PARODY / SATIRE AND PERVERTED CATHOLIC SIGNS
IN HILARY MANTEL’S FLUDD AND
TORRENTE BALLESTER’S CRÓNICA DEL REY PASMADO

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Parody and satire (and their relations) are redefined on the basis of previous descriptions of these genres. This revision, methodologically founded on an instrumentalist approach, argues the relevance and/or validity of two genre traits for the analysis of Mantel and Torrente’s novels. Concerning parody, the requisite that source texts and norms possess an aesthetic or literary nature is refuted and replaced by a more functional, semiotic approach; this semiotic metalanguage is used to describe the diagnoses of Catholicism in the fictional worlds of the novels studied. Concerning satire, the overdetermination and possible orthodoxy of the messages of these novels are shown to be deliberately blurred by the plots imagined by the authors.

0. A BRIEF METATHEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

All generic categories, even the most time-hallowed and traditional, are ultimately to be understood (or «stranged») as mere ad hoc experimental constructs, devised for a specific textual occasion and abandoned like so much scaffolding when the analysis has done its work. (Jameson 1981, 145)

Once genre is defined as pragmatic rather than natural, as defined rather than found, and as used rather than described, then there are precisely as many genres as we need, genres whose conceptual shape is precisely determined by that need. They are designed to serve the explanatory purpose of critical thought, not the other way round. (Rosmarin 1985, 25)

The aim of this study is to consider the applicability of two «genre» concepts — parody and satire — to the analyses of Catholic practices (or communities) offered by Hilary Mantel and Gonzalo Torrente Ballester in Fludd (F) and Crónica del rey pasmado (CRP). In these two novels, both published in 1989, the authors explore (and expose) a number of habits, conflicts and tensions characteristically associated with Catholicism. The characteristics of the Catholic «model» are imperfectly reproduced in the imaginary society of Fetherhoughton (F) and in Madrid (CRP).

The appropriateness of the labels satire and parody for these representations of the Catholic world will be discussed in this study; yet, as the commentaries quoted above should make apparent, it is the idea «applicability of genre concepts» itself that will become prominent and problematic in this discussion, because several methodological problems can be identified. The problem of genre studies I am concerned with here is the tension between the «constitutive power» of genre statements (Rosmarin 1985, 8) — i.e., their tendency to generate autonomous stable identities for these models —, and the instrumental vocation that justifies the use of genres — i.e., the conception of genres as mere «heuristic tools» (Rosmarin 1985, 7). The formula I have just used to characterize genre — constituted entity vs. explanatory tool — is only one of the many manifestations or variants of such well-
known oppositions as nature / function, stability / flexibility, or theory / criticism. Although a detailed explanation is required, any attempt to introduce it will inevitably resemble a mockery of two millennia of genre thinking. Thus I will concentrate on some recently formulated views on the problem - the «instrumentalist» attacks on (and claimed defeat of) «traditional» approaches.

From an instrumentalist perspective, which shares many objections formulated by Derrida in his influential «The Law of Genre» (1980), the taxonomic vocation of traditional genre studies has undesirable ontological consequences: as studies on genres typically start by defining and distinguishing them against other simultaneously existing neighbouring genres, the tendency to perceive them as stable recipes or models with some sort of autonomous existence is fostered. Genres may be described as institutionalized «repertoires» of form-(and)-content features or traits (Fowler 1982, 55), or as «modes», which yield more integrated self-coherent master-structures (i.e., a sort of ideal unwritten specimen imperfectly imitated in all written samples). On another hand, genres are originated historically and/or theoretically (Todorov 1970; Guillén 1971), that is, «observed» in society (obviously in language and ideally in critical metalanguage), or prescribed by theorists on the grounds of perceived similarities between works, or of new classificatory criteria (García Berrio 1989; García Berrio & Huerta Calvo 1994). This has favoured the institutionalization in genre theory of a «geographic» conception of genres (Scholes 1974; Morson 1981, 69). Independently from these possible origins, the evident ontological consequence is that genres thus formulated «constitute» themselves as independent entities: they get detached from concrete textual manifestations and become apparently meaningful by themselves. Following the opposition between nature and function, instrumentalists claim that the onto logical phenomenon I have commented on above has serious functional consequences, since the capacity of genres to represent texts is negatively affected. This does not mean that genres cannot be used as «tools» to represent texts. However, a significant shift takes place once genre has constituted itself and is used to explain a text: we cannot expect it to graciously relinquish part of its «nature» to adapt to the different «nature» of individual works, as the genre already «exists», and as the coherence of the (already meaningful) model has been satisfactorily established in critical discourse. Not unlike HAL, the intelligent computer in Arthur Clarke’s famous novel, genre, designed to serve and adapt to others’ wishes, will assert itself against any risk of depriving it of its independent nature and stability - through the confrontation (or «contamination») with the different distributions of features that may characterize individual works (past and future). Instead the application of individual works to genres will follow the logic of the «completeness» (or why not the ambivalent word «perfection»?) of the work’s conformity to the model.

How can one be faithful both to the genre and the individual work when they are often opposed? Instrumentalist conceptions of genre seek to restore the original explanatory function of genre by «dissolving» its nature, by destabilizing static, essentialist genre-in-itself impulses and replacing them for more dynamic genre-as-oriented-to-texts analyses. How is this reorientation achieved? It would be clearly naïve to leave the «identity» of texts unaffected, as if they had a complete «nature» of their own, since our interpretation of texts depends on a myriad of «paratextual» factors (Genette 1991) and the genre affiliation of the text is one of them. Rosmarin’s approach is a dynamic syllogistic procedure in which

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1 Michael Macken’s The Origins of the English Novels (1987) includes a chapter on «The Destrabilization of Generic Categories». Even though it is historically and novelistically oriented, the underlying logic is comparable to the instrumentalist model, as his «Introduction» also shows: the taxonomic disease and its reifying effects are consistently discussed.
different genres are hypothetically «invited» to explain works, which may be more or less close to each other at an intuitive level. These are elaborated as logical exercises, and it is insisted that eventual explanatory discoveries do not lead to essentialist claims beyond specific critical operations:

... properly used, genre theory must always in one way or another project a model of the coexistence or tension between several generic modes or strands: and with this methodological axiom the typologizing abuses of traditional genre criticism are definitely laid to rest. (Jameson 1981, 141)

My methodological claims, while inspired by instrumentalist conceptions, are more restricted:
a) First, because my practical application does not seek «unorthodox» genre affiliations of disparate works, nor attempts to create any new genre; it still adheres to widely accepted generic affiliations of works, and it is not surprising at all that Fluid and Crónica del rey pasmado can be linked to satire/parody.
b) Moreover, there is still extensive use of traditional «stabilizing» approaches to genre: the recommended departure point for analysis is the assessment of traditional definitional efforts.
c) Applicability will be granted if our understanding of works can be substantially (not necessarily unproblematically) enlightened by a critical analysis of the centrality or necessity of genre concepts for the study of concrete texts. The difficulties involved in this methodological issue are lucidly explained in the following reflection on a problem of which this conflict is only a regional manifestation:

The purpose of models as tools of empirical study is to provide us with a metalanguage for descriptions ... the encounter between an abstract model and a concrete text is not a mechanical «application» of the model, its reiteration and reaffirmation ... in its encounters with texts the model is tested in its scope of validity and effectiveness. However, the main result of the confrontation is a description or interpretation of a concrete text, which provides knowledge about the text not contained in the model itself. (Doleč 1985, 190-1)

Adapting Doleč’s commentary to genre, the malleability of the model is necessary during the testing process, since available descriptions of parody and satire can provide us with a metalanguage and a problematic model, and can select genre constituents that can prove more illuminating for the works under inquiry, and that, hopefully, the application will not be mechanical, as the tools themselves (satire and parody) will not remain unaffected, untouched.

In section 1 I will revisit some attributes and perspectives usually employed in definitions of satire/parody. The main problem of section 1.1 is the uncertain genre status of satire and parody (they will be basically treated as a macro-genre). In section 1.2 I will revise definitions of satire and parody, particularly those commentaries in which they are distinguished. It will be shown that two aspects often selected for description - the artistic «nature» of the source of parody; the overdetermination of constituents of satire - are significantly obscured in the two novels under scrutiny. A new relationship between parody and satire will be developed, emphasizing their complementary functions and the relevance of the metalanguage of sign and its structure. Section 2 will show instances of blurring of the previous features in Mantel’s and Torrente Ballester’s diagnoses of Catholic societies: The «defective» structure or functioning of Catholic «signs» (2.1) becomes a positive force in the lives of some characters of these novels (2.2); in 2.3 the confusion of
attitudes and values is reflected in the strange alliances suggested between opponent forces - God and devil.

1. SATIRE/PARODY: SOME PARADOXES AND INTERFERENCES

The analysis of several well-known approaches to satire and parody yields information about two kinds of interferences, paradoxes, and tensions induced from tendencies of normal genre practices:

a) Satire and parody do not easily adapt to typical treatment because the analytical criteria conventionally used in genre studies are not applicable. There is interference because satire and parody do not possess some of the "essential" qualities of literary works brought about to "make" more conventional genres. But there is also a paradox: a parallel set of "essential" parodic/satiric features can be formulated, but they are rather disturbing from a taxonomic point of view, and tend to confuse analysis. These problems will be treated in section 1.1.

b) The generic "indeterminacy" of parody/satire is paradoxically "compensated" by the relative meticulousness of attempts to distinguish one from the other. Besides, conventional approaches to "normal" genres interfere in the sense that both labels are postulated to simultaneously "exist" in the same conceptual territory, as alternative possibilities at the same descriptive level. A functional approach, based on the distinctive concentration on the sign structure of the satiric target carried out in parody, redetermines the relationship between these genres at the end of section 1.2.

1.1 Three Genres: «Problems»: Incompleteness, Contexts, History

A) The "INCOMPLETENESS" of satire and parody, i.e., their formal elusiveness, indeterminacy or dependency, is widely acknowledged: they are (Fowler 1982, 127), modes (Seidel 1979, 3), or hypertextual relations (Genette 1982, 14); for Linda Hutcheon (1985, 19) they are, that is, "less" than genres; parodic/satiric works lack rigorous "textual properties" (Dane 1980, 151), etc. The fact that a standard definition is not feasible seems to cause some tension in scholars who still wish to imitate "full" descriptions (perhaps because full genre "status" is necessary to justify research.), and they struggle with this initial difficulty in two ways:

i) One solution is to defend the principle that any distribution of at least two different analytic factors are enough. For instance, Linda Hutcheon’s explanation that satire has raises it above the level of "technique" (1985, 19).

ii) Leon Guilhatet (1987) disagrees with the idea of distributional strategy, particularly the traditional (1987, ix). In turn, his more "orthodox" treatment vindicates the validity of the form/content binary, although he concedes this implies broadening our sense of "structure" - "much of what is perceived as theme in satire is really a residue of form" (1987, x). The formal attributes incorporated into the structural description of the genre are the rhetorical patterns of the "categories of classical oratory" - demonstrative, deliberative, and judicial - imitated by satire, (1987, 13). The doubtful points and paradoxes that appear cannot be discussed here.

Parody is simultaneously more and less concrete from a formal point of view: its relevant specific constructional/stylistic (as well as thematic) attributes are always bor rowed from the original work. The parodic operation - (Hutcheon 1985, 32) - pays a great deal more attention to "form" than satire, but the form is of something else. Parody dies cannot
imitate the form of their own genre, and parodic works ambiguously, simultaneously, belong to this genre and the genre of the work imitated. Obviously this is an obstacle if classification is in mind.

B) «Contextual» and pragmatic factors, literary and social, which affect authors and readers cannot be disregarded: satire, typically identified as «action», «act», «attack», even «aggression» (Seidel 1979, 3, 10, 11), is characterized by particular purposes and personal motives (Hight 1962, 233f, 238f). The superordinate organizing principle of satire is the critical project and formal qualities are accidental, variable techniques subordinated to it. Thus it is not strange that many general studies of satire break the pattern of generic studies - «prescriptive» portraits of structural qualities - and look more like records of successful particular historical applications. In fact, the traditional approach to satiric «form» follows Gilbert Hight’s inductive logic (1962, 11) - texts «qualify» as satirical because some essential (i.e. natural, pre-theoretical) but diffuse attributes can be identified before «shapes» and historical occurrences are investigated: (Hight 1962, 3). The analysis of parody is equally unstable: (Hutcheon 1985, 23), and this implies that traditional methods of organizing textual evidence into stable generic groups is significantly disturbed; when more variables are included, the grasp of works and labels is obscured. This affects all positions in the process:

1. Satire and parody heavily rely on the READER’s (literary knowledge and values, on a set of «fortuitous» conditions relating to the area (Rose 1993, 36f) which, by definition, are not so prominent in other genres: the identification of the intertextual link of parody necessarily depends on the reader’s possessing «shared codes» (Hutcheon 1985, 84) with authors. A set of ideal conditions of encoding/decoding can be theoretically identified (Hutcheon 1985, 93f), but not easily predicted or integrated in generic discourse.¹

Moreover, the reader’s role is important in still another way: parody/satire are affected not only by knowledge or identification of sources, or world-knowledge, but by the moral/social values he possesses, because the critical force of parody and satire, the identification of issues denounced or even of satiric targets are seriously affected by them.²

2. Once attitudes to the external world are invoked, the issue of the AUTHOR’s intention also finds an easy way in genre characterizations. First, general social roles are prescribed for authors:

The satirist penetrates to origins that are potentially compromising to his subjects, to himself, and to society at large. In effect, satiric activity compromises society’s renewing and «cleansing» dispensations - orders that allow for (indeed, insist upon) gestures of polite civilization that cover upon dirty notions. (Seidel 1979, 17)

Second, other subjective elements intrude, as feelings are presumed in texts and transmitted to readers:

¹ The reader’s knowledge of the source text, his/her capacity to retrieve it as prompted by stylistic or thematic similarity … the reader’s «literary competence», memory, attention, or simply luck, play unexpectedly significant roles. The same applies to satire: the lack of precise knowledge, or simply the reader’s presumed ignorance of some historical situations affect the fortune of generic writings - those based on well-known facts or people or on «eternal» vices will have more access to studies and anthologies of the genre. On the other hand, Culler’s commentaries on Todorov’s characterization of fantastic literature, «based on particular operations of reading» and the indeterminacy created in genre theory by this criterion (1981, 58-9) are significant.

² The identification of Orwell’s targets in 1984 and Animal Farm, and the assessment of his success, have always been clearly influenced by the political position of the reader, as shown in some writings of the marxist critic Isaac Deutscher on Orwell (1954).
The final test for satire is the typical emotion which the author feels, and wishes to evoke in his readers. It is a blend of amusement and contempt. In some satirists, the amusement far outweighs the contempt. In others it almost disappears: it changes into a sour sneer, or a grim smile, or a wry awareness that life cannot all be called reasonable or noble. (Highet 1962, 21)\(^1\)

3. The motives and attitudes of CRITICS also determine descriptions of satire and parody, since their analyses and selections of dominant traits contain important aesthetic prescriptions.\(^2\) The institutional influence on generic characterization can be observed in the critics' attempts to vindicate a less aggressive, more «human» dimension to compensate for the essential «negativity» of satiric/parodic works. Linda Hutcheon, who concentrates on parody in postmodern art, is quite insistent on the fact that this historical variety is more respectful with its sources than other variations:

[Parody] is one of the ways in which modern artists have managed to come to terms with the weight of the past (...) The modern form does not always permit one of the texts to fare any better or worse than the other. It is the fact that they differ that this parody emphasizes and, indeed, dramatizes. (1985, 29-31)

This respectful, neutral mood is not «innocent» or isolated: studies of parody and satire have been historically conditioned by two kinds of prejudice concerning the correctness of their social message; the first was once used to justify satire, the second now tends to privilege parody. The first one is primarily moral/ideological, and tends to link the status (or literary quality) of satire and parody to the approval of its moral apprehension in terms of a respectable social doctrine: hence the «implied idealism» of satire, its «ameliorative intention», and the attempts to open parody up to social and moral dimensions observed by Hutcheon (1985, 56, 16, 43). The other, more modern kind of prejudice, conversely, tends to confer aesthetic potency to parody and satire by emphasizing their subversive force. Thus, while traditional defences of satire were made on moral grounds, parody, a more contemporary art, is reflexive and exposes conventions in a more ambiguous way:

Satire affirms its model of coherence by making it highly visible; parody subverts its model of coherence through the same mechanism. And it is perhaps significant that what we generally describe as satire is the positive and affirmative variety of satire (i.e., non-inventive); what we consider parody is the subversive variety. (Dane 1980, 153)\(^3\)

The last part of this commentary by Dane accounts well for the shift towards undecidability and ambivalence proposed by others: Margaret Rose criticizes approaches in which (1993, 49) is disregarded; Linda Hutcheon repeatedly comments on the of modernist parody (1985, 57), and grants that «its range of intent is from respectful adoration to biting ridicule» (1985, 16). It is not insignificant - about both contemporary critical and artistic

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\(^1\) The style used by Rose (199, 45f), Linda Hutcheon (1985, 50f) and Dane (1980, 152-3) in their characterizations of the “ethos” of parody may be less impressionistic, but the issue remains.

\(^2\) Analysis justifies itself by vindicating the object: studies on more fashionable parody, fostered by the growing importance of intertextual practices in postmodern art and the interest in Bakhtin’s work, tend to aesthetically subordinate «dogmatic» satire to parody - speculative, double-voiced, polyphonic, subversive.

\(^3\) A good illustration of the traditional «positive» orientation of satire is provided by Rawson’s commentaries on the «unnaturalness» of Swift’s satire in *Gulliver’s Travels*: (1974, 226).
practice - that the subversive quality of parodic texts is kept within the bounds of a world of texts, while more definite, assertive external implications/functions are broadly relegated.\(^1\) C) Finally, the long history of the terms parody and satire has produced an unmanageable plethora (i) of senses and (ii) of intergeneric relations:

i) Definitions of parody and satire have often followed the «etymological» strategy. However, these approaches are paradoxically hampered by the «surplus» of descriptions originated in different languages (and different phases in the lives of languages), in the frames of different generic systems, or driven by different current creative traditions: for instance, attempts to recuperate the Greek/Latin meanings of the words are simply self-defeating because the origins of words are opaque or do not do away with ambiguity (Hight 1962, 231-233; Genette 1982, 20-36; Rose 1993, 6-19).

Other factors are more «historical» than linguistic. Many ancient definitions may be simply irrelevant for our cultural (or literary) system: for instance, Aristotle’s classification of parody as the narrative mode of comedy, the vulgar mode of epic, does not make sense outside that precise frame, and of course does not help much in Genette’s model, as he only alludes to it, without using any of its implications. At other times the problem is that history works against the theorist’s wishes, because critics find that «undesirable» senses have been used. One clear example is offered in the last part of Genette’s historical revision of definitions of parody: he complains that the nineteenth century witnessed an (unjustified) extension of the use of parody, as satiric imitation and caricature were also designated with the word parody (1982, 35-6). Is the critic authorized to unauthorize that «dark» etymological phase? If the «imperfect» generic system actually «happened» the critic’s task is simply to record it, and the critic’s attempts to discredit it can be as futile and confusing as his attempts to bring terms back to a state of purity and innocence («re»)«bautizar», Genette 1982, 37) without distinguishing this task (theoretical-prescriptive) from the previous one: after one of the diagrams (the fourth of seven in the same section of the book) designed to reorganize labels, Genette acknowledges:

*Al proponer esta reforma taxonómica y terminológica, no me hago demasiadas ilusiones sobre la suerte que le espera. Como la experiencia ha demostrado tantas veces, si nada hay más fácil que introducir en el uso un neologismo, nada hay más difícil que extirpar de él un término o una acepción heredados, una costumbre adquirida.* (1982, 38-9)\(^2\)

ii) This reflection can be used to introduce the other problem - intergeneric links - and even the next section (1.2) as all aspects are affected by the tension between common language, the «vulgar», and theoretical analysis. Genette acknowledges some cultural confusion: (1982, 36).The critic is forced to succumb to one of the famous antithetical aspirations of generic criticism - the historical or the theoretical: to «represent» actual usage (which, as in Genette’s case, may be thought unsatisfactory, confusing, incomplete, variable, etc.), or to classify, to «represent» ideal, organized usage, or in Rosmarin’s words:

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\(^1\) Hutcheon claims that ideological implications are not absent from her treatment (1985, 28) and chapter 6 of her book is a systematic attempt to make up for the impression that her approach neglects what she calls «worldly connections» (1985, 104). However, it has to be conceded that the (1985, 104) prevents her from taking more seriously studies in which parody is more committedly treated as *Ideologiekritik* (1985, 103).

\(^2\) Genette’s attempt to stop abuse, based on evidence of historical corruption has been paradoxically described as «transhistorical» (Hutcheon 1985, 21). Hutcheon’s approach itself, while springing from a contemporary perspective («we must broaden the concept of parody to fit the needs of the art of our century». 1985, 11), inevitably tends to generalize observations.
Section 1.2 will concentrate on distinctions between satire and parody, but these are only two of the many (Hutcheon 1985, 37) that have to be ordered (and eventually dismissed). In this respect Genette and Rose are remarkably thorough taxonomists, although with different emphases: Rose (1993) contrasts as many as 13 «labels» of parody (satire not included); 1 Genette concentrates on only three major forms - pastiche, travesty and parody, but his internal distinctions and devices are much more systematically examined.

We have already referred to the ontological problem: obviously the main (negative) effect of these efforts is the creation of stable boundaries between labels; labels tend to represent preexisting conceptual territories; this also means that labels are thought to coexist simultaneously in the same system, to possess an autonomous existence. We have also referred to the functional (critical) consequences: typologizing approaches to genres tend to adapt characterizations of genres to their own particular purposes, and the problematic quality of the attributes selected is not normally perceived (or favoured). Our analytical strategy works in a contrary way, as it will elaborate its distinctions on the materials of previous definitional practices, but it will instrumentally survey those attributes of genres which are considered essential and problematic for the application - i.e. the novels - we have in mind.

1.2. Satire and Parody: Looking for Differences

The parodic-satiric text can be identified; but once identified, it forces the reader into one divergent and contradictory readings. (Dane 1980, 148)

We must be careful to keep them [parody and satire] separate. (Hutcheon 1985, 25)

An eye for resemblance is always also an eye for difference. (Rosmarin 1985, 25)

Some basic differences between satire and parody have appeared in the previous revision, but our discourse tended to unite approaches to them as opposed to approaches to more «conventional» genres. With an eye for difference I could have said that,

a) Despite shared «incompleteness», the set of «unmarked» attributes of each genre is different: «formal» parody is relatively indifferent to functional/pragmatic aspects; these factors are central in satire, but its area of form is relatively «empty».

b) The satiric-parodic text «implies a negative statement» (Dane 1980, 147), is «marked pejoratively» (Hutcheon 1985, 56); we also know that «parodic and satiric texts may be arrayed on a scale from «positive» to «affirmative» to «subversive»» (Dane 1980, 151). However satire, despite its apparently more immediate critical function, is «unlike parody ... ameliorative in its intention» (Hutcheon 1985, 16). Parody, in turn, is subversive, but modern varieties, according to Hutcheon, can be interpreted almost as respectful homages to their sources.

c) The «comic factor» is also distinctive: for Ben-Porat (1979, 247) parody is only «usually» comic, while satire is 2

1 Page numbers are within brackets: Pastiche (72), plagiarism (69), travesty (54), burlesque (54), quotation (77), persiflage (68), pekoral (68), hoax (69), metafiction (91), cross-reading (77), cento (78), contrafact (87), irony (87). Hutchinson (1985) concentrates on irony, parody, and satire, but also deals with pastiche (38), plagiarism (38), travesty (40), burlesque (40), quotation (40), and allusion (42). Other related terms are not focused on: caricature, carnivalesque, ridicule, etc.

2 For the distinction between «humorous» and «comic» as applied to parody, see Margaret Rose’s revision of the many senses historically attached to the word “comic”, which brings to surface “less funny” interpretations derived from “comedy” (1993, 20). Genette lifts this factor to a highly functional scale, as it is used to introduce a set of serious hypertextual practices (1982, 39-43).
The distribution of features, their being essential or accidental, primary or secondary, uniformly or variably found in texts, emphasised, relegated or denied, is normally subject to the function of each definition or study. In this study I will concentrate on (and question) two other features, also typically selected by critics, which can give us specific information about the novels of Mantel and Torrente Ballester: the necessity of the textual or artistic quality of the parodied object (section 1.2.1); the identification of the «message» of satire, which implies the identification of the «referents» of satire - the «target», the object represented, the norm addressed, etc. (section 1.2.2).

1.2.1 In the following brief revision of definitions (or parts of them) of satire and parody I have underlined the words that recall criteria related to the identification of the object/target/referent:

a) Hutcheon complements the contrast between our classes - on the basis of their differential «ethoi» - with a related opposition between two different realms affected: (1985, 25). When her purpose is less taxonomic (i.e., when she concentrates on parody itself), she introduces a set of related (but not identical) features:

parody can obviously be a whole range of things. It can be a serious criticism, not necessarily of the PARODIED-TEXT; it can be a playful, genial mockery of CODIFIABLE FORMS. (1985, 15)

parody's target text is always another work of art or, more generally, another form of coded discourse. (1985, 16)

What, then, can be parodied? Any codified form can, theoretically, be treated in terms of repetition with critical distance, and not necessarily in the same medium or genre. Literature is famous for parodying non-literary discourse (...) To say, quite simply, that any codified discourse is open to parody is more methodologically cautious and more true to fact than to assert, as some do, that only mediocre works of art can be parodied. (1985, 18)

When we speak of parody, we do not just mean two texts that interrelate in a certain way. We also imply an intention to parody another work (or set of conventions) and both a recognition of that intent and an ability to interpret the backgrounded text in its relation to the parody. (1985, 22)

Parody, then, is related to burlesque, travesty, pastiche, plagiarism, quotation, and allusion, but remains distinct from them. It shares with them a restriction of focus: its repetition is always of ANOTHER DISCURSIVE TEXT. (1985, 43)

b) Tuvia Shonkly (1966), quoted by Rose (1993, 82) and ratified by Hutcheon (1985, 43), relies more explicitly uniform and «precise» criteria, as all elements involved seem to qualify as literary: LITERARY parodies, unlike satire, imitate other LITERARY TEXTS and affect LITERARY FORMS.

c) There are more nuances in Margaret Rose's opinions than in Shonkly's: although she defines parody as (1993, 52), and what is reproduced is (1993, 36), she DENIES THAT ONLY LITERARY FORMS are affected by the parodic operation. Besides, she does not endorse that artistic material cannot be the target of satire or imitated in it, only that it is not necessarily built on it:

... one major factor which distinguishes the parody from satire is ... the parody's use of the PREFORMED MATERIAL of its «target» as a constituent part of its own structure. Satire, on the other hand, need not restrict the imitation, distortion or quotation of other LITERARY TEXTS OR

Hutcheon's disagreement with Genette in this respect is important (1985, 21), because he eventually gives a different name to «serious» parody.
A PLURALIST APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF ARTISTS' WORKS, and when it does deal with such WORKS, need not make itself as dependent upon it for its own character as does the parody, but may simply make fun of it as a target external to itself. (1993, 81-2)

d) Ben-Porat’s formal definitions of parody and satire, elaborated from a multitude of contributions on these genres, «orthodoxically» summarize bibliography on the genres:

Parody = An alleged representation, usually comic, of A LITERARY TEXT OR OTHER ARTISTIC OBJECT - i.e., a representation of a which is itself already a particular representation of an ORIGINAL REALITY. The parodic representations expose the model’s conventions and lay bare its devices through the coexistence of the two codes in the same message.

Satire = A critical representation, always comic and often caricatural of - i.e., OF THE REAL OBJECTS which the reader reconstructs as the referents of the message. The satirized original reality» may include MORES, ATTITUDES, TYPES, SOCIAL STRUCTURES, PREJUDICES, AND THE LIKE. . (1979, 247)

In the previous definitional efforts the literary (or aesthetic) quality of several ingredients involved is considered a crucial feature; some problems are manifest:

1) The exactitude of the demand of «literariness» for the parodied object is far from uniformly expressed. Generally speaking, Shonky’s literary «purity» has definitely been eroded in latter approaches: Linda Hutcheon, for instance, concedes that other codified texts or forms of codified discourse, even «sets of conventions» can be parodied. This is an important release; however, the notion of the necessity of artistic status uncertainly persists in some commentaries: Margaret Rose still demands that source texts are literary (1993, 52), and when Hutcheon is forced to answer the typical accusation that only poor works of art can be parodied we feel that a vindication of literariness as a mark of prestige is still present.1

2) The previous formulations also problematically retain the notion that the possession of artistic status is «natural». This complaint is not primarily referred to works as wholes, but to features. The doctrine of the contextual, pragmatic, historical, and social determination of «literariness» is well established in the poststructuralist world, but the ghostly presence of the essentialist myth is felt at a lower scale, and for the works seem to have «inherited» some «essentially literary» status from works that other features do not possess. This tendency is just another version of the «essentialistic» conception of genres commented on above (section 1): works qualify for genres in a similar fashion as they qualify as literature or works of art; features used to define literary genres become essentially «literary» themselves.

Such tendency can be observed in Hutcheon’s distinction between aesthetic and social-moral norms (1985, 25): the intrinsic ingredients of the «aesthetic» of parody (!) should be explicitly and rigorously determined; more importantly, it should be shown that «aesthetic» elements of works are not fundamentally affected by social/moral implications. Of course, the logic of the definitional procedure tends to essentialize the literary status of features and create a priory borders between them.

Some degree of uncertainty is also present in Margaret Rose’s commentaries on the features that are imitated in parodic operations (1993, 52): while source texts have to be

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1 Hutcheon’s defensive commentary addresses the prejudiced connection between parody and sub-literature, but it comes to reinforce the myth of an essential border dividing the artistic and the non-artistic. This prejudiced view is not easily eliminated when we consider Ben-Porat’s excellent formal analysis of the MAD satires of TV serials as MASH: these satires are defended on account of their analytic potential.

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«literary works», parodies are said to be built on «preformed» (codified?) materials of these literary works, and they can be. An essentialist identification between formal ingredients and aesthetic status is avoided, but two issues remain unsolved: a) the necessity of literariness (of the parodied object) is not logically (or functionally) justified; b) the alternative is ambiguous, because the relationship between these two (as inferred from the commentary from page 82) seems to make the linguistic a mere index of similarity between parodic and parodied text.

3) Hutcheon’s decision to distinguish between the nature of norms (aesthetic vs. moral/social) affected and the nature of texts parodied is a positive factor, as it allows for a more precise description. However, distinctions between descriptive realms should be more precisely formulated, and this claim is meant in two senses:

a) The applicability of statements should in each case be explicitly limited to the specific constituents of the parodic and satiric operations affected - the parodic text, the source text, the set of norms addressed, the satiric target, the features imitated. For instance, in parody, imitation of verbal (linguistic) formulas does not necessarily mean that only a set of verbal norms is addressed; the imitation of the feature «style» of an object («source-text») only necessarily indicates another object that possesses that feature, not that the norm the parodist is necessarily (and exclusively) addressing (or exposing) is the style of that object.

b) The implications of concepts chosen for the definition should be made operative in the application, i.e., they should lead to effective discrimination. Linda Hutcheon’s (1985, 15, 16, 18, 22, 43) use of the concepts «codified discourses», «texts», «forms», «works», «sets of conventions», «discursive texts» to refer to source (parodied) texts, provides us with a good example. These words belong to different theoretical frameworks and reflect different statuses, different degrees of completeness and formalization (or verbalization) of the parodied object: «work» belongs to a different theoretical domain than «SET of conventions»; «work», «text», «discourse» are not freely interchangeable, unless we use them in a «weak» sense, or unless our discourse as a whole is designed as «weak» in a metatheoretical sense (Mooij 1979; Dolezel 1990). It obviously follows that the choice of any of these labels (as opposed to any other) should significantly affect our analysis.

Ben-Porat’s definition provides us with another example: while the first part of each definition is clearly conventional, with the opposition between the representation of a literary text or other artistic object and the real objects, the second part introduces the opposition, which in fact points towards a process or sequence: (parodied) texts «model» on unmodelled realities, and then other texts (parodic ones) «model» on those modelled realities. Two problems are apparent:

- We could infer from the structure of the definition that the modelled/non-modelled opposition is simply equivalent with the literary/non-literary one, which messes up descriptive realms.

- The notion that the realities satirized (which include ) have to be approached as seems to imply that only when realities have been «written in literary texts» they can aspire to be legitimately interpreted and analysed as systems of signs that make texts of their own.

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A more decisive effort at distinguishing between the constituents of the analysis and the domains of our approach is needed. A first step is the simplification of the demand of literariness or aesthetic quality for texts, norms, principles and features for parody, because parody and satire have been made to represent a few oppositions that only obscure the
relationship between both.¹ In our view the relationship between parody and satire has to be redefined and more effectively discriminated in the narrower frame of the model of the sign and its constituents, and in the application of linguistic metalanguage.

Such necessary simplification is attempted in Joseph Dane’s (1980) approach to parody and satire. However, my selection of this critic’s contribution does not exactly mean that Dane’s departure from previous approaches is radical, nor that all conflicts have been successfully disentangled into an undisputable taxonomic diagram, nor that the previous methodological objections are completely dissolved, only that his treatment invites critical consideration of the problems in a more forceful and genuine way, that discussion, though still problematic, seems to me to have a stronger instrumental potential. Let me start with some of Joseph Dane’s short definitions particularly concerned with the notion of the referent, but concentrated on a simplified, systematic set of oppositions, derived from the notion of the sign and its structure:

1) Satire refers to things; parody refers to words. The target and referent of satire is a system of content (res); that of parody is a system of expression (signum). (1980, 145)

2) Parody has as its referent a sign system or an expression; satire has as its referent a state of things (physical or conceptual) that is regarded primarily in its non-signifying capacity. (1980, 148)

3) Within the category expression or signum I include literary texts, literary conventions, generic rules, language, etc. Within the category content or res I include society and social rules, concepts, systems of thought, etc. (1980, 150)

4) Parody refers us to the sign itself, or to a system of signs. Satire refers us to the contents of signs, which I designate as a system of res. Parody thus turns a sign (a text) into a referential object. Satire takes an object (e.g., society) and ultimately turns it into a sign (usually of some moral good or evil). (1980, 150)

Some of the previous methodological reservations can be invoked again, but at least the artistic quality of source texts or features cannot be said to interfere in the definition, and more significant is the justification that it is the reading of parodic/satiric texts that makes the identification of referents as words or things (readers determine the status of referents):

the status of an object in the world is not what qualifies it as res or signum. Res/signum does not refer to qualities in the object; rather this dichotomy delineates two fundamental ways of interpretation, or two opposed ways of reading a text. (1980, 151)

The difference between the two genres is to be found less in the texts themselves than in the reader’s choice of interpretants and referents for those texts. (1980, 153)

However I will specifically consider a basic distinction:

A) A few different oppositions are juxtaposed to distinguish parody from satire. From extracts 1, 2 and 4 (first half) above we get the following list of opposed referents:

¹ The confusion is generated by the juxtaposition of the intra/extramural dichotomy (art/life) and the form/content dichotomy: a multitude of concepts like form, language, structure, aesthetic norms, discourse, modelled reality tend to be associated with the side of the opposition, while another set of concepts like content, people, objects, mores, ideologies, moral-social norms, target, non-modelled reality, or simply reality, falls in the other end (1).
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<th>SATIRE</th>
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<td>A RES</td>
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<td>D state of things</td>
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<tr>
<td>F system of content</td>
<td>system of expression</td>
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<tr>
<td>G content of signs</td>
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The extension of the res/signa opposition seems clearly established in the first rows (A, B, and C), as the «object/sign» and «word/thing» formulas look like a «natural» and metaphorical translation of the Latin labels. As we get into subsequent oppositions, however, new possibilities (and indeterminacies) are introduced: in row D «thing» does not seem to change its status («state of things»), while sign is now designated «system of signs». This implies a different descriptive realm, because the new formula focuses on the code, not on particular instances of codified discourse. The shift from members of systems to systems themselves is completed in row D, as things are also attributed a general system that organizes them. Does this imply that «states of things» are organized into systems independently of the verbal systems that designate them? This possibility is accepted, since both physical and conceptual states of things (eg., systems of thought) are included. In row F a more radical alternative possibility is introduced, because, apart from the reference to the systems addressed, expression and content are constituents of the sign, i.e., we have moved from an opposition between «objects of reality» and the «language that designates them» to an internal dimension within the sign, with «content» ambiguously reproducing «reality», and «expression» representing the whole of the «sign». Though problematic, this last opposition is still established between elements at the same conceptual level; in row G this taxonomic fetish of symmetry is also shattered, because the content of signs is explicitly opposed to signs themselves, that is, the part is opposed to the whole.

The lack of strict equivalence between the senses adopted by RES/SIGNUM should not, however, be considered a negative factor if we conceive that all oppositions at least share an overall functional paradigm, and a common sign framework: in this sense they can be understood as a catalogue of roles to be variously associated with the objects/texts we study as parodic and satiric; bearing in mind the important fact that they are selected and understood by the reader as functions between entities (signs/objects), or as functions between ingredients of those entities. Another advantage is that genre labels themselves become dynamic indicators of relations between signs and things; this functional logic shown above also represents the different functions that are established between parody and satire themselves: (1980, 150). This functional approach is prevalent in the postulation of two simultaneous non-symmetrical oppositions: a «word» referent is opposed to the «thing» referent, but inside a «word» (precisely designated «signum») the opposition is reproduced as expression/content, with the plane of content designated «res». In other words, some horizontal relations (parody and satire are logical opposites at the same level - as expression versus content, or word versus thing) are perceived, but also a vertical relation (each one can be a subcategory of the other): satire and parody are related according to the signifying capacity assigned to the referents of texts - i.e., whether or not referents are perceived to «function» as complete signs, as objects represented by signs, as expressions, signifiers, signifieds, etc.
B) Yet, Dane does not completely abandon essentialist identifications: in the practical indication of ideal candidates for satire and parody (extracts 3 and second half of 4) Dane identifies «signa» with «official», institutionalized aesthetic objects as (my underlining). This recalls Ben-Porat’s identification of «modelled realities» (or Hutchon’s «codified discourse») with «work of art» contradicts the functional orientation proposed before: the differences between parodic and satiric relations are not based on the possibility of identifying significations in the objects, but still on the (ultimately) aesthetic status of objects; the possibility of analysing cultural objects «as signs», is not considered within the scope of parody. In this sense, Dane’s methodological move to a functional semiotic perspective is only suggested, not fully realized: «expression» is intrinsically linked to the literary (and to parody); objects/contents are restrictively interpreted as the matter of satire. A prominent case of necessary interpretation as «res» (thus as satire) is that of Dane’s description of «systems of thought» and «social rules»:

When a reader confronts Finnegans Wake, for example, he can take it as a satire on the mores of Dublin (...) To take Finnegans Wake as at all coherent, I am forced to see its referents as that is, I am forced to read the book as a parody. The norms and models I supply are literary. (1980, 157. My underlining)

The inclusion of a system of thought within my category res is crucial. A philosophical or theological system is certainly composed of signs intended to say something about the world; however, such a system is primarily the «referent» of the signs (real or imagined) that express it. (1980, 158. My underlining)

The first extract illustrates previously denounced assimilations of satire to non-textual realities and of parody to literary texts. The decision reflected in the second extract is a much more sophisticated version of the previous assimilation: when a system of thought is addressed in a parodic/satiric text we must decide it is a case of satire because the system is not to be identified with the signs «that express it». Another explanation is that the system of thought is not «contained» or «reflected» in the signs «that express it», i.e. is essentially detached from them, and perhaps can be distinguished from the code of the signs «that express it». My view is that many systems of thought, particularly religious ones, can be analysed and grasped through the systems of expressions built on them (not to say that systems are themselves constituted by them), that systems of thought characterized by formalized discourses «make signs» with them and have to be decoded as complete signs. To take Dane’s former example of Finnegans Wake the mores of Dublin are not isolated phenomena «naturally», necessarily, lacking any «signifying capacity», ghostly manifested to the author, and by the author to the reader; they can be studied as signs in a system as far as their codified structure, and their functions in a semiotic system are identifiable. This move characterizes poststructuralist attempts to open up the use of discourse and text analysis (and, in consequence, of semiotic treatment) to cultural formations (Birch 1989, 14-6), and should have important consequences on the description of satire and parody, because the distinction on the basis of separate essences addressed by each of them simply collapses. Linda Hutchon is aware of the argument I am using when she decides to resist its implications, and Dane could have used it too: (1985: 16). Of course a perspective is not the only conceivable possibility, and there are different degrees of release of the intramural/textual restriction towards the cultural formations; in consequence, Hutchon’s choice in the context of her study does not offer a genuine argument against a «textual» approach to moral/social codes, i.e., to treating them as objects of parody, not necessarily satire. In the context of this study - the analysis of parody, and particularly Mantel’s and Torrente’s parodies - it is interesting to consider that some worldly realities - Catholic sys-
tems of thought - make a quite well-defined codified discourse, made of a multiplicity of written texts, conventions (hierarchies, regulations, rites, dogmas, etc.).

Our interest is justified by the concrete works in question, but also by a more general revision of the relationship between parody and satire. For Dane, despite the ductility and multiple relationships he grants to these genres, there is still an essentialist quality in his notion that both genres are simultaneous, mutually exclusive interpretative possibilities,¹ and his opposition breaks the fluidity of the distinction between parody and satire. In my alternative view the opposition should be substituted by a satiric continuum with a gradation of markedness from to «parodic», where parody is manifested when the system of expression of the satiric target or source text is systematically focused on, typically by exposing its «artificial» relationship with the referent or content. A text will be parodic when the formalist feature of the «laying bare of the device» is perceived to possess particular importance in the design of the parodic text, if the repetition of the plane of the expression, of the «word» of the object («ress») becomes an important structural feature, if the expression/content structure of the target is focused on.

Gerard Genette can help in this appropriation of Dane’s theory: his treatment, based on the ingredients intertextually reproduced and transformed, is made in terms amenable to the expression/content dichotomy; parodied and parodic texts are signs whose constituents are differently affected in (strict) parody, travesty and pastiche:

estas tres fórmulas producen en todos los casos un efecto cómico, en general a expensas del texto o del estilo «parodiado»: en la parodia estricta porque su letra se ve negativamente aplicada a un objeto que la aparta de su sentido y la rebaja; en el travestimiento porque su contenido se ve degradado por un sistema de transposiciones estilísticas y temáticas desvalorizadoras; en el pastiche satírico porque su manera se ve ridiculizada mediante un procedimiento de exageraciones y recargamientos estilísticos. (Genette 1982, 37)

The words underlined by me in the previous commentary share a common descriptive realm - that of the linguistic constituents of texts, parodied and parodic - and a superordinate satiric purpose, with different possible targets designated. The importance of language in the satiric and parodic effect is also present in another very interesting commentary, brought here on account of its more immediate application to the referent we have in mind - the Catholic sign. In this respect I can see an illuminating parallelism between Genette’s commentaries about the parodic effect of Homer’s formulaic language and the naturalness with which the Catholic formulaic text lends itself to parodic treatment:

Estas repeticiones [de Homero] pueden considerarse como autocitas, y puesto que el mismo texto aparece aplicado a un objeto (una intención) muy diferente, hay que reconocer en ella el principio mismo de la parodia. El principio, pero no la función, pues con estas repeticiones el aseo no intentaba seriamente hacer reír; pero si esto se produjese sin haberlo pretendido,

¹ These are the different phases of Dane’s analysis: a) Parody and satire are treated as a macro-genre (145-8); b) Symmetrical patterns are identified (151); c) Symmetry between is then proved to be negative or inverse, as opposite functions are identified for them (152-3); d) Coexistence between them is highly variable: parody can support satire (154), parody can interfere with satire (154), or «neutral» coexistence is possible, but alternatively, never simultaneously: «He [the reader] cannot indifferently place a text within parody or satire. In The Rape of the Lock, for example, a text which is certainly both satiric (of social mores) and parodic (of the epic or perhaps even of the mock-epic), the reader has such a choice: he can read it as parody or as satire, two readings which are equally legitimate but quite opposed. To take the poem as a topical satire requires that we ignore momentarily the mock-epic machinery; to laugh at the parody requires that we ignore the satiric force of the text» (Dane 1980, 156).
¿No se podría decir que había hecho involuntariamente el trabajo del parodista? Verdaderamente el estilo epico, a causa de su estereotipía formularia, no solo es un blanco diseñado para la irritación divertida y el desvío paródico, sino que además está constantemente en instancia e incluso en posición de autopastiche y de autoparodia involuntarios ([1982, 26]).

Adapting these commentaries, one of the main ideas in our analysis of the novels *Fludd* and *Crónica del rey pasmado* will be that Hilary Mantel and Gonzalo Torrente Ballester have successfully identified in their novels the parodic effects that the rigid dependence on general conventions produces on the Catholic text, especially when its complex sign structure is poorly performed, deformed, or perverted. This is the case in the fictional communities of Fetherhoughton and Madrid in Mantel’s and Torrente’s novels, where the dissociation between the «style» and the «content» of Catholic practices is clear.

1.2.2 In this section I will briefly reconsider the notion of «referent». The final purpose is to show the tendency to simplify the issue of the identification of the satiric target, to equate it with the extramural counterpart («referent») of the object focused in the fictional work; however, I will have to go too far back to the foundations of linguistic inquiry, as I will use Dane’s arguments again, and he claims to have departed from original use in the structuralist tradition. If (Dane 1980, 149), Dane’s grants new possibilities: «I will not relegate the word «referent» to “objects in the real world”. The “referent” is WHATEVER THAT WHICH IS UNDERSTOOD AS A SIGN REFERS TO. It can be either an imagined state of things in the real world, or the cultural units that refer to such states» (1980, 150. My underlining). Dane is here suggesting a release of the exclusivity of the representation or designation of a «real» object as the essence of the satiric/parodic sign; however, as the essence of every sign is precisely to refer to (i.e., to allude to) something else, Dane allows that fictional or conceptual («imagined») «objects», or other «signs» can be addressed by satiric/parodic signs; of course the distinction between «states of things» and «cultural units that refer to them» is intended to recall (and eventually justify) his basic distinction between signs and signa: parodic/satiric signs do not only refer to «things» or «contents» (in satire), but also to the «words» and «expressions» produced to represent them (in parody). There are several interesting suggestions in Dane’s presentation, but it could be complemented:

a) What Dane seems to have in mind when he uses «referent» to designate the (dimensions of) «objects» primarily addressed by the satiric/parodic signs («whatever that which is understood as a sign refers to»), could be more illuminatingly represented by the traditional formalist concept of the «the dominant», which I understand as an homological projection of the concept of referent to the domain of more sophisticated signs: (Jakobson 1981, 751. Steiner 1984, 104-6). One initial objection for the application of the notion of the dominant is its strong historical relation to the complex issue of the poetic or aesthetic function; however, I have found in this «unrelated» problem some clues on how to approach the problem of the referents of the satiric and parodic works: . (Prague Linguistic Circle’s *Theses* 1982, 18).¹ This could be paraphrased for our purposes: the organizing feature of parody by which it differs from other satiric structures is an orientation toward the sign that designates the object rather than toward what is designated. What is explored and exposed in the parodic operation is the object in the frame of its signs, the scope and validity of the relationship between both; in other words, the defective agreement between

¹ Note the interesting incomplete coincidence of words, with our semiotic metalanguage: «Dentro del marco del formalismo estoy la principal oposición se establecía entre mensajes que privilegian el *signatum* (el objeto, la referencia) frente a los lenguajes artísticos que privilegian el *signans* (la palabra como tal palabra, los signos, la forma del mensaje…)» (Pozuelo 1988, 48).
discourse and referent, the destruction of the genuine signifying capacity of discourse. In parody the effects of Jakobson’s poetic function are peculiarly imitated, because parody also (Jakobson 1960, 356). My practical application of this definition is that in the satiric attacks on the Catholic communities of Fludd and Crónica del rey pasmado a parodic principle is explored, as authors pay special attention to the effects of the overwhelming abundance and variety of Catholic signs and their problematic referential capacity in the contexts of Madrid and Fetherhoughton.

b) The substitution of the traditional notion of reference by a range of possible orientations - context, code, message, etc. - invites reconsideration of the issue of the identification of the target of satiric texts, and the principle to revise is that of the assumed identity of all factors involved in the process: represented object, satiric target, (set or sets of) norms censured, alternative norms inferred to be vindicated. All these tend to be easily identified and in some cases made equivalent. This could be a consequence of the assumed «didactic» aim of satire, and the derived notion that this aim necessarily precludes any ambiguity in the identification of objects and targets, the specification of the moral norms addressed, the distinction between fiction and reality, the borders between designation and criticism, etc. In this sense the didacticism of satire seems to coincide with the logic applied by Susan Rubin Suleiman in her application of the notion of redundancy to her analysis of authoritarian fictions: satire becomes a «highly coherent system» (1983, 172), with absence of internal contradiction, with constituents determining each other.

My commentaries on the «coherence» of satire will be here illustrated with the conventions of religious satire: fiction on Christian communities has not traditionally doubted the identity of its referents and targets; it is not a coincidence that J. Dane’s most important distinctions on kinds and rules of satire are exemplified with the analysis of hypothetical statements on the behaviour of a certain «Monk X» (1980, 151). The determination of the «message» of satiric works dealing with religious issues has normally been automatically linked to two variants - the «tone» of criticism and the «size» of the criticised object; it has to be commented, however, that these factors are not disconnected at all, because a logic of identifications and exclusions works quite smoothly on two main poles:

- When we find the representation of an individual (either a churchperson or simply someone alleged to be religious), and assume that he/she is the target, we still have to decide to what extent the target is intended by the author to be «read» as a qualified representative of the whole institution and its aims. If satire focuses on personal degeneracy, the norm of the institution may be left relatively untouched, ideal, if not indirectly reinforced. In this case the imperfect unworthy human being takes the blame, and there is no genuine revolution or subversion of established values.

- The «tone» of criticism gets inevitably darker as the norm is more substantially censured and the whole institution or its «system of thought» becomes the target. As we assume that denying or doubting the existence and attributes of God (the most substantial «norms» held by the Church) is out of the question, the typical accusations to aim at religion do not go beyond the proceedings of «the Church»; the Church, an institution, is en-

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1 It is not generally accepted that many thorny issues related to reference in fiction (Pavel 1986, 11-42), or to focalization and its effect on reliability in narrative (Yacobi 1981) are as necessary for the study of satire as other genres. The critical fortune of Swift’s (or Gulliver’s) attacks on several scientific institutions (Book 3) and the final invective against mankind after Houyhnhnmideal is a good instance of the multiplicity of possible referents and sets of ideals offered, which is caused by the simple device of creating a literary persona. To this we should add, as we shall see, the plethora of interferences caused by personal (the critic’s) taste and opinion.
visioned as manifesting itself independently from, if not in conflict with, the spiritual necessities of believers.

The novels by Mantel and Torrente are conventional in the sense that they explore this last aspect of religious satire - how individual aspirations are repressed by the institution. However, as commented above (section 1.2.1) the Catholic «problem» is more specifically handled: one of the distinctive features of the Catholic Church is the «vastness» and structuredness of its hierarchy and organization, and the strength of these may be reached at the cost of individual freedom and happiness. In the fictional village of Fetherhoughton, where Hilary Mantel’s novel is set, some religious books tend to confirm this view:

Divine Revelation, coupled with two thousand years’ experience has made the Church an incomparable teacher in matters of human conduct. There is not a walk of life, a personal activity, a private or holy occasion, on which our Holy Mother is not able to teach, encourage, warn, or advise us, from the deep knowledge she has of the human heart and mind, and their strange modes of action. (F 158)

This is only one of the several manifestations of the vastness of the Catholic discourse, as represented in Fludd and Crónica del rey pasmado; the authors of these novels comically explore the effects of such inmoderate proliferation of signs. In the fictional communities invented by Mantel and Torrente the complex systems of Catholic signs have become ineffectual, and the referential capacity of Catholic signs is inevitably undermined. Nevertheless, this should not be understood as a sketch of the probable practical «message» of Fludd and Crónica del rey pasmado, only of the first part of next section (2.1); the determination of ideal norms and targets, particularly of the vindication of the individual against institutional constraints, tends to be obscured by means of two main devices, to be explored in sections 2.2 and 2.3. A basic distinction between the quality of the fictional worlds and the plots «staged» in them by the authors is fundamental for our description, as the parodic/satiric effect of the first is complemented with new insights derived from the second.

2. PARODIC PLOTS IN PARODIC WORLDS

2.1 THE PARODIC WORLD: OPAQUE SIGNS

In Hilary Mantel’s Fludd, the bishop’s visit to Father Angwin’s Church of St. Thomas Aquinas rouses controversy about idolatry and the Fetherhoughtonians’ religious life:

Father Angwin said,
said the bishop.
Father said. (F 22)

In Torrente Ballester’s Crónica del rey pasmado Father Rivadesella frequently talks with the devil, who complains - in nearly the same way as Angwin does - about Catholics and what they pray for:

- El Señor sólo escucha las oraciones que imploran la piedad y la justicia, y vosotros no sois justos ni piadosos. No sois más que católicos.
- ¿Es que tú no lo eres?
- Sí, pero a mi modo. Quiero decir que lo soy desde la parte contraria (132)

What is the satiric meaning behind these attacks? Father Angwin abruptly disconnects the Catholics from the Christians out of the need for superstitions, ritual, and Latin; Angwin bluntly insists that the Catholic norm consists mainly of «frills», «baubles», and
«friperies». There are also private motives behind Angwin’s identification of Fetherhoughton’s religious life with the Catholic norm, to be sure, but the problem can be explained as a «theoretical» one as well: his refusal to dispose of traditional elements of Catholic identity is justified as a reaction against the bishop’s announcement of a «wind of change», and of (F 9).

Angwin is forced to bury the statues. The bishop’s new rules somehow presuppose some loss of Catholic identity, as its most conspicuous element - decoration - is rejected. From a taxonomic perspective the Roman Catholic could be envisioned as a sector of the complete Christian circle (which is paradoxical since the etymology of «catholic» is «universal»), but the inclusion of the part in the whole depends on the status granted to the aspects of Catholicism that are not shared by the other sectors. If they are deemed «accidental», unnecessary, ornamental, erasable, then the bishop’s idea of (F 9), that is, into a universal core of the true Christians, is feasible. Angwin’s deliberate splitting of Catholics from other Christians implies that these Catholic characteristics are not accidental at all. What the bishop seems to consider mere ornamentation has become the essence of Fetherhoughton’s faith, to such extent that the original purpose of Catholic institutions is abandoned:

«Have you heard of the vernacular mass? Have you thought of it? ... There are men in Rome who think of it.» (…) «Do you mean ... that they could understand what we were saying?»

Father Angwin muttered audibly. «Arrant nonsense.» (F 10)

Angwin’s Fetherhoughtonian Catholic model admittedly deviates from the standard, original Roman Catholic model they possess in Rome; it is important to note here that a necessary degree of ambiguity is introduced, as Angwin’s reservations are justified for practical reasons: the bishop himself has to concede that (F 10), and the narrator consistently makes fun of them: (F 14). Angwin does not believe that the villagers could adapt to a new approach to divine matters, especially if it involved shifting from ritual modes of expression - superstition, legend and practical regulation - toward the true substance, the «content» of the phenomenon: religion as a more abstract, personal, and intellectual activity. The problem, however, cannot be solved merely by blaming the people of Fetherhoughton: if the opulent Catholic ritual perfectly meets the aspirations and necessities of the mentally and spiritually faulty Fetherhoughtonians it is so because the model itself favours the danger of such misuse.

I first introduced a linguistic metalanguage here by equating ritual with expression and referring to the content of the religious phenomenon ambiguously. Now I shall address this metalanguage more decisively. It is indeed difficult to understand and deal with the traditional «friperies» of Catholic ritual (or discourse): Can they still impart their essential spiritual and moral messages? Although Catholics of Rome presumably know how to interpret these signs, in Fetherhoughton, Latin masses and their significance are completely lost on the villagers. We can start considering how many signs of the Catholic ritual have become blind. In fact, Father Angwin opposes intelligible masses in English. Of course he attributes it to «their little grasp of the English language» (F 10), but the application of it is more general: the importance of ritual and decoration in Catholic discourse erodes the true referential function of these signs and recalls those negative definitions of the aesthetic function in which the formalism of discourse implies a neglect of content or meaning: the mass becomes theatre, whose effect dies with the end of each performance.

Rules and prohibitions, rather than masses, seem to influence the behaviour of Catholic communities more perceptibly. However, the proliferation of these regulations also
threatens the theoretically desirable dominance of the referential function of lists of tips and commandments of different orders. In this case it is the metalinguistic, not the aesthetic, function that rules, and frequent entanglements disputing the applicable codes - not the message - occur. In other words, the profusion of rules (codes) has made communication (application and understanding of rules) easier, but rather more complex; Catholicism has let entropy enter its language as distinctions do not work easily:

The opening conflict of Torrente Ballester’s *Crónica del rey pasmado* derives from the King of Spain’s visit to a prostitute, Marfisa. This gives rise to serious dispute between «patanes alborrados de textos en latín» (CRP 72) on how to classify these sins:

Dos dominicos y dos franciscanos se habían metido a discutir sobre los pecados del Rey, a la luz de los informes llegados, a unos y otros, por caminos populares. Las posibilidades eran tres, según dichos informes: cuatro copulaciones y un fracaso en la quinta, las cuatro copulaciones sin fracaso, y el fracaso como única realidad pecaminosa. Lo que se discutía no dejaba de ser complicado: si las cuatro copulaciones debían considerarse como un solo pecado o como cuatro; si el fracaso, aislado o en conjunto unitario, debería considerarse también como falta mortal en grado de intención … (CRP 73)  

The conflict of the novel itself - the King’s decision to look at his wife’s naked body and then have sex - brings about ridiculous (but not so fictional) distinctions on sexual aspects of married life:

El varón puede acceder a la mujer con fines de procreación y, si sus humores se lo exigen, para calmarlos, pero jamás con intenciones livianas, como lo sería la de contemplar desnuda a la propia esposa (CRP 53)

In *Fludd* Sister Philomena uses anonymous confession to challenge Father Angwin’s meticulousness with ridiculous questions:  

(F 87)  
(F 87)  
(F 118)  
(F 120-1)

We are offered a parallel version of these dialogues with Sister Philomena’s problems to answer the children’s absurd questions: (F 91).

Several instances of controversy appear in the extracts quoted so far, and this analysis explores some theoretical issues. We should not think, however, that all debates are caused by theological conflicts: the conventional satirical topic of the conflicts raised by the interference of personal ambition and petty rivalry in the relations between members of the hierarchy is also prominent. It should only be commented that the presumed holiness of the vocation of priests and nuns should, in theory, minimize the effects of such typically human perversion. What happens in these two worlds is precisely the opposite: instead of the one big family of God’s children, we have a tightly structured organization in which power struggle, oppression and tension are manifest:

A complex web of hostilities can be perceived in Fetherhoughton. The bishop, who is not on good terms with Angwin, sends an assistant, Fludd, whom Angwin considers «some ordinary spy» (F 26). This is not Angwin’s only rival, as Mother Perpetua, the head of

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1 This point seems to be clearly reflected in the codes of the Church: «Pues cuatro la misma noche es el tope que los teólogos ponen a las exageraciones de la carne» (CRP 50).

2 (F 25-6).
the convent and of St. Thomas Aquinas School, expects Fludd to help eliminate Angwin (F 70f). Besides, Mother Purpit’s relationship with the sisters is far from smooth.1

Torrente’s courtly circles are more sophisticated: First, there are two hierarchies - a political and a religious - which overlap somewhat; and second, the conventional rank within each of the hierarchies is also uncertain: the King’s sex life is in the hands of (forbidden by) the Valido, who is uneasy about the recent bad influence of the mysterious Conde de la Peña Andrade. The Valido’s own sex life is greatly influenced by Germán de Villaescusa, the palace chaplain and a traditional Capuchin, whose actual status does not merit the power to control the King’s actions. This is partly due to the indifference of the «Gran Inquisidor», who only has two passive and unimportant auconfidentis - don Secundino Mirambel and Fray Eugenio de Rivadesella - looking for evidence of the presence of the devil or having conversations with him. In fact, an unknown Portuguese Jesuit, Almeida, whose position in the Spanish court is unclear, is Villaescusa’s only opposition.

Apart from some details of the relations between the characters, what I have described primarily reflects the static dimension of these works, i.e., the fictional societies in which some conflicts are set. The main quality of this static dimension was satiric: the determination of targets and norms is not difficult, and the authors’ analyses, which can be more or less objectively identified, are quite conventional. At the same time, the presence of a parodic principle is also apparent, as the wealth of formal elements of Catholic discourse is explicitly used to ridicule its deformed practices; besides, the diagnosis of the Catholic anomalies parallels our arguments for the definition of parody against satire, as the dissociation between the word and the object is the problem reflected upon. It is only necessary to make precise now how the sense of ambiguity so many critics have identified in parody is introduced in the novels considered. Two devices are to be distinguished; both affect the dynamic dimension of the novels - i.e., the plots.

2.2 PARODIC PL MotoS (I): PERVERSIONS THAT PROTECT.

An informal functional (actantial) analysis of the stories of Mantel’s and Torrente Ballester’s novels brings to the surface surprising similarities, and also several significant differences.

To start with the similarities, the aspirations (OBJECTS) of several SUBJECTS (the King and the Queen want to have a free sex life; Father Angwin wants to lead the quiet, conventional priestly life he is used to; Sister Philomena longs for secular life, or simply life) are thwarted by OPPONENTS in the name of power and orthodoxy (the Valido and Villaescusa make the success of the army in Europe and the arrival of ships full of gold from America depend on the king’s virtue; the bishop’s modernization of Catholic life has left Angwin without the tools of his trade; Mother Perpetua’s conventional strictness is destroying the sensual Sister Philomena, who feels no real vocation).2 Some HELPERS are decisive in the consummation of the subjects’ wishes: Almeida and Andrade arrange a successful meeting between the king and the queen and «defeat» the opponents, since Villaescusa is sent to Rome with the promise of promotion and the Valido converts to the religion of sexual tolerance (CRP, 224-5). Fludd helps Angwin get his statues back and

1 The description of the different groups of the Catholic community - the Children of Mary, the Men’s Fellowship, their relations with Protestants, with people from other towns, etc. are equally governed by a sense of emnity: (F 73).

2 From the very moment she is introduced, precisely at the burial of statues (F 32-5), we are told of her strength, of her physicality.

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resist the bishop’s authority through blackmail; Fludd elopes with Sister Philomena, leading her to freedom and defloration in Manchester, and sets Mother Purpit on fire.

This sketchy presentation will suffice to introduce a basic problem: the solutions to the conflicts of Sister Philomena and the King can be said to support a correct (conventional, modern, liberal) approach to religion against a conservatively orthodox vision;¹ in both cases individual aspirations are made to triumph over institutional orthodoxy, and it is inferred that the worlds of these people should not be affected by the principles that have oppressed them. Angwin’s case is significantly different: even though he is also a victim and his personal choice not threatened by institutional power, he is supposed to abide by the «wrong», deformed principles.

Hilary Mantel’s benevolence with Angwin’s figure can be interpreted as a mark of ambiguity in her satric «message» and forces us to look for a superior set of norms in the novel. In my opinion the solution lies in the problem of faith, which reverses the conventional situation: (F 27). Angwin’s complaint is typically directed against modern times in general. However, instead of focusing on the typical issue of the oppressive power of the Church’s sophisticated apparatus, we find that the «deformed» quality of superstition/ritual can play an unexpected, protective function for those who have to experience their lack of faith as a deeply-felt personal tragedy; priests are supposed to be ideal candidates for that unenviable position, and that is Angwin’s, as he unexpectedly confesses to Fludd:

I thought to myself a priest must believe in God, or at least pretend to; and who knows, if I pretend for thirty years, for forty years, perhaps the belief will grow back in again, the mask will grow into the flesh ... And with that as my philosophy, it somehow seemed possible to go on, enclosed in ritual, safe as houses, as they say. (F 52)

Angwin’s atheism is of a extremely peculiar sort, as he confesses to know the devil, a tobaccoist called Judd McEvoy (F 53 138, 144, 161); this is explicitly denied by Sister Philomena («I saw the devil myself when I was seven. He was nothing like McEvoy»). F 109). Anyway, Angwin’s lack of faith explains his extreme dependence on legend, superstition, and idolatry, even at the cost of common sense. In angry refutation of Fludd’s words he declares that (F 50).² The implication is that in Angwin’s private (and hopefully provisional) system, religion is totally disconnected from the private sphere: faith, sin and grace are linked to personal experience as much as to common sense. Without faith, sin and grace are dependent on absurd external codes, as common sense is not evident. This explains Angwin’s inebriety in answering Sister Philomena’s questions. His confidence in precise rules, codes, and prescriptions for all aspects of life betrays him. He cannot imagine appropriate, canonical solutions for Philomena’s absurd problems, and he is reluctant to appeal to common sense - the modern orthodoxy - as this would result in a recommendation that both should not get entangled in the web of sterile casuistry. Mantel, however, even goes beyond modern orthodoxy, as she permits open betrayal of the principles of a «good» religion to defend personal freedom and drama, even if the sincerity behind one’s hypocrisy is exposed.³

¹ The tradition of forcing children into monastic life is not so acceptable: (F 97).
² Andrada’s opinion explicitly contradicts Angwin and agrees with Fludd: «Sólo es pecado lo que se hace como pecado» (CRP 132).
³ It is important to remember that the bishop’s ecumenical solution is punished, perhaps on the grounds of its lack of sincerity: his old book of questions and answers invites us to think of an opportunistic modernization of message, or style, an adjustment to Protestants (F 9). Another aspect to consider is that Angwin is not interested in forcing people into acceptance of his set of lies, and he does not use a pretended faith as one of his tools.
These problems are also handled in *Crónica del rey pasmado*, but in two instances, with opposite orientations and different degrees of explicitness. First, Torrente’s handling of faith and ritual clearly parallels Mantel’s. Almeida’s complaint against Villacasusa’s formal orthodoxy is linked to his presumed lack of faith; Villacasusa is, like Angwin, spuriously using doctrine for personal purposes:

- Que Dios me castigue si me equivoco, pero ese fraile no cree en Dios ... Es de esos hombres que hablan, gritan, agitan, amenazan, todo en nombre de la doctrina más pura, pero jamás se atreven a mirarse en el interior. ¿Le ha escuchado alguna vez referirse al Evangelio? ¿Cree Vuestra Excelencia que tiene la menor nocición de la caridad? El padre Villacasusa cree en todo lo que cree la Santa Madre Iglesia, pero sobre todo, cree en la Iglesia, a la cual pertenece y a la cual encarga de que crea por él; dentro de la cual espera medrar y, sobre todo, mandar. (CRP 77)\(^1\)

Villacascusa’s orthodoxy represents a «negative» application of the formula heading this section - perversions that protect. But Villacasusa’s is not the only case: although much more subtly, lack of faith is also hidden behind the apparatus in the case of the «Inquisidor»:

- Excelencia, ¿cree usted en Dios?
  Y el Gran «Inquisidor» sonrió tiernamente, pero su sonrisa se transformó en una mueca triste.
  - Hay muchos libros escritos sobre Dios, pero todos caben en una palabra: o sí, o no. (CRP 206)

Apart from the difference in explicitness, the «Inquisidor»’s position is obviously much more comfortable than Angwin’s, as he can resist by passively witnessing others’ acts, or by creating councils to study every possible conflict that could be solved with a bit of common sense, or by directly addressing the essence of religion - faith. The only element of «tragedy» about the «Inquisidor» that is constantly repeated in the novel is his forced denial of his personal devotion to aesthetic and sensuous pleasures (CRP 57-9, 60, 71), his «flojera romana» (CRP 102). His position, provided he is reserved and hypocritical, is secure enough; however, he misses «las tolerancias de la corte romana», the Catholic religion of Rome: (CRP 57). Perhaps more «orthodox» judges would interpret some of the «Inquisidor»’s inclinations, such as his enjoyment of naked beauty, as licentious and sinful, while the more tolerant would accept the naturalness of this interest as purely aesthetic. The orthodox counterargument comes easily enough: is not the tolerant view a concession to human weaknesses, i.e., to the devil’s power? How much individual pleasure is acceptable in one’s life without seriously damaging life’s purity? This argument is ultimately based on the assumption that pleasure derives from the devil and that God demands the avoidance of pleasure. I only want to make textual and critical claims about the two novels considered here, and not discuss theological issues. Besides, the previous questions and the arguments that follow, as well as the set of clearcut distinctions between the holy and the wicked that can be formulated by looking at Catholic writings, are deliberately proved absurd or impossible to answer if we look for evidence in the plots of

\(^1\) It is remarkable that Almeida says after he has opposed Villacasusa in a formal reunion of the Inquisition - «la Suprema» - in which he has refuted the accusation that the king has been adulterous, basing his argument on the dangerous principle that the king and the queen are not properly married, as they were not truly free to decide. The effect of the debate that follows, absurd but strictly orthodox, is equivalent to that achieved by Sister Philomena’s questions, as general principles and common sense violently clash with well-established assumptions.
Mantel’s and Torrente’s novels. As shown in the following section, God and the devil ambiguously collaborate in the same enterprise, thus making the determination of the sanctity of the set of norms defended a more intricate issue than expected for satire.

2.3 PARADOX PLOITS (II): UNCERTAIN ALLIANCES AND MYSTERIOUS IDENTITIES

«I have come to transform you. Transformation is my business» (F 55). What is the meaning of the transformations performed by Fludd, Almeida and Andrade? They may be religiously ambiguous, but the prevailing principle - the superiority of individual aspirations and personal happiness over demands and regulations of the institution - is clear enough. In the two texts, however, the authors seem to have obscured the liberal (modern orthodox) message, and frustrated simplistic interpretations. The uncertain identities of Fludd, Almeida and Andrade (and the association between the last two) suggest designs strangely shared by God and his natural enemy - the devil. Although perhaps unintended by the authors, Catholic emphasis on the figure of the devil may reveal a secret scheme, devised by God and the devil, to protect themselves. Surprisingly, both supernatural powers agree on what is immoral in Catholicism: superstition and the emphasis on supernatural mediation. The devil’s answer is quite emphatic:

- Entonces, que el Rey vea o no a la Reina desnuda, ¿no influye en la llegada de la armada a Cádiz, o en la derrota de nuestras tropas en Flandes?
- La arribada de los barcos a Cádiz depende sólo de que los ingleses lleguen a tiempo de impedirla, y la derrota de las armas españolas en Flandes tiene bastante que ver con la calidad del armamento, con la disciplina de las tropas y con la posición de los contendientes. Dados esos factores, ganará el general que sepa usarlos mejor. (CRP 132)

When faced with superstition, Almeida (CRP 80) and Fludd (F 100) also prefer to give logical, physical explanations. The paradox lies in the denial of the active role of the supernatural (and of myth, miracle, and superstition) by supernatural beings using their extraordinary powers: Catholic fantastic creatures reject Catholic fantasy.

How are these powers revealed in the novels? Interestingly the deep-level equivalence between the transforming forces in the novels is arranged differently on the surface. A troubled character, Fludd, acts both as angel and devil, while Andrade and Almeida are less equivocal.

The identification of Andrade, although indefinite, is carried out by a myriad of signs applicable to the figure of the devil: apart from his sudden (dis)appearances and extraordinary capacity to get relevant information (CRP 142, 151, 153), the «Inquisidor» sees him as a cock (CRP 87, Rivadesella sees another when speaking to the devil, CRP 135). Only to doña Paca de Távora does he reveal himself openly: (CRP 168-9). Almeida is more human: he is an intelligent heterodox Jesuit who ardently defends his liberal faith. The only questionable details are his mysterious Brazilian origin, secret English destination, and his friendship with Andrade - all conspicuously impious details!1

Fludd is more complex and problematic, first because he is a reincarnated historical figure, a physician, alchemist and mystical philosopher called Robert Fludd, or Robertus de Fluctibus («It is no more surprising to be born twice than to be born once». F 56); second,

1 Some supernatural details should not be completely forgotten: Andrade’s origins are also unknown (CRP 17). When Almeida and Andrade leave Madrid they disappear from the memory of people (CRP 223, 227). The character of Fludd is also decorated by striking features: people cannot remember his face when not he is absent (F 49, 55, 116); his drinking and eating does not consume food (F 139); he can see in the dark (F 108).
because his plan, motives and personality accommodate the more elusive and modest behaviour and problems of his protégés (Angwin and Philomena); third, because his few meditations show a pious man devoutly, humbly praying for everybody else and for his own salvation (F 77-79). This complexity is confirmed by the «general increase in holiness» after the «arrival of Father Fludd in the parish» (F 75). However, one can also detect darker connotations in his activity and identity: his ironic commentary on his skill with fire - «the devil is a great chemist» (F 173) - is deliberately challenging. More significant is the novel's climax in which, when Fludd «seduces» Philomena, she suspects he is the devil:

Man or devil, she thought, devil or devil's pawn, you'll only damn my immortal soul. That's all you'll do.

Fludd said, «I would have a relish for you. It is strange that you would think the devil a man of fiery tastes, there is nothing he likes better at his banquet than the milk-toast soul of a tender little nun. If I were the devil, you would not be clever enough to find me out. Not until I had dined on you and dined well.» (F 110)

He does exactly this at the end of the novel, and the interpretation of Philomena's «liberation» becomes as ambiguous as Fludd’s identity.¹ For instance, Fludd, in agreement with his historical counterpart, describes alchemy as a mystical art of transformation parallel to his own activity in Mantel’s novel, as «a deep science releasing spirit from matter» (F 106): his alchemy transforms Philomena essentially into the Irish woman Roisin O’Halloran (F 153). The general implication (or «message») is that the Catholic world should also do away with the matter - the ritual, the word, the sign - and concentrate on true contents - the spirit, the individual - but the inference falts when it is interpreted as the devil’s triumph. Thus satire becomes much more ambiguous than initially expected, or than its traditional theory allows.

3. CONCLUSION

The preceding analysis of Hilary Mantel’s Fludd and Gonzalo Torrente Ballester’s Crónica del rey pasmado has revealed some important parallelisms between the authors’ diagnoses of possible perversions of Catholic practices. The impoverished performances of these Irish and Spanish communities are justified precisely by the gap between those practices and the sophistication generated by the institution. The opposition between theory and practice overlaps with several other distinctions - notably the personal «essence» of religion and institutional regulations (rituals, norms, formulas, legends, etc.). The authors show that the Catholic «system» is not precise and smooth, but simply an entropy. Besides, this environment does not detect fraud; it tends to favour it. These observations have been illustrated by linguistic or semiotic metalanguage. I have described the institutional-theoretical dimension as discourse, expression, and signs, which were originally intended to designate the personal dimension, in turn identified as content and object (thing/res) or referent. The failure of Fetherhoughton and Madrid’s Catholic performances can be thus interpreted as signs that do not work. The referential function of their messages is not properly realized, since the poetic and the metalinguistic functions dominate. We have also observed that although the narrative structures that manifest these diagnoses and concerns are different, they prove broadly equivalent.

¹ The night before eloping with Fludd, Philomena has a revealing nightmare: «Marauding nightmares circled her brain like the outriders of a guerrilla band. Nigredo, a huge blackamoor, offered her a cigarette from a silver case. Albedo, an angel, lit it for her. They wrestled on the allotments, rolling over and over on the rough ground. Later they linked arms, and sang “Danny Boy”» (F 112).
However, apart from knowledge about the novels in this comparative analysis, I have aimed to relate critical observations to other dimensions of literary research: the analysis appears within the frame of a discussion of the methods of genre manipulation. The concrete information is deliberately contrasted with established principles of the genres these novels «belong» to; even further, our analysis revolves around two genre features contradicted by these two novels: the common notion that parody is exclusively built on artistic sources and principles is invalidated, and the idealism and moral overdetermination of satire is also discussed.

More transcendental has been our attempt to redefine the relationship between satire and parody; the distinction between them is precisely based on the relevance or dominance of sign relationships in parody. At this level, our «negative» use of available genre studies on parody and satire and our alternative formulation have also been explained: the aim has not been to denounce «false» approaches to these genres nor to introduce the «true» one, but to oppose the restrictive interpretative effect of genre descriptions (on concrete works), and to counteract the power of genre descriptions themselves to produce natural entities. In fact, the identification of obscure or blurred manifestations of traditional tenets of parody and satire may illustrate these genres in the postmodern age: Linda Hutcheon’s idea that parody contains an ambiguous blend of caricature and homage is reinforced by our examples, and the same applies to satire, which nowadays cannot be too dogmatic. I think these ideas are present in the views of Catholicism that Mantel and Torrente put forward in their novels, where Madrid’s and Fetherhoughton’s Catholic models are seen as parodies of its essence and original quality. The authors’ narrative twists, however, make this conventional view ambiguous, as the fates of individual victims and their oppressors, predetermined by God and the devil’s collaboration, do not strictly agree with the orthodox norm they - God and the devil - tolerate and encourage.

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