked royal support for Vicent Ferrer's anti-Semitic campaign, repealed the *apartheid* laws imposed on Jews, and issued an edict «que los ditos sermones sean [...] de la materia inductiva a la fe, e no de cosas que de aquellas se pueda seguir scándalo»³⁶.

Even more caveats are needful when applying the term «popular» to the analysis of sermon style. The preacher's most ancient rule is: chose a style fitted to the capacity of the audience³⁷. But this is a simplification; audiences are always composed of a diverse plurality of individuals, so preaching is constantly drawn to polyphony³⁸. Furthermore, since the medieval sermon's function is to convey to the many-headed *vulgus* the Church's elaborately codified reading of sacred texts, it is

³⁵ Vicente Ximeno, *Escritores del reyno de Valencia, chronologicamente ordenados desde el año MCCXXXVIII hasta el de MDCCXLVII*, 2 vols, Valencia, Josef Estevan Dolz, 1747–1749, I: 62 (my italics).

³⁶ Fritz Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien: Erster Teil, Urkunden und Regesten*, 2 vols, Berlin, Schocken, 1929–36, I: 849, §527.

³⁷ Fernando de Talavera, *Colación de cómo se deben renovar en las ánimas los fieles cristianos en el santo tiempo de Adviento*, 1470: «segund la diversydad y diversa profesión y capacidad de los oydores deven ser proporcionados los sermones» (Amador de los Ríos, *op. cit.*, VII: 544–61, at p. 544). Lecoy de la Marche, *op. cit.*, pp. 194–95 & nn. 1–3 traces examples of this topic back to the fourth century (Gregory Nazianzen, *Orationes*, 2 (*De fuga*), xlii–xlv; *Patrologia Graeca*, 161 vols, Paris, Migne, 1857–1866, XXXV: cols 451–54), but it is far older (e.g. Cicero, *De partitione*, 89 «ad opiniones eorum qui audiunt accommodanda est oratio»).

³⁸ Tomás Albaladejo, «Polifonía y poliacroasis en la oratoria política: Propuestas para una retórica bajtiniana», in *Retórica, política e ideología desde la Antigüedad hasta nuestros días*, ed. Antonio López Eire *et al.*, 3 vols, Salamanca, Asociación Española de Estudios sobre Lengua, Pensamiento y Cultura Clásica, 2000, III: 11–21, relates the factor of «audición plural» to Bakhtin's *polifoniya*, either as an implicit dynamic of multiple voices that become subjects in their own right, or through explicitly divided illocution (address to separate elements in the audience).

also propelled inevitably towards heteroglossy³⁹. Besides, the notion of decorum in style is not a given, but a moving target; it has its own history, so that concepts of the «popular» fluctuate over time. Hence, apart from the divide between *divisio intra* and *extra*, medieval authors often debated *elocutio* within the *ad populum* category itself⁴⁰. Typical is *De doctrina cordis*, a widely read thirteenth-century devotional tract cast in sermon form for the benefit of nuns — a prime gendered category of the «unlettered». Paradoxically, its author, Gérard de Liège or Hugues de Saint-Cher, rejected the very features of preaching we might now assume to be typically oral or popular (rhyming prose, tropes for the *orejas*) as redolent of a culpably ambitious «high» rhetoric:

Es amonestado al predicador que regale con estudio la palabra de Salud con declaración *diligente e familiar*, porque pueda entrar más ligeramente a los coraçones de los oydores [...]. No asconda la verdad del su enseñamiento so fermosura de palabras, parando más mientes a la apostura de la fabla que al seso; ca no conviene al predicador de la verdad de las Escrituras divinales *fablar rimado e por consonantes*. [...] Según Giliberto dize, «algunos ay que más estudian de fablar en el convento de los frayles

³⁹ Bakhtin's own example of heteroglossy (simultaneous use of different cultural strata of language; *peresechenie* «intersection», *vzaimosveshchenie* «mutual illumination», *vzaimoorientatsiya* «interorientation») is the interplay of Church jargon and popular discourses in Rabelais, which he saw as typically medieval: Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* [*Tvorchestvo Fransua Rable i narodnaya kul'tura srednevekov'ya i Renessansa* («The works of Rabelais and the popular culture of the Middle Ages and Renaissance»), Moskva, Khudozhestvennaya Literatura, 1965], tr. Hélène Iswolsky, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1984, pp. 465–73.

⁴⁰ What complicates this issue is not the ersatz counterfeits mentioned in n. 32, but the fluid border between erudite and popular discourses at all levels of sermon practice. Lecoy de la Marche opined: «Tous les sermons adressés aux fidèles, même ceux qui sont écrits en latin, étaient prêchés entièrement en français», calling the Latin versions travesties («c'est ainsi que furent *dénaturées* les prédications», *op. cit.*, pp. 219–45, at p. 237), but this is simplistic; apart from such bizarre solutions as macarronic sermons, popular features often occur in learned sermons, and vice versa (e.g. *Libro de Buen Amor*'s incongruous sermon-prologue — it is the crowd-aspect that motivates its inclusion: «a todo omne o muger [...] puede bien dezir 'Intellectum tibi dabo'», cf. *coplas* 15a «sea de todos escuchado», 67a «En general a todos fabla», etc.).

cosas *altas e fermosas* que convenibles e provechosas, e han vergüença de fablar cosas *llanas e humildes*, porque no sean tenidos de ellos que no saben más de aquello»; e, sin dubda, no fablan al coraçón, mas a las orejas⁴¹.

Amador de los Ríos often cited *Enseñamiento del corazón* as an original witness to late-medieval sermon theory and practice in Spain⁴². His pardonable mistake reminds us once more that there is no absolute «popular» manner, only the endless tug-of-war between rival fashions of Atticism and Asianism, which is constant in the history of style. In fact, every medieval discussion of preaching from Augustine onwards inveighed against the tinsel flowers of rhetoric, the theatrical buffoonery of worldly eloquence, stressing that the message must outweigh the medium; Francesc Eiximenis went further in his *Ars praedicandi populo*, foretelling loss of tongue or premature death for anyone who employed «*verba picta, rimata et rethorice ornata*»⁴³. The effect of all this on preachers' style, in terms of any measurable shift in decorum towards popularization, was precisely nil. The debates did not translate into any permanent template of popular style because such a template is a chimera. In the Renaissance a humanist revival of ancient rhetoric

⁴¹ Cited from the anonymous fifteenth-century Castilian version, *Del enseñamiento del coraçón*, Salamanca, [s.n.], 1498, ff. A2^r–A3^r (my italics); «Giliberto» is Gilbert of Hoyland (d. 1172), *Sermones in Cantica Cantecorum*, xxvii.2 (*Patrologia Latina*, 217 vols, Paris, Migne, 1844–1855 [henceforth *PL*], CLXXXIV: col. 140C–D).

⁴² Amador de los Ríos, *op. cit.*, vi: 313 n. 1, 326 n.2; vii: 179–80 n. 1. Cf. Marcelino González Pascual, «Enseñamiento del corazón, una traducción anónima castellana de *De doctrina cordis*», in *Boletín de la Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo*, 78 (2002), pp. 31–68; Anthony Lappin, «The Spanish Translation: *Del enseñamiento del coraçón* (Salamanca, 1498)», in *A Companion to 'The Doctrine of the Herit': The Middle English Translation and its Latin and European Contexts*, ed. Denis Renevey & Christiania Whitehead, Exeter, University, 2010, forthcoming.

⁴³ Martí de Barcelona, «*L'ars praedicandi* de Francesc Eiximenis», in *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia*, 12 [= *Homenatge a Antoni Rubió i Lluch*, II] (1936), pp. 301–40 (pp. 306–7, §6), cited by Beverly Mayne Kienzle, «Medieval Sermons and Their Performance: Theory and Record», in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience in the Middle Ages*, ed. Carolyn Muessig, Leiden, Brill 2002, pp. 89–124 (pp. 95–99). On the other hand, for a finely nuanced pragmatic analysis of how *verba rhimata et ornata* might actually have worked for popular audiences see Cátedra, *Los sermones en romance del Manuscrito 40 (siglo xv) de la Real Colegiata de San Isidoro de León*, Salamanca, Semyr, 2002, pp. 36–47.

once again led sacred orators to rehearse the old topics, and in particular to reject the rigid formalism of the «thematic» sermon of *ars praedicandi* in favour of a more spiritual style aimed at the heart. Reformers presented this as a return *ad fontes*, citing St Paul, who eschewed «lofty words or wisdom» and enjoined preaching through divine «foolishness» —that is, by feeding us carnal «babies» with pap⁴⁴. Critics would have us believe the new *ecclesiastica rhetorica* was revolutionary, but, apart from outlawing the surface filigree of the *divisio*, it reprised standard medieval views already reflected in *De doctrina cordis* —«heartlore», no less— and the missionary ideals of Franciscan preaching⁴⁵. Connoisseurs may distinguish Renaissance or Baroque sermons from medieval, but patently not because they employ a «lower» or more heartfelt language (the opposite is true).

One may retain the epithet «popular» with regard to the sermon, therefore, only on the understanding that it does not refer to origin, milieu, performance, the social class of its intended audience, politics, or a specific style. The genre is popularist purely in terms of collective psychology; that is, in its task of conveying the Word to listeners in an

⁴⁴ 1 Cor 1.17–3.3 «placuit Deo per stultitiam praedicationis salvos facere credentes. [...] Et ego veni non per sublimitatem sermonis aut sapientiae adnuntians vobis testimonium Christi. [...] Non potui vobis loqui quasi spiritalibus, sed quasi carnalibus, tamquam *parvulis* in Christo; *lac vobis potum dedi*, non escam». This was the rallying cry for humanist reformers (Pedro M. Cátedra, «Nebrija y la predicación», in *Antonio de Nebrija: Edad media y Renacimiento. Actas del Coloquio Humanista. Antonio de Nebrija, Salamanca 1992*, ed. Juan Antonio González Iglesias & Carmen Codoñer Merino, Salamanca, Universidad, 1994, pp. 129–50), the V Lateran Council's *Circa modum praedicandi* (1516), Erasmus's *Ecclesiastes, sive de ratione concionandi* (1535), the Council of Trent's decree ordering bishops to «feed the people», and the flood of manuals that followed, such as Luis de Granada's *Rhetorica ecclesiastica* or Diego de Estella's *Modus concionandi* (both 1576).

⁴⁵ *De doctrina cordis* cites classical rhetoric («Séneca dize 'la palabra de la verdad no deve ser compuesta, mas simple' [= *Epp. ad Lucilium* LX.4]») (*Enseñamiento del corazón*, f. A2^v), and this was commonplace (e.g. the same quotation in Guillelmus Peraldus, *De eruditione principum* v.9, ca. 1250; Albertanus Brixiensis, *Ars loquendi et tacendi* II.1, 1245; Harry Caplan, «Classical Rhetoric and the Mediaeval Theory of Preaching», in *Classical Philology*, 28 (1933), pp. 73–96. Ironically, the antiquated thematic sermon attacked by the reformers was called by the medieval schoolmen *sermo modernus* —and now scholars ingenuously portray it, too, as a «homiletic revolution»: Phyllis B. Roberts, «The *Ars praedicandi* and the Medieval Sermon», in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience* (n. 43, above), pp. 41–62.

affective way, its need to make a required narrative connexion with the felt life and emotions of a crowd. In terms of internal literary organization, this means that the sermon's characteristic rhetoric seeks to suppress the individual conscience, to activate instead communal instincts. For this reason we need not doubt the story of the German geese; it is quite logical that these notoriously gregarious creatures (which, as we know, once nobly came to the aid of Rome and saved her from barbarian invasion), on observing humans' herd-like reaction to a harangue, should sociably have followed suit. They could not be so affected by genres that, in contrast to the sermon, seek to activate the individual and appeal to the self, such as lyric. One imagines the birds impassively grazing on before a Wordsworth enthusing about daffodils, for all his vaunted empathy with the natural world.

What geese also tell us about the sermon is that it is popular in the specific sense that its appeal to collective fantasies presupposes a prelation of *pathos* (emotion, affect) over *dianoia* (thought). "Faith", said Saint Paul, "comes from hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ" (Rom 10.17) —not «understanding from hearing», not «faith from understanding». Medieval authors often compare preaching to the «daily bread» of the Lord's Prayer; we may interpret this as meaning that the purpose of sermons is not to feed the crowd new ideas, but to nourish it with convictions about everyday ideas with which it is already familiar. The maxim that truth comes from the barrel of a loaded gun would be a fair metaphor; the aim of homilies or harangues is not to demonstrate that God's Word is true, since this is self-evident —the barrel, in that sense, is loaded—, but to bring the transcendent Truth into the realm of action and practical consequences —which is where firing the gun comes in. The prologue to *De doctrina cordis* (itself shaped as a sermon with *thema, prothema, divisio, exempla, unitio*) expresses the point with an apter, more humane, and more beautiful *similitudo*: the words of God are grapes which the preacher treads for spiritual wine so that, once stored in the cellar of the heart, his listeners may «slake their thirst and get drunk» on it⁴⁶. Collective inebriation is

⁴⁶ *Enseñamiento del corazón*, f. A2^r «Las palabras de Dios así son como unas uvas [...], e así como es menester que sean bien pisadas e espremidas las uvas para que salga el vino dellas, así es menester de declarar con diligencia la palabra divina porque el vino del entendimiento spiritual pueda entrar a la bodega del corazón.

a good way of describing the desired affect of the sermon. The commonest circumstance recorded of Vicent Ferrer's preaching is of crowds being transported without being able to hear his words or understand his language⁴⁷. Evidently, then, the successful sermon communicates its narcotic or stimulant effect at a level more instinctive or subliminal than conscious intellect⁴⁸. Instructive in this regard is Rico's hint that the hypnotic structure of *divisio*, braiding and unbraiding the *thema* in a cat's cradle of conceits, works like music; or D'Avray's remark that the sermon's «passion for similitudes» brings it «nearer to the conventions of modern poetry than of modern prose»⁴⁹.

Further analysis of the incantatory or ritual aspects of the sermon's crowd-formation might involve a study of behavioural psychology. Here let us consider only a literary facet, the preacher's dialogic relation to the crowd. Lecoy de la Marche (*op. cit.*, p. 6 n.1) observes that the Latin Fathers translated *homilia* as *tractatus popularis* to reflect a

[...] [Quantas vezes te es a ti predicada la palabra divina], es enbiado a la bodega del tu corazón el vino del entendimiento spiritual *para te abrevar e embriagar*».

⁴⁷ Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 495D–E says that by a miracle they *could* hear, however far away, and that even women and children *did* understand, wherever he spoke, though he always did so in Valencian (even Bretons, «quorum lingua solis ipsis cognita est»); for testimonia, Fages, *op. cit.*, 1: PJ doc. ii.5, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii. We take leave to doubt this pious legend, specially when Ranzano affirms that the evidence was what listeners professed afterwards («facto verborum eius fine, *fassi sunt* se singula verba percepisse»), and adds that many claimed also to have seen angels «in specie humana» hovering about Ferrer's head. These sound like hallucinatory side-effects of the «prelation of emotion over thought» of which I am speaking.

⁴⁸ The records of Ferrer's campaigns (n. 15) list large gifts of wine to his company, which, as Ranzano (*op. cit.*, p. 504) recounts, was dispensed in a great tub «quod ab illius regionis incolis vocatur portatoria [Catalan *portadora*, *aportadera*]»; no matter how many drank, it miraculously replenished itself with vintage of amazing medicinal powers. The folk of Granolles must have cursed when theirs lasted a day, but Villalonga's went on filling up for ten years. Martínez Carrillo, *art. cit.* (n. 17, above), pp. 352–53 remarks on the «fervor síquico y corporal» likely to have been produced in «gentes fanatizadas» by the mix of alcohol and «apocalípticas palabras»; no wonder Ferrer's band, composed of unsavoury renegades as well as genuine penitents, was regarded as a menace by justices, so that he had to demand safe conducts (*ibid.*, p. 346; Cátedra, «La predicación castellana de San Vicente Ferrer», pp. 238–42).

⁴⁹ Francisco Rico, *Predicación y literatura en la España medieval*, Cádiz, UNED, 1977, p. 10 «trenzar y destrenzar un motivo y crear una estructura cuasi-musical»; D'Avray, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

difference in Greek between *ὁμιλία* and *λόγος*. The distinction rested on the former's «caractère dialogique», as Photius made clear in his note on John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Genesis*:

Though entitled «treatises» (*λόγοι*), they are more like homilies [...] because again and again he addresses his listeners face to face (*ὡς παρόντας ὁρῶν τοὺς ἀκροατάς*) with questions, answers, promises [...]. It is clear he preached them to the crowd (*ὠμίλει δὲ ταύτας τῷ πλήθει*)⁵⁰.

On the face of it, this reiterates a point made at the outset of this paper about the role of continuous apostrophe in homiletic rhetoric, but it also raises a deeper question about how the sermon works. How *does* one «address» a crowd (as opposed to the finite group of known interlocutors naturally implied by *vosotros*) when the aim is to reduce it to a single herd? As observed above (n. 38), the task was compatible with the polyphony of divided illocution; moreover, preachers had no compunction in addressing audiences as *tú*, or embracing them complicitly in the first person plural, or even standing aside to imagine themselves in the act of dialogue with a single heckler:

Dirá agora alguno de vosotros: —«¿Non vos recordades, frey Álvaro, que dexistes ayer [...]»?». S[í] recuerdo; mas cata cómo as de entender [...], darte he un exenplo⁵¹.

Such combinations are also normal in literary texts that imitate the orality of sermons, like *Libro de Buen Amor* and *Arcipreste de Talavera*⁵². But there is a vital pragmatic difference: in the latter, plural and

⁵⁰ Photius, *Bibliotheca*, ed. Immanuel Bekkerus, 2 vols, Berolini, Reimer, 1824–1825, Cod. 172 (t: 118); cf. Augustinus, *Ep.* CCXXIV.2 «tractatus populares quos Graeci *homilias* vocant» (*PL*, XXXIII: col. 1001).

⁵¹ Cátedra, *Los sermones en romance del Manuscrito 40*, Serm. xxii, p. 250 (the trick was typical of «predicadores populares», *ibid.*, p. 27; note the attention to hierarchy, the interlocutor's deferential *vos* answered with familiar *tú*). This sermon, though showing a preference for *tú*, runs through all the variants: «Buenas mugeres, contentadvos», p. 251; «Agora ayamos alguna doctrina para nosotros», p. 252; «las cosas que deve omne [‘one’, *impers.*] sentir en sí», «cada uno de vos», p. 254.

⁵² *Libro de Buen Amor* constantly partitions its listeners into groups, male/female, *loco/cuerdo*, married/single, lay/secular, etc., and varies between *tú*,

divided illocutions are imaginary and only *tú* is real (since the implied receptor is personal: the individual listener or reader), whereas in the sermon it is the other way round, singular illocutions are metonymic and only *vosotros* is real (the implied receptor is collective: the crowd). When a preacher says *tú*, there is no actual referent; he has no specific person in mind.

Paradoxically, this odd reversal in the pragmatics of address, milling and grinding generic *vosotros* into smaller and smaller apostrophic categories down to atomic *tú*, implies that effective sermons «activate the communal» by creating the illusion of addressing each person in the audience separately, while in fact appealing to shared archetypes and fantasies of a collective subconscious (usually, to be sure, an explicitly male one: *Danza de la Muerte*, ll. 65–80 «See these two girls, whose presumptuous beauty I'll punish by making them my brides, stripping and worming into every orifice of flesh»). This suggests that crowd-formation is achieved not so much by the sermon as by the psychology of the audience. In Canetti's terms, listeners are first divided and defeated so each «stands alone, confronted by the priesthood»; only then are they manipulated through the «density and expectancy» of the pack.

But, of course, not every audience works itself up into the exaltation or debasement of a crowd. Medieval authors were clear that the deciding factor in the successful sermon's dialogic equation, more important even than rhetorical structure, content, *elocutio*, *pronuntiatio*, or *actio*, was the character of the preacher. The first requisite of preaching, declared Augustine, is to teach by example («sit eius quasi copia dicendi forma vivendi»); Gregory the Great reckoned that, in comparison

vosotros, *nosotros* (no wonder Ruiz says: «Quiérovos abreviar la mi *predicación*», 1606a). *Danza de la Muerte* has examples of each kind: (1) *tú*: «omne, ¿por qué curas?», etc., ll. 1–24; followed instantly by (2) *vosotros*: «ved el fraire», ll. 29–32; (3) *nosotros*: «quiere levar | a todos nosotros», ll. 53–54, 625–632; (4) *divided illocution*: «el que no quisiere [...] non puede ser más esperado», ll. 59–64; the rest singles out individuals of each estate with polite *vos*, until finally it turns to (5) *ellos*, envisaging those not even present: «todos los que aquí non he nombrado», ll. 617–624. *Enseñamiento del corazón* is the same; its prologue ends «Oye, fija, e inclina la tu oreja», the next line reads: «*Aparejad vuestros coraçones al Señor, e devedes saber*», etc. (*ed. cit.*, f. A3^r), interspersed with *nosotros* («fablemos al coraçón», «nos enseña el santo», etc.). *Arcipreste de Talavera* deploys the whole gamut on almost every page.

to this, the sermon itself was supererogatory, if not dispensable («*praedicator plus actibus quam vocibus insonet, et bene vivendo [...] quam loquendo*»)⁵³. But the Fathers' assumption that crowds would be moved by a monkish «good life» of humble piety was a triumph of hope over experience; the case of Gilles de Rais shows that bestial sinners can be far more riveting. From an impartial point of view it is clear that what is in question is not good character but *charisma* in Max Weber's sense, and furthermore, charisma of the specific kind that Michel Foucault relates to *parrhesia*, «truth-telling» which depends not on rational argument but on a spectacularly provocative way of life as proof of the preacher's hot-line to illumination⁵⁴. From a sociological viewpoint medieval Christianity was a charismatic religion; its preachers, dedicated to an otherworldly spiritual ideal in which everything unconnected with the divine was seen as corrupt and inauthentic, propounded an active rejection of the body and disengagement from worldly matters such as economic life, family, or sex⁵⁵. Hence *Danza de la Muerte*'s seemingly trivial insistence on its friar's learning («*sabios predicadores*», «*grand sabiença*») turns out to be a meaningful allusion to charismatic authority, in this case as defined by the mendicant orders, particularly Dominicans.

But in real life learning was by no means a necessary or sufficient charismatic qualification for the successful preacher, and could even be ostentatiously rejected as part of the parrhesiastic performance. We

⁵³ Augustinus, *De doctrina christiana*, IV.xxix.61; Gregorius, *Regula pastoralis*, III.40, cited by Kienzle, «Medieval Sermons and Their Performance», pp. 96–98, who traces this appeal to «a moral identity» as a «basis for authority» in *artes praedicandi*. Muessig, *art. cit.*, p. 77 «saints and wandering preachers often were renowned not so much for what they preached but for how they lived their lives, [and] did not necessarily need a sermon in order to preach».

⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discourse and Truth: The Problematization of Parrhesia* (Six Lectures, University of California at Berkeley, October–November 1983), at <<http://foucault.info/documents/parrhesia/>> [accessed 1.i.2010], Lect. IV, *The Practice of Parrhesia*, «Parrhesia and Public Life: The Cynics». Paradeigmatic of the «parrhesiastic game» is the story of Diogenes, delousing himself in the sun by his barrel at Corinth, asking Alexander the Great to «please stand out of his light» (Plutarch 671B [*Parallel Lives, Alexander*, xiv.2–5]; Dio Chrysostom, *Discourse IV, On Kingship*).

⁵⁵ For this, and many other illuminating observations relevant to the pragmatics of the sermon, see Bernhard Lang, «The Sexual Life of the Saints: Towards an Anthropology of Christian Heaven», in *Religion*, 17 (1987), pp. 149–71.

get a better picture from the descriptions of Vicent Ferrer's charisma, which was so great that, as we have seen, he was revered in life as a saint and could electrify huge crowds without needing to speak to them in an intelligible language. This he achieved by flamboyant mortifications that made Diogenes's decision to live like a dog in a kennel look mild and reasonable: never washing or changing clothes, sleeping on straw for no more than five hours, ceaselessly flagellating himself (or, if ill, getting his companions to lay on the whip with cries not to hold back «sed validis ictibus caederent»), never eating meat (fish only if badly cooked, «non multo studio coctos»), keeping up a pitiless routine of preaching in a different place each day (often more than once), flaunting his disregard for money or possessions, and, most heroically, resisting attempts by women or demons in female form, whether on their own initiative or as hired emissaries of ill-wishers such as the Devil or jealous rivals, to destroy all his good work by tempting him by strip-tease into one damning act of carnality—all in vain, «nudam carnem eius nemo vidit unquam, nec etiam Fratres»⁵⁶. All this, however, would not have gained Ferrer the following he craved without the mercenary attraction of miracles. Once he had been seen to be touched by the fingers of Christ and St Dominic during a sermon at Avignon (Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 491D), he spent a good part of each day in the laying-on of hands to crowds of the faithful queueing for cures (*ibid.*, p. 493D).

These antics, which to a modern view seem outlandishly fanatical, comic or tragic in their extremity, formed part of a clichéd typology that was familiar to medieval audiences⁵⁷. Naturally it was important also to project the charisma through the sermon's delivery. Despite

⁵⁶ Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 493 («flesh» in the last phrase must be a polite synecdoche for the part not seen, since the saint insisted on undressing to the waist for floggings by his brethren); p. 488–89 (strip-tease, naked women ejected from his bed or, in the case of a prostitute, subjected to an impromptu sermon on chastity). Diogenes went to the other extreme, performing bodily functions, ablutions, and masturbation in public, but the difference was formal; the aim of self-advertisement remained unaffected.

⁵⁷ Such charismatic preachers were constantly arising; Johan Huizinga, *Herfsttij der Middeleeuwen* [1919], Amsterdam, Olympus, 2004, pp. 21–26 describes, besides Ferrer, striking examples in the North, while Lecoy de la Marche, *op. cit.*, p. 194 mentions French preachers who already in the fourteenth century claimed crowds of 20,000, as well as well-known cases such as Anthony of Padua (see the description of his ministry in *Acta Sanctorum. Junii*, 7 vols, 1698, II: 705–13, nota-

tell-tale reproofs in *artes praedicandi* of mimicry, histrionic raising of the voice, pantomime gestures, or other scandals, we have persuasive evidence of the strident theatricality of charismatic preaching. I have mentioned Ferrer's shouting, in a voice that he could make «shrill or bass, graceful or booming», and his copious and to our taste repellently sentimental weeping, perhaps brandishing a bible⁵⁸. Such exhibitions were commonplace⁵⁹. Ferrer's harangues, says Ranzano, were «so fiery they seemed angelic, not human»; *reportata* gave «barely a shadow» of the reality⁶⁰. It is small wonder that listeners, amazed to discover they were being addressed by a semi-celestial being, dispensed with hearing the words. Few reports on the charisma of medieval preachers

bly flagellants, p. 709–10; preaching, p. 712). We might add Bernardino of Siena, Savonarola, etc.; the details are alike, down to the particulars of naked ladies, etc.

⁵⁸ Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 495D «pro libito voluntatis [...] acutam, gravem, gracilem ac sonoram vocem edebat». Shouting: see the sermon by Ferrer on the text *Aperuit illis sensum* (Lu 24.45) that takes as its *materia* an allegory of his own hoarseness («secretum meae raucitatis», Fages, *op. cit.*, I: PJ doc. II.14, pp. 1–11), and the anecdote on *ronquera* in Catedra, *Sermón, sociedad y literatura*, p. 229. Kienzle, «Medieval Sermons and Their Performance», refers to Ferrer's using «tears, silence, singing, and numerous gestures» like an actor, with «different voices to dramatize [...] stories» (pp. 108–109, 110), and «overcoming linguistic differences [i.e. gift of tongues] with the aid of emotive speech and gestures» (p. 109 & n. 74).

⁵⁹ Kienzle, *ibid.*, pp. 99–122. On weeping, she notes that Bernardino da Siena specifically called on the women in the audience to cry with him, using their gender «in a sort of affective dialogue», which nicely pinpoints the aspect of the sermon's dialogic nature that I am trying to describe (p. 118; cf. Joly, at n. 31 above). See Sánchez Sánchez, «Vernacular preaching in Spanish, Portuguese and Catalan», for further examples (e.g. diagrams in *reportata* to represent Ferrer's gesticulations, p. 808); and in general on the sermon as spoken *parole* rather than written text, Augustine Thompson, «From Texts to Preaching: Retrieving the Medieval Sermon as an Event», in *Preacher, Sermon and Audience* (n. 43, above), pp. 13–37. In the Baroque age preachers would have to be asked to refrain from throwing skulls at the audience or climbing perilously onto the balustrade of the pulpit to hop about gesticulating.

⁶⁰ Ranzano, *op. cit.*, p. 495C «eloquia eius ignita, ita ut [...] non ex ore terrestres hominis, sed potius caelestis angeli manare viderentur»; 495A «qui et eum praedicantem audierunt et nunc legunt sermones [...] in scripta redactos asserunt quod vix consequuntur umbram eorum quae ipse suo ore resonabat». His account of Ferrer's speaking in tongues, though no doubt based on psychological fact, is clearly shaped by Christ's original mandate for the ministry of the Word, the miracle of Pentecost and the angelic «tongues of fire» that settled on the apostles (Acts 2.1–6; Claire M. Waters, «The Labor of *aedificatio* and the Business of Preaching in the Thirteenth Century», in *Viator*, 38 (2007), pp. 167–89, at pp. 168–69).

are more telling than Geoffrey of Auxerre's account of a German audience that listened with raptures to Bernard of Clairvaux's sermon in incomprehensible Latin, but ignored the interpreter turning it into their own language:

miro audiebatur affectu, et ex sermone eius, quem intellegere [...] non valebant, magis quam ex peritissimi cuiuslibet post eum loquentis interpretis intellecta locutione aedificari illorum devotio videbatur, et verborum eius magis sentire virtutem; cuius rei certa probatio tunisio pectorum erat et effusio lacrymarum.

Once again we have the tell-tale breast-beating and tears; Geoffrey also calls Bernard's preaching «fiery», despite the «mel et lac» of his style («ignitum [...], in ore eius ignea lex», citing Song of Songs 4.3 «Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon»); he too claims that readers of the saint's written sermons received only a distant impression of the real effect, «longe minus ab eis qui verba eius saepius audierunt»⁶¹.

Needless to say, we cannot explain such phenomena without turning back to the other side in the dialogue, the crowd. Hagiographers said that multitudes, including infants, would listen to Anthony of Padua in silence for hours, but this was regarded as a miracle (*Acta Sanctorum Junii*, II: 712); it was far from the case with Ferrer, of whom Ranzano repeatedly asserts that crowds wept along with him, not quietly «llorando de los ojos» but with groaning, breast-beating, and frantic threshing about on the floor. It must have been an astonishing, impressive, and frightful spectacle.

In the light of all this, we may conclude that a juster term for the sermon than «popular» is «vulgar», both in the etymological sense of crowd-pleasing and also in the ordinary sense of trite, appealing to the common denominator. Nevertheless, since the sermon's true purpose—denied with futile vehemence by *artes praedicandi*, at least until the fifteenth century—is to move rather than to instruct, its vulgarity is often of a very artistic kind. Nowhere is this better seen than in the graphic texture of Alfonso de Toledo's *Arcipreste de Talavera*, which,

⁶¹ Gaufridus monachus quondam Claræ-vallensis, *Vita prima Bernardi. Liber III*, 3.7 (*PL*, CLXXXV: col. 307).

being a deliberate literary recreation of a preacher's voice in action, may perhaps be the closest we can get, apart from flashes of Ferrer's style preserved in *reportata* and Latin translations, to a sustained impression of oral sermon rhetoric⁶². The text is replete with heteroglossy —pages of scholastic sophistry alongside low ribaldry—, but the overriding impression is of a relentless emphatic violence of expression that matches both Ranzano's evocation of Ferrer's «fire» and the *ars praedicatoria*'s advice to «trumpet» or to «thunder»⁶³. All the vulgar elements designed to achieve the sermon's prelation of emotion over intellect —coarse humour, low satire, first-person narrative, cajoling apostrophe, acoustic figures of anaphora, alliteration, rhyme, storytelling, descriptive similitudes, prosopopoeia, slang— are bound to strike us as no more than a bag of tricks if we see them as mere ornaments of a declamatory style. They were not add-ons bolted to the outside of the sermon; they *were* the sermon —its necessary discursive rhetoric, its vulgar essence. In a passage that illustrates the surprising art of drawing incorrect inferences from correct data, G. R. Owst wrote:

Mere aesthetic appreciation is not for the preacher; he must deal with sterner methods and affairs. An evil world

⁶² See now Rebeca Sanmartín Bastida, *Teatralidad y textualidad en el «Arcipreste de Talavera»*, London, Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London, 2003 (Papers of the Medieval Hispanic Research Seminar, 44).

⁶³ Philip of Harveng, *De silentio clericorum*, 20 «in modum tubae vocem exaltare» (*PL*, CCIII: col. 977A); Alain de Lille, *Summa de arte praedicatoria*, 1 «tronet minis» (*PL*, CCX: col. 113B). Since Alain repudiated «verba scurrilia vel puerilia, [...] praedicatio theatralis et mimica, [...] verba effeminantia purpuramentis colorum [...] nimis picturata» (col. 112B–C), he would have deplored *Arcipreste de Talavera*; but then, with his call for preaching to be «rationibus subnix» he effectively sought to outlaw the true sermon altogether, replacing it with Sunday-school lessons. Pedro M. Cátedra, «La modificación del discurso religioso con fines de invectiva: El sermón», in *Atalaya: Revue Française d'Etudes Médiévales Hispaniques*, 5 (automne 1994), pp. 101–122, traces the increase, from the fourteenth century, of «elementos que podríamos calificar de *violentos*, [...] la necesidad de imprimir una clara conciencia de *violencia* en el ejercicio del arte de predicar, [...] la predicación del *miedo*», and connects this with preachers' growing «aislamiento» from society (see above) and fondness for «dramatización alegórica mental» (see below). For examples in *Arcipreste de Talavera*, Jeremy Lawrance, «Representations of Violence in 15th-century Spanish Literature», in *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 86 (2009), pp. 95–103, at pp. 99–100.

must be driven to contemplate the stark realities [...]. On its purely doctrinal side, then, the pulpit of the waning Middle Ages [...] was almost invariably morbid. Fortunately, however, the preacher had direct and continuous contact with Life. In the sermon as organ of a virile, picturesque speech and a keen, critical view of society, as medium for vivid illustration, lively anecdote, homely portraiture, witty and ruthless satire we have to deal with something of a very different order. Here, at all events, speak living voices. Here [...] the spring of a new Renaissance had already blown upon the Church, making the old sap of moral purpose rise once again within her. We shall be fully justified, therefore, if we lay aside the dull mass of theological argument and concentrate solely upon these excrescences of preaching⁶⁴.

This rightly pinpoints the sermon's characteristic vulgarity, but in every other particular it is wrong. If the preacher spoke it was presumably with a living voice, but there was no «purely doctrinal side» to the medieval sermon, its vivid illustration and lively anecdote had nothing to do with rising sap, its homely portraitures did not belong to a «different order», it was not incidentally or accidentally an «organ» of virile speech or «medium» of satire; above all, none of these things were «excrescences» on a dull theological mass. What Owst elsewhere calls the sermon's «common forms of Realistic treatment» (*ibid.*, pp. 51–52) were no decorative frill around some biblical kernel, but the vulgar, affective beast itself. The sermon, as a genre of oratory characterized by a rhetoric of emotive vulgarity designed to produce an affect in a crowd, had no other method, no other task than to bring the divine allegories of the Word into contact with the crude world of real sensation and experience.

From this vantage point, indeed, it is clear that the sermon's intended affect is its structural kernel, the scriptural *thema* its decorative frill. Despite the fact that the choice of *thema* was often determined by liturgical constraints, we almost never find that the biblical text motiva-

⁶⁴ G. R. Owst, *Literature and Pulpit in Medieval England: A Neglected Chapter in the History of English Letters & of the English People*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1961, pp. 54–55.

ted the truth-content of a sermon. Instead, the preacher chose what he wanted to say; the rhetorical process consisted in forging a metaphoric link between this and the words of the pericope, which were atomized and recombined in configurations that need have no connexion to the scriptural sentence's meaning in its original context. To put it another way, *divisio* was an exercise in the construction of ingenious analogies or conceits; for this the *thema*'s content was formally necessary, but its syntax and hermeneusis were utterly indifferent. Neither of *Danza de la Muerte*'s *themata* is actually scriptural, not because its two homilies are make-believe (real preachers often displayed the same slipshod attitude to the sacred text), but because the sermon's relation to its *thema* is paraphrastic, not metaphrastic⁶⁵. In fact, the *thema* itself was no more than a ritual sound-bite, an audible label of the preacher's charismatic authority. Just as folk actually preferred being preached at in a language they could not understand, so too the sermon's incomprehensible Latin *auctoritates* —no doubt cantillated or chanted in distinctive plainsong recitative, like the Qur'ānic verses in an Islamic *khutba*— played their charismatic role in isolating the preacher and raising him to his station of power and hierarchy over his audience⁶⁶.

⁶⁵ Alberto Descalzo de Blas, «El *ars praedicandi* de Sancho Porta, O.P. Estudio del sermón *Die purgationis Marie secundum legem* del Manuscrito 30 del Burgo de Osma», in *Revista de Filología Románica*, 15 (1998), pp. 145–64, noting that the sermon he edits omits a few words of its *thema* (p. 147 n. 2), comments that preachers frequently relied more on memory than «comprobación» (p. 146). Greater liberties are attested; e.g. the varied cases diagnosed in Cátedra, *Los sermones en romance del Manuscrito 40*, pp. 29–86 (§1 «no tiene una estructura acorde con el *ars praedicandi* [...], es discutible hablar de *thema*», p. 29; §2 «no parece partir de un *thema* litúrgicamente localizado, sino de una afirmación general de carácter biológico» —though its «recursos oratorios nos remiten al mundo de la predicación real», pp. 31, 35; §12 «tiene como originalidad el hecho de introducir o declarar el *thema* por medio de un *exemplum*», pp. 69, 178 nn. 2–3; §18 has no *thema*, pp. 79–81).

⁶⁶ The author of the eyewitness *relación* of Ferrer's visit to Toledo in 1411 (edited in Cátedra, «La predicación castellana de san Vicente Ferrer», pp. 297–304) told Fernando de Antequera that, though it was impossible to describe the marvels of Ferrer's sermon on Antichrist, and particularly his «gestos, [...] ca non ha en el mundo cosa que diga por la boca de que non faga el gesto», he could at least send «las abtoridades [...], porque éste es que más queredes vos saber e ver»; that is to say, deprived of one powerfully tangible token of the preacher's charisma, he could as a substitute be given a taste of this other.

Now that we have touched once more on my opening example, does any of the above advance our understanding? *Danza de la Muerte*, to be sure, is not a sermon but a text influenced by the sermon, or maybe what C tedra calls a «g nero para-predicatorio» (*Los sermones en romance del Manuscrito 40*, p. 21); the poem’s form shows it to be an avowedly literary text, even if its versification is so crude that it could only pass muster in a voiced recital. It is nevertheless probable that real preachers made sermons like that of the poem’s *predicador* in front of painted representations of the *danse macabre* such as the famous murals in the cloister and charnel-house of the Parisian cemetery of Les Innocents⁶⁷. We might, indeed, posit this scenario to explicate the poem’s curious nesting device (n. 3, above): rather than a straightforward narrative of the dance, the poem is conceived, somewhat like an Ignatian spiritual exercise, as a meditation on a pictorial mental image —a meditation in which (as in the paintings) the preaching voice is replicated by its *doppelg nger* within the frame of the picture, thus evoking the experience of listening to an actual sermon in front of a fresco such as the one in Le n cathedral mentioned by *Arcipreste de Talavera*⁶⁸. The image of Death «comes alive», if one may be permitted so gross a paradox, at

⁶⁷  mile M le, *L’art religieux de la fin du Moyen  ge en France:  tude sur l’iconographie du Moyen  ge et sur ses sources d’inspiration* [1908], rev. 2nd edn, Paris, Colin, 1922, pp. 359–80 (Part II, chap. 2 «La mort») argues that «la premi re pens e» of the *danse macabre* came from Franciscan or Dominican preachers (p. 354), adducing painted *Dances* that include a friar preaching the «prologue du drame» (as in our poem) to suggest an origin in the «illustration mim e d’un sermon sur la mort» (p. 362 & n.1). Controversial, but Herv  Martin, *Le m tier de pr dicateur en France septentrionale   la fin du Moyen  ge, 1350–1520*, Paris, Le Cerf, 1988, pp. 593–97 documents the use of images, and specifically *danses macabres*; also preaching in cemeteries, holding skulls or crucifixes (pp. 552, 580), and other show-boat tricks. See Kienzle, «Medieval Sermons and Their Performance», pp. 105–7 (images), pp. 110–11 (theatre), and from a different angle,  lvarez Pellitero, *art. cit.* (n. 1, above).

⁶⁸ Alfonso Mart nez de Toledo, *Arcipreste de Talavera, o Corbacho*, ed. Michael Gerli, 2nd edn, Madrid, C tedra, 1987 (Letras Hisp nicas, 92), Parte IV, c. 2, p. 271 «la Muerte en figura de muger, en figura de cuerpo de omne, e que fablava con los reyes, etc., como pintada est  en Le n», a mention that assumes his public will be familiar with the painting. As a further correspondence between our poem and such frescos, M le (*op. cit.*, p. 375) notes the presence in archaic versions like that at La Chaise-Dieu of a «foule indistincte» at the end «qui ne se m lent pas   la ronde», corresponding to «ceux qu’on ne peut d nombrer» in *Danza*, ll. 617–624 (see n. 52).

the magic touch of the preacher's words. The *danses* were painted in a strip to be read from left to right; the opening figure of the preacher was often accompanied by a «scène biblique: Adam et Eve tentés par le serpent mangent le fruit défendu», the serpent being portrayed with a skull for a head, i.e. as Death (Mâle, *op. cit.*, p. 362 & n. 2). The *Danza*, too, fleetingly alludes in l. 36 to «the fruit | of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste | Brought death into the world» (*Paradise Lost*, l.1–3). From the point of view of medieval pansemiosis, the Fall is the all-encompassing myth, the key to universal history: in the transfiguring light of our final destination, every action and event in the world is rendered transcendent or, as they would have put it, «figural» —that is, foreshadowed in Scripture. One may thus see the *Danza's* subject and method as the true subject and method of all preaching, and the true reason for all medieval sermons.

If this analysis be accepted, then it is licit also to apply to *Danza de la Muerte* Canetti's categories of relationship to the crowd, as sketched out at the start. We must hold fast to the proviso that, since the work is literary —not a sermon but an imaginative representation of one—, there is no actual crowd; hence, though the author's awful purpose would no doubt have been served by eyeball-rolling, frothing at the mouth, and weeping on the part of his audience, these must remain virtual or imaginary affects on the part of an individual receptor. But this makes the poem's aesthetic more, not less, interesting. Mâle, with his usual perspicacity, observed the extraordinary popularity of illustrated editions of the *Danse*, and the problem of readerly «pleasure» posed by such avid consumerism:

Le succès si rapide de la danse macabre est un phénomène singulier. Comme il nous est difficile d'imaginer l'état d'esprit des générations qui achetaient la *Danse macabre* de Guyot Marchant! Comment croire que les hommes d'alors aient pris tant de plaisir à avoir chez eux et à feuilleter à toute heure ce funèbre album de la mort? (*op. cit.*, p. 375)

The question is entirely pertinent to our investigation of the sermon's function, and of the *Danza's* lesson in its regard. The component of entertainment, of *jouissance*, provides the last piece in the jigsaw. At

some level, whether it be the *ego* or the *id*, the sermon's crowd-forming or crowd-preventing power depends on an appeal to the subconscious instincts of the pleasure-principle.

To conclude our question of the *Danza de la Muerte*'s relation to the crowd, therefore, one may argue that, though its overt message («fazed penitencia») puts it in the ranks of the soft-shuffle homily, designed to impose resignation and conformity with the Church's hierarchic power of the Keys (confession and absolution), its nightmare rhetoric actually appeals to wilder emotions — foremost among them, terror and the vengeful malice of *schadenfreude*— that make it a harangue, prone to arouse affects of a disorderly and, we may add, pagan nature. It sets out to inculcate apathetic fear of God, but its stroke of grotesque genius is to mingle living bodies with the dead in the frenetic buffoonery of a dance — a last fierce expression of defiant joy and desire of worldly life⁶⁹. The *Danza*'s most memorable image is its gratuitous tableau — wholly incompatible with the ordering of dance partners by descending rank and estate— of two lovely maidens, conjuring up the gruesome but pleasurable fantasy of post-mortem copulation with their naked bodies. Did the preacher simply forget Christ's call to make ourselves eunuchs in order to enter the kingdom of heaven (Mt 19.12)? The intimation of a perverse paradise of sex after death defeats the whole point of charismatic Christianity, which is to preserve the immortal soul intact, sexless, antisocial, unwedded⁷⁰.

⁶⁹ Mâle, *op. cit.*, p. 368 «Désir de vivre que rien ne peut rassasier, et impossibilité d'échapper à la mort, cette terrible contradiction de la nature humaine [...]. La danse macabre peut choquer nos délicatesses; [...] pourtant on est obligé d'avouer qu'elle est au nombre de ces grandes œuvres qui ont su incarner et rendre visibles [...] quelques-uns des sentiments primordiaux de l'âme».

⁷⁰ In Spanish, though not in French (*le Mort*), the scene involves the spicy extra transgression of lesbian congress, since *la Muerte*'s «spouses» are girls. Of course the moralist tries to turn us off by talking of burrowing worms, slimy flesh, mouths — just making things worse (whereas dull Seville 1520 achieves the job by censoring «desnudedad» and boring readers with five frigid stanzas — or is it fifty? — on the evil of female cosmetics). The connexion between the Church's ascetic disgust for the body and its celibate conception of the afterlife — death as a consequence of sin, and hence the hereafter as the carnal body's reversion to an angelic existence with no need for sexuality or reproduction — is expounded by Lang (*art. cit.*, pp. 154–56), who points out another detail bearing on the *Danza*: in medieval pictures of heaven and hell the blessed are portrayed without gender or «parts of shame» —

Here, at least, we may talk of an official discourse for taking control of the laity's minds being «infected», in Gurevich's expression, by the primitive outlook of «popular» belief⁷¹. Against the theologians' dogmatic eschatology of providence and the last trump, common folk held fast to the fantasy of a personal judgment at the hour of death and the savage conviction that a day of carnal life is preferable to an eternity of spiritual afterlife⁷². Such earthy emotions are never more likely to be aroused than by violent remembrances of death. The *danse macabre*'s drastic decision to stamp out all pity, all nostalgia for the transient joys of life risked sending out a double-edged message, even without the disturbing inclusion of girls whose only conceivable role in the poem's economy is as erotic playthings or sex-dolls (specifically not «brides», of course, otherwise why *two*?). Commenting on the risk, Mâle reminds us that graveyards were for centuries an agreed and favoured spot for prostitutes to ply their trade⁷³.

What I have tried to suggest by this analysis is that, by putting orality and the crowd back at the centre of our definition of the sermon,

they enjoy not even friendship or conversation, let alone touching or sex— while the damned have perfect bodies that «clearly retain their sexual features» (*ibid.*, Figs 1–3); thereby establishing that most people would surreptitiously prefer hell.

⁷¹ Aron Gurevich, *Medieval Popular Culture: Problems of Belief and Perception* [*Problemy srednevekovoi narodnoi kul'tury*, Moksva, Isskustvo, 1981], tr. János M. Bak & Paul A. Hollingsworth, Cambridge, University Press, 1988, pp. 2–5.

⁷² Gurevich, *op. cit.*, pp. 138–46; I mean «primitive», «savage» as psychological, not historical, terms—he sees these conceptions not as different stages of intellectual development, but as «the spiritual situation of the human personality in the two-fold space of medieval culture». See also his «Popular and Scholarly Medieval Cultural Traditions: Notes in the Margin of Jacques Le Goff's Book [*La naissance du purgatoire*]», in *Journal of Medieval History*, 9 (1983), pp. 71–90.

⁷³ Mâle, *op. cit.*, pp. 380–381 «Une telle œuvre isolée, dépouillée de son commentaire, ne conserve, à vrai dire, aucun caractère proprement chrétien. Les illettrés [...], il faut le croire, y trouvaient un encouragement à bien faire, mais quelques-uns, sans doute, y voyaient une invitation à jouir de cette courte vie. Au cimetière des Innocents, les filles de joie erraient sous les cloîtres et parmi les tombeaux. [...] Il est dangereux de faire appel à la mort, et d'émouvoir si profondément la sensibilité». This said, I do not think *Danza's* girls were just a mistake; the author well understood the depraved relation between *eros* and *thanatos*, and used it with (misguided) cynicism. The nexus was, after all, perfectly familiar to his contemporaries; see, for instance, Rosa Vidal Doval, «Erotismo, amor y violencia en *Celestina*: Consideraciones a la luz de *La llama doble*», in *Celestinesca*, 33 (2009), pp. 233–245.

we gain a more unified understanding of the genre's nature, a way of linking its formal structures and rhetoric to its task of constructing, as homily or harangue, «una visión homilética del mundo»⁷⁴. Admittedly this involves agreeing that certain medieval texts disguised as sermons do not belong to the genre, while others which do belong may be disguised as different things. In compensation, it becomes easier to see not only how medieval preaching resembles certain forms of demagoguery in our own society; but also how the sermon form can on rare occasions cross over into the realm of the aesthetic, even to the extent of deconstructing its own horrible intended affects. Neither discovery makes the sermon genre seem less interesting⁷⁵.

Lawrance, Jeremy, "Homily and Harangue in Medieval Spain: The Sermon and Crowds", en *Revista de poética medieval*, 24 (2010), pp. 147-183.

RESUMEN: Este artículo estudia el sermón como un género oral en el que el mensaje va dirigido a una multitud. Propone una clasificación de los sermones en términos del tipo de influencia que tienen sobre el público: homilía y arenga. Alcanza la conclusión de que la intención de influir del sermón forma su eje estructural.

ABSTRACT: This article studies the sermon as an oral genre where the message is directed at a crowd. Hence sermons may be defined, according to the type of affect they have on the audience, as either crowd-preventing (homily) or crowd-forming (harangue). It concludes that the intended affect of the sermon forms its structural kernel, while accounts for its rhetoric of vulgarity.

⁷⁴ The apposite phrase of Fernando Gómez Redondo, *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana*, 4 vols, Madrid, Cátedra, 1998–2007, III: 2949. His survey of *sermonística* (II: 1897–1915; III: 2948–73) supersedes all earlier efforts such as Amador's, subsuming the modern work mentioned in n. 9 above.

⁷⁵ I am grateful to Rosa Vidal, Rebeca Sanmartín, and Barry Taylor for inviting me to write this paper, and to the audiences at Belfast's meeting of the AHGBI and Nottingham's SPLAS Seminar for suggestions, specially Bernard McGuirk (harangue, tub-thumping) and Tomás Albaladejo (n. 38). My great debt to Pedro Cátedra is evident; I warmly thank him and Fernando Gómez Redondo for their gifts of books; and Illustrissima Silva, as always, for keeping the lamentable jeremiad on the road.

KEYWORDS: Affective rhetoric. Crowd. *Danza general de la Muerte*. Genre. Orality. Vincent Ferrer.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Retórica afectiva. Multitud. *Danza general de la Muerte*. Género, Oralidad. Vicente Ferrer.