

ABSTRACT

Marriage as Unifying Theme in the Early Modern Spanish Religious Drama

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In this thesis, I will examine the role of the nuptial reality in the religious drama of the Spanish Golden Age as a unifier of the sacred and profane elements of the human condition. In doing so, I will propose that the unifying role of marriage can be best appreciated when viewed through a non-competitive, or teleological, understanding of the relationship between divinity and humanity. I will establish the cultural context in which the role of marriage as a unifying theme must be approached and will then analyze certain theatrical works from three playwrights: José de Valdivielso's *autos sacramentales*, Marcela de san Félix's *Coloquios del Alma*, and Lope de Vega's *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*. Through my examination of these dramas, I will demonstrate that the mystical wedding serves as a teleological unifier of the sacred and profane spheres of Spanish Baroque society. I will conclude by reemphasizing the importance of this thesis and by suggesting other necessary avenues of study.

Marriage as Unifying Theme in the Early Modern Spanish Religious Drama

by

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DEDICATION

To *mi esposa querida*, whose unwavering love and support
lights my way and gives me life. And, as always, *ut in
omnibus glorificetur Deus...*

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The *Comedia de Santos* and the Question of Baroque Tension

“To be, or not to be- that is the question” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* III.1, v. 64).

Despite containing only eight unique words and a total of thirty letters, the opening verses to Hamlet’s soliloquy in Act III of Shakespeare’s tragedy bearing the same name is perhaps one of the most famous lines in English theater. Recognized and parodied across generations and media forms, this sentence embodies one of the key reasons for the stage’s popularity: its ability to address the existential questions of the human condition not merely by writing or reciting them, but by acting them out. The staging of the central concerns of humanity brought Shakespeare and his contemporaries fame across England and beyond, but the flourishing of Early Modern theater in its many forms was not confined to English speakers. In his article “All the Town Is a Stage: Civic Ceremonies and Religious Festivities in Spain during the Golden Age,” José Antonio Mateos Royo notes the immense impact that playwrights and their works wielded over the culture of Spain during the Golden Age. According to Royo:

The great success of the Spanish stage during the Golden Age is unquestionable. If the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced in Spain great writers who created splendid comedies, autos and dramas, the importance of this theatre was increased by its social impact. Its incredible popularity, that saw Spanish theatre disseminated throughout the whole country in this period, seems to be the result of the ability of the comedians to perform either religious or profane drama and to satisfy the popular demand for new theatrical production. (181).

In a nation heavily influenced by the decrees of the Council of Trent, the surging Catholic Counterreformation, the discovery of the Americas, and the beginning of the decline of

Spanish imperial power, the existential questions of the Spanish Baroque represented within *comedias* and *autos* were very frequently manifestations of a single issue: the relationship between the high and the low, the divine and the human, and the sacred and the profane. This set of questions reveals what some critics have termed the “universal y trágica dualidad del barroco” (Gonzalez 71), a worldview of the Spanish Golden Age which “define los dos términos de la dualidad desde diferentes puntos de vista: físico-espiritual, cuerpo-espíritu, sensual-divino, sentidos-nada, belleza-muerte, temporal-eterno, sueño-vida. La afirmación simultánea de ambos elementos constituye más que un ‘hombre barroco’ una actitud barroca” (Gonzalez 72). Hundreds of studies have been conducted on the interaction between the high and the low and its manifestation as one of the characteristic elements of Spanish Baroque culture. Additionally, very few of these works have concluded without at least mentioning the name of the perennial Spanish dramatist, whose works presented the interplay of sacred and profane in a manner almost unrivaled by his contemporaries: Lope de Vega. Lope’s *comedias* and his other poetic and theatrical works “introduced... in Spain a greater sense of the realities of love and living than had hitherto been allowed by the courtly and neoplatonic conventions” (McKendrick 84); thus, no study of the Spanish theater and the ways in which it dealt with questions such as the relationship between the spiritual and the carnal would be complete without mention of the Lopean *comedia*. However, Lope was not the only driving force behind the formation of Iberian society. Perhaps equally prevalent was a class of figures whose writings might at first seem to stand in direct contrast to Lope’s own popular dramas: the Spanish mystics, whose prestige as emblematic figures of the

Counterreformation catapulted them into the spotlight of national pride.¹ Just as with Lope de Vega, a considerable amount of literature has been devoted to the lives and writings of Juan de la Cruz, Teresa de Jesús, and their contemporaries, especially inasmuch as these figures served as hallmarks of Spanish Baroque spirituality. As a result, they too must be considered by any critic wishing to undertake a holistic analysis of the manner in which the relationship between grace and nature was conceptualized and expressed during the Spanish Baroque. In brief, “neither the culture nor the drama of the Siglo de Oro can be understood without reference to the Lopean *comedia* and the Catholic Church” (C. Rziha 110).

However, despite the plethora of studies on both the popular and religious facets of Baroque culture, including a number of works on both the possible religious origins of the Spanish theater and the dramas of Calderón de la Barca and his generation, only a modest number have focused on perhaps the most striking meeting point of these elements: the Lopean *comedia de santos* and its sister genres of public religious theater-*autos religiosos* and *coloquios espirituales*. This lack of analysis of the Baroque religious dramas of Lope’s generation represents a major gap in modern Golden Age scholarship, especially in regard to formulating our understanding of how intellectuals, Churchmen, and the public of that era understood the relationship between the sacred and the profane. If the interaction of grace and nature really formed such an integral part of Baroque culture, art, drama, and literature that it can be considered the central question of the time period, then it is a great misfortune that a genre of dramatic works that would later be condemned specifically for “the horrible monstrosity of mixing the sacred and the

¹ For example, Mujica notes that at the time of the writing of *La bienaventurada Madre*, Teresa “was bringing prestige to Spain and restoring national pride through her canonization” (170).

profane, of confusing light and darkness, and of joining heaven and earth” (Gascón 25), has been largely ignored. According to McKendrick:

Technically the religious plays they wrote do not constitute a category apart. They were performed in the *corrales* before the usual audiences and were written to the familiar *comedia* pattern. They speak the standard language of love and honor, they are full of action, excitement and passion, with *graciosos* who provide touches of comedy, and they employ all the conventions and devices of the secular plays. They even use sexual excitement as a legitimate channel of moral instruction... to all intents and purposes they take place in a world whose ethos is recognizably that of 17th century Spain. The liberties they took with their material often attracted the opprobrium of the theater critics but their audiences, of course, loved them. The *comedias de santos*... form a coherent group within this larger body. (120-121)

Thus, a serious understanding how the central Baroque question of ‘high-low’ tension was conceptualized and characterized by the society of Golden Age Spain cannot be gained without an examination of the world of religious drama, where the height of popular impulse and sacred inclination met. In addition, among the studies that have analyzed the *comedia de santos*, virtually no attempt has been made to examine the role of the wedding within these works, despite its centrality within both sacred and secular literature. Carrión declares that “marriage was the geometric center of societies moral, social, economic, physiological and spiritual concerns” (xiv), and as this thesis will show, the nuptial reality functioned as a central theme within both the *comedia* and the life of the mystic. Thus, a lack of scholarly criticism on the place and purpose of the wedding within the Early Modern religious drama is once again an oversight for anyone wishing to gain a more nuanced understanding of Golden Age society.

The purpose of this thesis, therefore, is to begin an attempt at filling these gaps by analyzing the role of the nuptial theme as a unifier of the sacred and profane elements of the Baroque religious drama. In doing so, it will specifically focus on the Lopean

comedia de santos most often called *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús* (~1614?), primarily due to the presence of a female mystic as the protagonist of the work. According to Gascón, “the female ascetic often appears as a liminal figure between the human and the divine” (37); likewise, he declares that:

Many hagiographical *comedias* featuring women Saints... reveal as much or more than other genres about how the playwrights perceived women relating to themselves, men, and society. The religious woman in these plays confronts not only the same problems as the female protagonists of romantic plays, but also issues concerning her role within the church, her relationship to divinity, and her conception of desire. (18)

In other words, *La bienaventurada Madre* is ideal for a study of the role of the nuptial reality as a unifier of the sacred and profane spheres of the Spanish Golden Age society due specifically to its topic: the life of Teresa de Jesús. Most likely written between the years of 1604 and 1622 (DiPuccio 398), *La bienaventurada Madre* is one of three plays on the life of Teresa attributed to Lope de Vega (Mujica, *A New Anthology* 170). Rather than presenting the entire life of the saint, each of the three acts centers on a selection of important events in Teresa’s life. The first act recounts the story of her decision to enter the convent and choose God as her divine spouse. The second reveals her transverberation, her intimate relationship with God, and her decision to begin the reformation of the Carmelite Order. The third shows Teresa as miracle-worker, reformer, and spiritual mother, and ends with her death and eternal union with God in heaven. Questions still remain as to the true identity of the author of *La bienaventurada Madre*, but DiPuccio, drawing from the research of various other critics and projects, affirms the undeniably *Lopean* identity of the drama.² Although this thesis will address the issue of

² DiPuccio notes that “in all likelihood, somewhere between 1604 and 1622, merely 22 to 40 years following her death in 1582, Lope, or possibly another Golden Age dramatist, wrote a play, or perhaps two different plays, about Teresa” (398)

authorship later in the work, it is important to state from the outset that the arguments and observations presented do not apply specifically to Lope de Vega. Due to the prevalence of the sacred and profane and their diverse manifestations within the society of Lope's time, their influence can be said to extend to the other dramatists of his school as well. Thus, while many critics have indicated the strong Lopean identity of *La bienaventurada Madre*, even if Lope himself were not the author, the cultural reality within which the work was written, of which Lope was perhaps the pinnacle, remains more or less the same as regards its importance to the composition and comprehension of the drama.

Given that only a modest number of critics have analyzed *La bienaventurada Madre*, this thesis will attempt to draw from all existing scholarship on the work. Just as with the genre of the *comedia de santos* in general, little attempt has been made to analyze the role what could be referred to as the 'mysticomedic' wedding present in this play. Likewise, few studies have been conducted that examine how the relationship between the sacred and profane is affected by the presence of this central marital theme. Thus, this thesis will pay special attention to the function of marriage within both the mystical and theatrical narratives of Golden Age Spain. In order to contextualize its analysis of *La bienaventurada Madre* within the broader genre of religious drama in general, this thesis will also include chapters on the role of marriage as a unifier of the sacred and profane in the *autos sacramentales* of José de Valdivielso and the *coloquios espirituales* of sor Marcela de san Félix. Both of these authors were closely related to Lope himself; Marcela was his daughter and Valdivielso was his close friend and spiritual advisor. Through its analysis of the three main subgenres of Golden Age

religious theater, this thesis hopes to present a more complete view of how the question of ‘Baroque tension’ was presented within these works.

Finally, it is important to note that it is not the purpose of this work to make any sort of general claim regarding the nature of the public, official institution of marriage during the Golden Age. This thesis is not concerned with the mundane, economic, social, and civil concerns which so often featured as primary reasons for marriage, nor is it concerned with the particulars of married life in Spanish Baroque society *per se*. In addition, this work will not attempt to evaluate how the messages presented in these plays – both nuptial and otherwise- were interpreted or misinterpreted by their audiences, as well as the effect of these popular responses on the acceptance, rejection, or censorship of religious dramas as a whole. Such realities are so vast and complicated that they are completely beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, it merely seeks to identify the presence and function of what could be referred to as the ‘nuptial reality’ within the religious dramas in question. Thus, any comment on the nature of marriage in *La bienaventurada Madre* will be limited to its *conceptualization and expression* within the comedic and mystical traditions. Likewise, this thesis does not seek to negate the current scholarship on ‘Baroque tension,’ nor does it wish to postulate that the alternate worldview it presents was embraced by every member of Spanish society. Rather, it seeks to establish that marriage, when present in the Baroque religious drama, often served as a manner of uniting divinity and humanity in a way which elevated both simultaneously. It is hoped that an analysis of marriage in this understudied body of literature will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the conception of the human condition in Spain during the Baroque era.

Thus, this thesis will be divided into five central chapters, including an introductory chapter and a concluding chapter. In the first central chapter, or Chapter Two, a general analysis of the Baroque understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane will be presented and situated within the contexts of mysticism and the Lopean *comedia*. Drawing from recognized bodies of literature on these two elements of Spanish society, this chapter will point out that a conception of the relationship between the high and the low which is based entirely on *conflict* is unsustainable when applied the works of individuals such as Lope de Vega and Juan de la Cruz. It will conclude by pointing out the presence of a *teleological*, or non-competitive, worldview within certain works from these writers. Although this worldview will be more fully explained later on, generally speaking, a teleological system is one which understands the relationship between the sacred and the profane, the divine and the human, as not essentially in conflict, but rather made for an ultimate end, or ‘telos,’ which includes their unity. Thus, this thesis will suggest that a true understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane in the *comedia de santos* is more easily grasped when approached from a teleological perspective, rather than from a perspective based solely on Baroque tension or conflict.

In the next chapter, the presence and function of marriage will be analyzed within the contexts of the *comedia* and Spanish mysticism. Marriage will be suggested as the reality which most often serves as unifying theme within the *comedia*, and likewise as the manner in which the perfection of the mystical life is normally described. The function of marriage in both contexts will be discussed, with an emphasis on the idea of *theosis* - the transformative, deifying elevation of humanity both in this life and the next to

participation in the fullness of God's nature through grace - as central to mysticism. This chapter will conclude by noting that both the theatrical and mystical understandings of the role and effects of marriage assume a teleological system in regard to the union or disunion of the spiritual and the carnal.

In Chapter Four, the conclusions of the first two sections of the thesis will be applied to examine a selection of the works of José de Valdivielso. Two of his *autos sacramentales* -*El Fénix de amor* and *El Árbol de la gracia*- will be analyzed, as well as some of his Eucharistic poetry. By pointing out that Valdivielso employs a Biblical-mystical-theatrical understanding of marriage as a substitute for the theme of the Eucharist, this chapter will argue that marriage therefore serves as a manner of uniting divinity and humanity in a way which brings greater perfection and glory to both. This nuptial understanding of the Eucharist will be foregrounded through the writings of the mystics and Thomas Aquinas, and it will be extended beyond the *auto sacramental* through a brief analysis of Lope de Vega's hagiographic drama *Lo fingido verdadero* (~1608).

In Chapter Five, the role of marriage as a unifier of the divine and material dimensions of humanity will be discussed as it appears in the *coloquios espirituales* of sor Marcela de san Félix. Specifically, the spiritual wedding will be described as the goal and perfection of the religious sisters for whom these dramas were composed and performed. Through a close reading of Marcela's *coloquio, De virtudes*, in the context of her other theatrical works and her divine and profane influences, this chapter will argue that the nuptial reality serves as a thematic unifier across all four of Marcela's *Coloquios*

del alma, and that the perfection of religious life this work presents is one in which divinity is 'incarnated' in Christ's spouse -the nun- by means of an active virtuous life.

In the final chapter, this thesis will utilize the context provided in its previous four sections to analyze the presence of marriage as a unifying theme in *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*. An analysis of *La bienaventurada Madre* will reveal that such a unifying element can indeed be found within and throughout the drama in the theme and imagery of marriage, especially that which occurs between Teresa and Jesus. The nuptial reality, therefore, serves as the thematic base that unites the action and plot of the work, permitting the reader to understand its multifaceted scenes holistically. In addition, marriage will be shown to fulfill another notable function in *La bienaventurada Madre*, which is the integration of the divine and human spheres within which the action of the drama takes place. This fusion of the sacred and the profane is brought about by the mystical wedding between Teresa and Christ, and it is extended beyond Teresa's interior life by means of her actions as reformer and miracle-worker. In conclusion, by analyzing the presence and role of the wedding in *La bienaventurada Madre* and other works that help contextualize it, and by situating this analysis within one of the most important existential questions of Baroque Spain -that of the relationship between the sacred and the profane- this thesis hopes to establish the fundamental role of the nuptial reality within the Early Modern religious drama.

CHAPTER TWO

The *Comedia*'s Context: The Sacred, the Profane, and the Question of Dramatic Unity

Among the many different artists and art forms present within the Spanish Golden Age, the importance of the *comedia nueva* of Lope de Vega and his followers is difficult to overstate, especially as regards its relationship with the popular culture of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries in the Iberian Peninsula. In his work *Lope de Vega and the Comedia de Santos*, Robert Morrison observes:

It is widely agreed that the theater of Golden Age Spain represented the popular taste, portrayed the society of the day, achieved audience identification, and met with popular acclaim. That the plays of Lope de Vega not only did all these things, but did them in a complete and representative way, is equally conceded. Lope's drama as a reflection of the tastes of his audience has been discussed again and again.¹ (21)

In other words, the *comedia* was, as Bruce Burningham notes in a summary of Lope's *Arte nuevo*, "a mirror held up to life" (212). The immense impact of the Lopean *comedia*, therefore, must be understood in the context of its relationship with the popular class and thus always as a performative text, as a "dialogic relationship that inherently exists between performer and spectator in performance" (Burningham 8). This relationship between the content and performance of the *comedia* and popular Spanish society is also reflected within the frequent condemnations of the secular theater by religious and royal authorities on the grounds that such works portrayed- and thus encouraged- immoral and

¹ Royo echoes this sentiment when he declares, "the great success of the Spanish stage during the Golden Age is unquestionable. If the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced in Spain great writers who created splendid comedies, autos and dramas, the importance of this theatre was increased by its social impact... its incredible popularity" (181).

subversive behavior.² Such condemnations were directed not only at the more secularly-themed *comedias de capa y espada*, but even at works of a more religious bent, such as the *comedia de santos*, or hagiographic comedy. According to Roy Norton:

In spite of the ostensibly religious character of the saints' plays, many of these conservative critics considered the kind composed by Lope de Vega to be, at best, indecorous and, at worst, sacrilegious. The polluting of the sacred subjects of these *comedias* by profane elements belonging to the secular *comedia nueva* was seen to illegitimate claims that their performance could cultivate piety among the spectators. (19)

Thus, the *comedia* was often linked to the popular and vulgar aspects of Spanish Golden Age culture, especially insasmuch as such elements were in conflict with the official moral attitudes of the Church and nobility, who often censored or condemned the theater.

The connection between the Spanish theater and the lower spheres of the human experience has been confirmed from a historical and literary standpoint as well. In his book *Radical Theatricality*, Bruce R. Burningham has argued for the existence of the popular roots of Spanish Golden Age theater within the jongleresque tradition, which he believes “lies at the very heart of early modern literary drama” (11). According to Burningham, “the *mimos*, *juglares*, and *trovadores* of Medieval Spain- performers who established a simple stage every time they performed... - represent the essence of theater itself; while the *carros*, *corrales*, and *comedias* of the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries are all belated complications” (9). In other words, at the heart of the

² For example, Dann Cazes Gryj notes that “Siempre hubo algún tipo de reservas y desconfianza, cuando no un franco rechazo, ante la actividad teatral, por lo que esta podía significar o provocar en relación con la moral, la religión y el orden social... los detractores del teatro censuraban el hecho de que estos espectáculos no eran sino una distracción de los deberes devotos, políticos y sociales, y que además corrompían a los individuos, pues solo ofrecían historias de casos indecentes, que «[...] amenazaban la moral familiar (adulterios y desobediencias), la paz pública (venganzas), la ordenación social (casamientos desiguales), o política (bandos y sátiras)»; sumado a esto, condenaban el estilo de vida de actores y actrices, por considerar que estos eran promiscuos y escandalosos” (58-59).

Spanish theater can be found the basic performative impulse of common society. For Burningham, this ‘vulgar’ element of Spanish society which gives rise to the *comedia nueva* is found not just in fragments of ballads and *farsas* of the late Middle Ages; rather, he notes that the actors, the audience, and even the playwrights were steeped in the popular, jonglerquesque tradition (166), so much so that Lope de Vega identifies it as one of the primary influences of his *comedia nueva* in the *Arte nuevo* (12). Thus, he declares:

What stands out most... is that the early Spanish theater was ‘vulgar’ from its inception, and that this vulgarity continues to influence the plays up through Lope’s day... what the *Arte nuevo* demonstrates here is that the *pasos*, *entremeses*, and *autos* of early modern Spain are not, in fact, pillars of classical theory, but rather ‘prosaic’ farces. (202)

Bellomi *et al.* make a similar claim regarding the relationship between the *comedia*, humor, the carnal impulses of humanity, and the life of the common person, noting that: “La comedia no representa el vicio como corrupción moral, sino más bien los vicios de la gente común, los defectos y las carencias que se manifiestan normalmente en la vida cotidiana, que son causa de reprobación, incluso de risa” (Bellomi *et al.* 200-201). In sum, in the eyes of Baroque moralists, common street performers, and even modern literary critics, there is much to be said for the identification of the *comedia* with the popular aspect of Spanish Golden Age society.

The ‘vulgar’ roots of the *comedia*, along with its emphasis on humor, subversion, and dialogue noted above, have led many intellectuals to find within it an element of the carnivalesque and grotesque, especially inasmuch as these elements are situated in conflict with the official, hierarchical narratives of Sixteenth and Seventeenth century Spain. Thus, the writings of Mikhail Bakhtin concerning the theory of Carnival -a social reality which he claimed “was immense in the Renaissance and the Middle Ages... a

boundless world of humorous forms and manifestations opposed the official and serious tone of medieval ecclesiastical and feudal culture” (Bakhtin 4)- have proven invaluable to *comedia* studies, albeit often in a nuanced or modernized manner. In his excellent summary of the carnivalesque impulse of humanity, Guillermo Garcia-Corales states:

El discurso carnavalesco revisa las estructuras hegemónicas de la sociedad y relativiza los paradigmas solemnes de autoridad y verdad al propiciar una visión del mundo a través de la inversión de jerarquías. Entonces la carnavalización acerca, compromete y conjuga lo sagrado con lo profano, lo grande con lo miserable, lo sabio con lo estúpido, lo central con lo marginal, lo banal con lo sofisticado. (21)

The connection between the more vulgar elements of the Spanish *comedia*, its popular roots, and the carnivalesque has been noted by many critics. For example, Burningham notes that “Bakhtin’s collective carnivalesque is very much the product of the amalgam of numerous individual jongleresque movements co-created between and among a myriad of shifting actors and spectators” (10), and Arellano states: “a nadie se le oculta la importancia de las burlas y sus modalidades en la literatura del Siglo de Oro” (“Burlas y Veras” 5). In reference to the general structure of the *comedia*, Mateo Royo likewise declares that:

The nucleus of the comedy, the main part of the usual representation in permanent theatres, consisted of romantic troubles between a knight and a lady, mixed often with conflicts of honour. The popular perspective was represented by the servants of the couple. Their realism and mockery produced a deliberate contrast with the ideals of their masters. Popular folksongs and traditions were incorporated and reinterpreted [... as well as] many aspects of popular culture: dances, burlesques, carnivalesque elements. (181)

In other words, the reality of carnival, which is to say the human impulse of total self-expression without the limitations of law, rule, or society, was strongly integrated within the secular Spanish dramatic tradition. The representation of this carnal ‘sphere’ of the human experience often included, therefore, an inversion of realities and values within

the sexual, social, and linguistic spheres of the human experience, and therefore an element of comic subversion,³ especially, but not only, within the figure of the *gracioso*.⁴ In sum, the profane, ‘material’ dimension of the human condition found an avenue for expression within the theater of the Golden Age and thus in the works of Lope de Vega and of his school.

Given the connection which often existed between the vulgar, carnal sphere of Spanish Golden Age society and the *corrales*, the condemnation of the theater, especially in its secular forms, by various moralists and official figures is not a surprising reaction.

Arellano notes:

La expansión de la comedia nueva provoca una serie de polémicas estéticas y éticas. los moralistas teatrófobos atacan reiteradamente, desde diversos puntos de vista, a la actividad teatral, que consideran corruptora de costumbres, escandalosa y en el mejor de los casos es inútil y superflua. severos detractores, eclesiásticos y seculares, argumentan contra las comedias y piden de las autoridades su prohibición. (*Historia* 141)⁵

However, although some moralists were against the theater in principal, others held that the *corral* was precisely the place where the Catholic Faith should be promoted and proclaimed. These figures might still protest against the vulgar aspects of the *comedia* but

³ “Lo que acabo de decir implica que la risa es, por esencia, un acto subversivo. La burla es rebelión contra el orden” (Jammes 9).

⁴ According to Burningham, “no figure on the early Spanish stage better exemplifies the jongleresque function of this performative bridge than the ubiquitous *gracioso*” (155).

⁵ Commenting on the same topic, McKendrick notes that these detractors “invoke the authority of the church fathers and the classical commentators in support of the time honored and cell familiar argument that the theater perpetrates evil and immorality by reminding the president of past wickedness, by encouraging evil thoughts with love intrigues and by corrupting the innocent by putting ideas into their heads, offering them ideas of how to deceive husbands, suborn servants, and so on. The moral conundrum presented by the very idea that wicked actions could be a source of entertainment clearly worried them. They went on to claim, close at home, that the *corrales* increase idleness but instructing people from their work and students from their studies, and extravagance by tempting people to spend their hard-won earnings. . . . So the second families arguments very persuasive and all performances, including those in private homes, were accordingly forbidden” (202-03).

felt the dramatic genre itself could be appropriated in accordance with the teachings of the Council of Trent on the purpose of the Arts.⁶ In regard to this view, Christopher

Gascón states that:

The dramatists wished to entertain and instruct their audiences. To edify, they had to uphold the tenants of the church, which no doubt hoped these plays would reinvigorate popular support for the embattled faith, galvanizing Catholics against the accusations of Luther and Calvin. To whenever audiences, the playwrights elaborated the productions with special effects, romantic intrigue, vulgar fools, honor dilemmas, and sword fights. Popular enthusiasm for plays like these suggests that the dramatist and the performing companies may have succeeded in inspiring the masses toward a general solidarity for Catholicism. (25)

Such an attitude is manifested in the unapologetically religious dramas of the Golden Age, such as the *autos sacramentales* and *coloquios espirituales* which loudly proclaimed the dogmas of the Faith. Gascón defines the latter of these genres as “a theatrical work of middling length written in the convents to be performed at ceremonies or on special occasions.... This type of work [is...] characterized by allegorical characters, very little action, doctrinal content, and poetic language” (40). Thus, while the *comedia* exhibited the lives, successes, and failures of the common people, the *coloquio espiritual* represented a sphere which was entirely divine and officially sanctioned. Whereas Burningham has argued for the popular, jongleresque sources of Spanish theater, many other authors, including Gascón, McKendrick, and Shergold, have noted the strong connections which exist between Catholic liturgical ritual and Golden Age drama. For example, Shergold notes that “the beginnings of medieval European drama are to be

⁶ See, for example, Arellano, who states: En la parte contraria, podemos citar por su relevancia, hacia final del siglo, la defensa del P. Guerrero, en la famosa aprobación... donde reúne los principales alegatos de la defensa: ‘las comedias que ahora se escriben se reducen a 3 clases: de Santos, historia y de amor, que llama el vulgo de capa y espada; toros son tan sin mierdas a las leyes de la modestia y de peligro sino doctrina... Santo Tomás... dice que es necesario algún juegos para la vida humana... sepan, pues, que los representantes no están en pecado mortal por su oficio... la comedia es conveniente en lo político, convencido de sentencia expresa de... Santo Tomás... la comedia es indiferente en lo cristiano y conveniente en lo político’” (*Historia* 145).

found in the tropes of Christmas and Easter, written to ornament the liturgy, and sung in churches” (1), and McKendrick supports a similar viewpoint in noting the role of popular courtly ceremony and Catholic liturgy,⁷ stating: “the public theater grew out of their ritual of religious worship as this ritual gradually overflowed the confines of churches and cathedrals into the streets and marketplaces” (6). The connection between religious ritual and Spanish theater has been recognized by Gascón as well, especially in relation to the *autos sacramentales*.⁸ Gascón, along with several other authors, has also noted the connection between the Spanish sacramental and religious plays and the Counterreformation,⁹ and Morrison has recognized the importance of the Council of Trent and the Counterreformation in general to the mere existence of the theatrical genres of the *autos sacramentales* and *comedias de santos*.¹⁰

⁷ Likewise, according to McKendrick, these “two categories are helpful in that they identified the traditions that will mingle and eventually merge in the second-half of the 16th century to form the national drama- on one hand the popular tradition rooted in ceremony and right and church instruction, unclassical in that it makes no obeisance to rules and theories; on the other the classicizing, literary tradition of drama as a self-contained art form” (40).

⁸ “The *auto sacramental* is perhaps the dramatic genre most readily identifiable as ritualistic in character... Due to its abstract style, its use of conventional character types and symbols, and of course, its sacred purpose: to celebrate the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist during the annual feast of Corpus Christi by recalling and expounding upon the meaning of Christ sacrifice” (Gascón 27).

⁹ For example, Gascón notes that “it seems reasonable to accept that the counter reformation, the Catholic reform movement, the need to instruct the Spanish population concerning religious doctrine, the public's enthusiasm for theater, and numerous other factors also served as impulses to the *auto*” (28). Likewise, Izquierdo Domingo states that: “con la elaboración del auto sacramental dentro de la concepción del arte persuasivo emocional, Lope viene a cristalizar en España las aspiraciones retóricas de Trento. Las predicaciones tridentinas, con la teatralización retórica, llevaron las ideas religiosas al borde del teatro. Lope de Vega, en sus autos, no ha hecho sino extremar la utilización simultánea de la expresión pictórica, musical y retórica, para conseguir su propósito de adoctrinar y conmovier” (75).

¹⁰ More specifically, Case states: “A third element which I believe is part and parcel of the *comedia de santos* is the restating and confirming of Catholic doctrine as proclaimed by the Council of Trent... The genre itself owes much of its very existence to these tenets, for the cult of the saints was a very important part of the declarations. This point is not emphasized strongly enough... The *comedia de santos* and the *auto sacramental* have their origin and theological basis in the teaching of this famous council” (19-20).

The discovery of an intimate relationship between the Church and the *corral* is therefore not surprising, especially given the prevalence of Catholicism in virtually all aspects of Spanish life during the Golden Age. According to Robert Morrison, the two most influential elements of Spanish Baroque society were in fact the Catholic Church and the Lopean *comedia*.¹¹ Regarding the prevalence of the former of these spheres, he states:

Religion was the part of life to which all other parts related. Of all the characteristics of the Spanish people, religion was so important in their life and soul that it became their most conspicuous trait. The great intellectual questions of the day were religious, and almost everyone found them more absorbing than any political or economic problem. The Spanish outlook upon all matters was essentially that of the Catholic faith, to such an extent that things material were sometimes neglected in favor of things spiritual. The roots of Catholicism had penetrated securely in Spain. (6)

Canning echoes the same understanding of the importance of Catholicism to Spanish Baroque culture when she states: “any dramatist writing during Spain’s Golden Age was acutely aware that he was writing for a public obsessed by fe, salvación, gracia divina, condenación and of course Dios” (*Lope de Vega’s comedias* 9). For Morrison, while the works of Lope were the pinnacle of popular expression in Spanish culture, one of the most prominent manifestations of the Catholic religion during this time was mysticism, a type of spirituality in which individuals sought their fusion, “as children of God, with Him to whom they gave themselves entirely... It was, in essence, a union with God in

¹¹ Expanding upon his statement and the relationship between Lopean drama and Catholicism, Morrison notes: “the second pervading influence on the people of Golden Age Spain was the drama, especially that of Lope de Vega. Deleito y Pifuela, writing about Philip IV, asserted that the Church and the theater were two great forces in the Spain of the poet-king (“Vida madrileña” 12: 48, 387), and, suggesting the joining of the two forces... observed that there was ‘intimo consorcio y a veces pintoresco maridaje entre la iglesia y el teatro’ (373)... the Church provided endless subjects for the drama... [and] professional actors and actresses often performed in convents and monasteries, many of which afforded all the customary theatrical devices and refinements” (19).

this life” (17). He likewise recognizes that the Spain was known as “a nation of mystics [and] a ‘pueblo de teólogos’” (8), and he concedes that this “is an accurate description of seventeenth-century Spaniards” (8). Thus, to at least some extent, the mystical theology of Spain, embodied especially in figures such as Teresa de Jesús, Juan de la Cruz, and Luis de León, was embraced by the populace of Spain.

As a result, many intellectuals have drawn attention to the ‘mystical’ qualities of popular Spanish spirituality of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, most notably the dichotomy that was drawn between the spiritual and material realms of the human experience. For example, Gascón notes that in her works, Teresa de Jesús “explains in detail the aesthetic belief in the perfection of the soul through a rejection of the material world and self-abnegation, and the mystical ideal of an ascetic union with God. Such ideas were also central to the aesthetic prose of fray Luis de Granada and the mystical poetry of San Juan de la Cruz, among others” (44). Thus, for Gascón, a denial of the physical in order to embrace the spiritual appears to be a hallmark of all of the major Spanish mystics. Tigchelaar follows a similar line of thought when she notes that “in mystical Christianity, a hierarchy existed through which the further one got away from the created realm, including Christ Incarnate, the better, as it tended to represent carnal habits that disallowed mystical pursuit. Examples of the influence of such thinking in Christian mysticism, although tempered by Christocentric theology, were nevertheless quite common, dating back to antiquity” (“Redemption Theology” 115), and Morrison recognizes this tendency within the popular spirituality of the time as well, stating: “the ideal of the holy Christian life, as it emerges from the various legends, turns out to be a monastic and ascetical pattern, based on ‘contempt for the things of earth’ and on the

practice of humility, chastity, obedience to God and the Church, and patience with the trials of this life” (44). In other words, for many moralists, theologians, and devout laypeople of the Golden Age, the essence of the perfect Christian life consisted in the rejection of all things vulgar and material and in the embrace of the wholly spiritual and sacred. Such a view of the relationship between God and man, grace and nature, is consistent with that of the detractors of the secular theater noted above, and in a sense even with Bakhtin’s understanding of Carnival and the division between the official and the popular, the sacred and the profane. Thus, Church-sponsored drama, when it existed, tried to distance itself from the banal and the comical as much as possible, drawing a firm line between the rough and the holy. O’Reilly, concurring with this viewpoint, therefore declares that at the time of St. John of the Cross, “the religious and the obscene were clearly demarcated by the church: Obscene literature was banned by the Index and the Inquisition, and secular songs, though often allowed in church, were not... approved if they were lewd or profane” (70). Religious theater, whether performed in Jesuit schools or in the streets during liturgical processions, became “in a way a self-appointed instrument of the faith, providing an extra dimension to the religious life of Spain that at once reflected and stimulated popular devotion and afforded the theater some protection from the attacks of ecclesiastical and moral reformers. This allowed churchmen to become enthusiastic patrons of the *corrales*. And of course a significant number of dramatists were themselves men of God” (McKendrick 120). Therefore, even when they existed in the same space, the relationship between the sacred and profane within Spanish society and drama was recognized as one of conflict. For many scholars, the paradox of the Baroque aesthetic, in fact, is brought about by the ‘commingling’ of these two

conflicting sources within every aspect of life, including religion, domestic life, literature, language register, and festivities.¹² For example, Gascón states that “Baroque culture and stylistics have defined the concept in terms of precisely this tension: it is ‘a conflict between asceticism and worldliness, the spirit and the flesh,’ a’ dichotomy of spiritualism and sensualism” (165), and Gonzalez echoes this sentiment when he declares:

El tema general del drama barroco es el hombre como campo de acción de dos fuerzas contrarias que hacen de su vida una situación conflictiva permanente. la dimensión de la vida humana es extendida ahora hasta lo infinito en el espacio y el tiempo, hacia arriba y hacia abajo, al más remoto pasado y al último de los futuros posibles.... El barroco no se deja escapar ningún efecto. lo más abstracto y lo más animal, lo más sutil y lo más vulgar, el sacramento y el excremento. (50)

In sum, while individuals such as Burningham and McKendrick may disagree as to the primary sources and inspirations of Spanish Baroque theater, both hold that the Catholic Church, its dogma, and its mystics; and Lope de Vega, his *comedia*, and his school are essential to understanding “la dualidad desde diferentes puntos de vista: físico-espiritual, cuerpo-spiritu, sensual-divino, sentidos-nada, belleza-muerte, temporal-eterno, sueño-vida. La afirmación simultánea de ambos elementos constituye más que un ‘hombre barroco’ una actitud barroca” (Gonzalez 72).

The tension between the rough and the holy, and the spiritual and the material or the high and the low, thus appears to be essential for understanding the construction, evolution, and appeal of some of the most characteristic cultural products of Spanish Baroque society: Lope de Vega’s *comedias* and the Catholic mystics. In other words, one should expect to find within the works of individuals such as Juan de la Cruz and Lope de Vega a sort of dualism in which the sacred and profane spheres of human existence,

¹² Gascón notes that “scholars have attempted to define the essence of Baroque style in terms of this type of tension, whether described as that between the mundane and the spiritual, the content and the form of language, or the imposition and subversion of authority” (63).

while often co-mingled due to the reality of humanity's situation within creation, are essentially opposed to each other. Bruce Wardropper recognizes this viewpoint as prevalent for theologians and dramatists;¹³ however, he notes that it is not the only legitimate understanding of the relationship between divinity and humanity which existed during this time period. More specifically, he states:

Hay otra consideración que dificulta aún más la decisión individual. El Mundo que hasta aquí venimos definiendo como el enemigo de Dios, es también la creación de Dios. Verdad que desde la caída del hombre todo lo crearon, está pervertido, es imperfecto, no es menos verdad que Dios se revela a través de las cosas del mundo. Santa Teresa, veía a Dios entre las ollas y los pucheros de la cocina, y no solo en él, recogimiento de la oración. En *El Gran Teatro* del mundo, aquel gran poeta, teólogo, Calderón de la barca hace que su personaje El Mundo, será Dios como director de escena. Pues, enteramente justo tras ser una frontera cerrada entre Dios y El Mundo, mezclar torpemente lo sagrado y lo profano... es tal vez menos peligroso que separarlos demasiado y arbitrariamente. (*Historia* 24-25)

Such an understanding of the world and its relationship to God, in which creation, though wounded in sin, fundamentally reveals the Creator and aspires to be like Him, seems contrary to the image already noted of the mystics -those who embodied the spirituality of Counterreformation Spain- who called for the renunciation of the world in favor of the divine. Even more importantly, however, Juan de la Cruz himself seems to refute such an understanding of the essence and goal of both mysticism and the Christian spiritual life in general. In his *Cántico espiritual*, he lays out his understanding of the *earthly* union with God to which a soul is called. Although the passage in which he elaborates these points is rather lengthy, it is well worth citing its majority:

El alma, o por mejor decir, la esposa... se dio toda al Esposo sin dejar nada para sí... ahora en ésta el modo y manera que tiene en cumplirlo diciendo que ya está

¹³According to Wardropper, this view is “aa que ve en El Mundo el antagonista de Dios - El símbolo de la cárcel donde yace el alma humana, encadenada a la carne-. Muchos creen en la necesidad de renunciar totalmente al mundo de morir para El Mundo antes de poder vivirla. Aprendí tú de la vida espiritual. La tensión entre estas dos actitudes forma el asunto del próximo capítulo” (*Historia* 18-19).

su alma y cuerpo y potencias y toda su habilidad empleada, ya no en las cosas que a ella le tocan, sino en las que son del servicio de su Esposo; y que, por eso ya no anda buscando su propia ganancia, ni se anda tras sus gustos, ni tampoco se ocupa en otras cosas y tratos extraños y ajenos de Dios; y que aun con el mismo Dios ya no tiene otro estilo ni manera de trato sino ejercicio de amor... Por todo su caudal entiende aquí todo lo que pertenece a la parte sensitiva del alma, la cual dice que está empleada en su servicio, también como la parte racional o espiritual que acabamos de decir en el verso pasado. Y en esta parte sensitiva se incluye el cuerpo con todos sus sentidos y potencias, así interiores como exteriores... todo lo cual dice que está ya empleado en su servicio. Porque el cuerpo trata ya según Dios, los sentidos interiores y exteriores rige y gobierna según Dios, y a él endereza las acciones de ellos... 'Que ya sólo en amar es mi ejercicio' - Como si dijera: que ya todas estas potencias y habilidad del caudal de mi alma y mi cuerpo, que antes algún tanto empleaba en otras cosas no útiles, las he puesto en ejercicio de amor... es a saber: que toda la habilidad de mi alma y cuerpo se mueve por amor, haciendo todo lo que hago por amor, y padeciendo por amor todo lo que padezco. Aquí es de notar que, cuando el alma llega a este estado, todo el ejercicio de la parte espiritual y de la parte sensitiva, ahora sea en hacer, ahora en padecer, de cualquiera manera que sea, siempre le causa más amor y regalo en Dios; y hasta el mismo ejercicio de oración y trato con Dios, que antes solía tener en otras consideraciones y modos, ya todo es ejercicio de amor. De manera que, ahora su trato sea acerca de lo temporal, ahora sea su ejercicio acerca de lo espiritual, siempre puede decir esta tal alma: Que ya sólo en amar es mi ejercicio. (*Cántico espiritual* 64-65).

In the sections quoted above, the relationship between the spiritual and the material is very clearly not in conflict; rather, within the ultimate union of the soul with God on this earth, which Juan de la Cruz refers to as the spiritual or mystical betrothal, not only the soul but also the body acts out of love for God in all things, whether spiritual or physical. Such an understanding of the relationship between grace and nature finds expression in the doctrine of the Incarnation: "es por la creación del hombre a imagen y semejanza divinas, y con mayor rotundidad, por la Encarnación, como podemos entender que el orden de lo espiritual y el de lo natural quedan definitivamente fusionados y que se unifican en el discurso amoroso. El misterio de la Encarnación permite la sacralización de la naturaleza y la corporeidad del espíritu" (Ayala 448). Within such a view, therefore, "'Corporality' per se is not wrong; disobedience is. From here, Christ's capacity to

redeem us through it provides no philosophical problem whatsoever, nor should the admission, in a discussion on mysticism, that flesh comes from the Godhead present any tension” (“Redemption Theology” Tigchelaar 123). In other words, the tension which exists in the world is not between divinity and humanity, or even grace and nature, but rather between sinfulness and goodness. Thus, Tigchelaar states:

Again, Christ’s perfect corporality determines ours; we do not somehow sully the Godhead through our imperfect fleshly Image-bearing inasmuch as we do not fundamentally degrade God-Love with our own imperfect mirroring. These truths... unproblematically permit transfigured human flesh into mystical exchange, as much as they allow transformed human love... they allow the communication of... mysticism to be distinctly... Far from excluding the corporeal, biblical Trinitarian theology embraces it: ‘[f]or in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form . . .’ (Col. 2: 9). Far from transcending his body, Christ, through His Ascension, remains embodied, even as the entire Godhead does. This divine Corporality, in turn, anticipates the End Times, a point at which all believers will reflect the Godhead wholly (in spirit and body), perfectly and eternally, as they cannot now even in heaven, during the in-between time evoked at the end of both Ordo and Breve festejo. (“Redemption Theology” 123-124)

That is, the full perfection of humanity, both on this earth, in heaven, and beyond it, is a holistic perfection of body, soul, relationships, and creation. Of course, such a perfection is not easily attained. It is still undeniable that Juan de la Cruz focuses much of his writings on the purgation of the body, the senses, and the soul. However, the purification of the body is not in order to diminish it, but to discipline it so that it might more fully reveal God to man.¹⁴ Thus, San Juan declares that:

Para mover Dios al alma y levantarla del fin y extremo de su bajeza al otro fin y extremo de su alteza en su divina unión, halo de hacer ordenadamente y suavemente y al modo de la misma alma... Y así va Dios perfeccionando al hombre al modo del hombre, por lo más bajo y exterior, hasta lo más alto e interior. De donde primero le perfecciona el sentido corporal, moviéndole a que

¹⁴ For example, Juan de la Cruz states: “cuanto un alma más vestida está de criaturas y habilidades de ella, según el afecto y el hábito, tanto menos disposición tiene para la tal unión, porque no da total lugar a Dios para que la transforme en lo sobrenatural. De manera que el alma no ha menester más que desnudarse de estas contrariedades y disimilitúdes naturales, para que Dios, que se le está comunicando naturalmente por naturaleza, se le comunique sobrenaturalmente por gracia” (*Subida*, V.4).

use de buenos objetos naturales perfectos exteriores, como oír sermones, misas, ver cosas santas, mortificar el gusto en la comida, macerar con penitencia y santo rigor el tacto. Y cuando ya están estos sentidos algo dispuestos, los suele perfeccionar más, haciéndoles algunas mercedes sobrenaturales y regalos para confirmarlos más en el bien, ofreciéndoles algunas comunicaciones sobrenaturales. (*Subida XVII.3-4*)

In other words, the ordering of both body and soul towards God is necessary for Christian perfection; therefore, in a world where sin is a reality, one must speak first of purgation before one may think of elevation. However, ultimately, as Garrigou-Lengrange notes, the ends of the ascetic and mystical life are the same: *theosis*, which is intimate, loving union with God through a participation in His very nature. (23-25; 42-43). He states:

Needless to say, this conception of the unitive or perfect life far surpasses what many modern writers... call it ordinarily. In their opinion, this way does not presuppose the painful passive purifications, at least not those of the spirit, which belonged to the mystical states.... This problem is a serious one. Is not the ideal of perfection notably lessened by maintaining that we can reach the full, normal development of Christian life without passing under one form or another through the passive purifications, which belong to the mystical order, and without being raised or infused with contemplation, that dark and secret initiation into the mystery of God present in us? (155-56)

In sum, the worldview found in the works of Juan de la Cruz is not one which recognizes an intrinsic conflict between the sacred and the profane, but rather one which holds that God Himself became flesh so that man could become God.

Such an understanding of the relationship between God and man, grace and nature, and body and soul is not foreign to Christian theology. Although it has appeared under various forms and different names throughout the history of the Church, it is commonly referred to by modern Catholic theologians as a *teleological* understanding of theology, morality, and anthropology. John Rziha defines a teleological moral anthropological system as follows: “a teleological system is focused on something’s perfection or completeness... on internal transformation resulting in the ability to

perform one's proper action.... Actions are determined to be good or bad based on whether or not they lead to true happiness" (57-58). Within a Christian worldview, a teleological system is thus based on three major premises. First, it holds that humanity was created "by a wise and loving God who wants us to be happy... created in such a way [so as to be]... fulfilled through loving relationships with God and other people" (J. Rziha 1). In other words, humanity was created by God for a purpose, which is happiness or goodness. Second, since God Himself is the fullness of Wisdom, Goodness, and Beauty, humanity is therefore created for union with God, a union which is only fully possible through the gift of grace, which has been traditionally defined in Christian theology as a participation in the Divine Nature.¹⁵ J. Rziha further elaborates on this notion of participation by defining it as "to share in the perfections that something else has by nature,... Sanctifying grace is also called 'deifying grace,' because through it humans become divine by participation" (93). Thus, "to the extent that humans share in God's divine nature through grace, they also share in his happiness" (J. Rziha 49). Finally, a teleological worldview holds that humanity is called to union with God holistically: as a body, a soul, and a relational being. In other words, "grace perfects nature and does not destroy it" (Garrigou-Legrance 54); therefore, union with God is not the denial of human nature but its fullest actualization and perfection. According to Tigheelaar, this union "is to be understood as the interiorization of the divine life of the Trinity into a Christ-like self... union with God is in no way superficial to the self, nor does it remove the self from its authentic created existence, but rather deepens and

¹⁵ "We must bear in mind that grace is really informally a participation in the divine nature precisely insofar as it is divine, a participation in the deity, in that which makes God, in his intimate life.... Grace is a mysterious participation in this essence, which surpasses all natural knowledge" (Garrigou-Legrance 55-56).

transforms it” (“Marcela de san Félix” 42-43). This holistic unity of the entire person with the Godhead is paradoxical, but not contradictory; it is not anti-natural, but supernatural, and it finds its basis within the reality of the Incarnation and the sacrament of the Eucharist, as Oberlander notes:

By the Incarnation itself Christ, a divine person, penetrated a visible nature to draw near to man. By this act of entry into a visible and corporeal human nature, the Son of God acquired a Mystical Body, for He united and took to Himself the whole human race becoming like unto man in all save sin. This insertion of the supernatural into the natural is the union which is the basis of the elevation of the human race to a participation in the divinity of the Head. (39:1,3; 49:6)... The flesh of the God-man, which contains the fullness of the divinity, becomes a revivifying flesh from which supernatural life comes forth to man. By the fact and manner of the Incarnation the Son of God has made of His corporal union with the human race the basis of His supernatural union with it. (94-95)

Within this teleological notion of grace, nature, and perfection through participation, the Baroque concepts of the ‘real’ and ‘ideal,’ the ‘holy’ and the ‘rough,’ take on even greater significance, as the imperfect world can be truly said to be ‘unreal,’ or ‘false,’ to the extent that its proper ends and actions of union with God are not fulfilled. However, the tension between the sacred and profane spheres of the human experience is not intrinsic to reality, but rather reveals creation’s higher calling and its true purpose. In other words, one’s being, “*esse*, is the actualizing and emergent plenitude of perfection to which all entitative determinations stand as potency towards act, as participant to perfect... fullness... [and] there are indeed distinct degrees of value and perfection within the universe” (O’Rourke 174-75). That is to say, the more that a thing fulfills its proper nature and draws closer to God, who is Being Itself, the more *real* and more *perfect* a thing becomes, and likewise, the further a thing falls from its creator, the *less real* and *less perfect* it becomes. Thus, a teleological worldview “maintains the infinite elevation of grace above our nature and also the harmony between the two, but... adds that this

harmony really appears only after a profound purification of nature by mortification and the cross, as the lives of the Saints show” (Garrigou-Legrance 60). This understanding of the relationship between God, humanity, and creation is precisely that which San Juan elaborates in the aforementioned passages. Along with Juan de la Cruz, Garrigou-Legrance notes that such a teleological system can be found within the works of many notable Catholic figures, including Teresa de Jesús, Luis de León, Luis de Granada, Dionysius, Augustine, Aquinas, multiple Church Fathers, and the Gospels,¹⁶ and J. Rziha adds to that list the names of Gregory the Great, Therese of Lisieux, and John Paul II (1). Additionally, from a historical standpoint, a greater emphasis on a teleological understanding of the relationship between God and humanity and the proper roles of grace and nature within Baroque Spanish theology is to be expected, given the prevalence of these themes within the Council of Trent and the Counterreformation. Cessario has noted the importance of Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the most influential teleological theologian, on the council of Trent, and he likewise points out that Thomism, the theological-philosophical system articulated by Thomas Aquinas, had a wide and vibrant following within Spanish universities and religious orders, including the Dominicans, the Jesuits, and the Carmelites.¹⁷ In sum, the presence of a teleological strain of thought within the religious sphere of Spain is easily distinguishable.

¹⁶ See Garrigou-Legrance, pp. 24-25.

¹⁷ According to Cessario, “Given the breadth of issues which the council fathers addressed, one recognizes why the expression ‘Counter- Reformation’ may not accurately describe the spirit that dominated the assembled bishops of Trent. On the other hand, a great deal of what was accomplished at Trent bore the stamp of St Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-74), especially the above-mentioned emphasis on clarifying how the seven sacraments of the Church instrumentally serve the new life of grace and virtues that belongs to the justified Christian” (163). In addition, he notes that “What is most significant, however, for measuring the reception of Aquinas at Trent appears in the 94 theologians, many of them from Spain, who were present for one period or another at the conciliar deliberations (Walz

However, the positive integration of the sacred and the profane was not a tendency restricted only to the religious sphere of Spanish Baroque society. In fact, perhaps the greatest example of a fusion of these planes can be found nowhere more than in the Lopean *tragicomedia*, and likewise in an extended fashion in his *comedias de santos*. According to Arellano, “la mixtura de lo popular y lo culto es quizás uno de los aspectos nucleares del teatro Lopeano” (*Historia* 175). Likewise, Johnathan Thacker states: “in Lope’s words, ‘lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado,’... is not a rigid separation of the highborn from lesser mortals, as a classical ‘art’ would require from tragedy and comedy... the ending is no longer calamitous or just happy... the rigid distinction between the origins of the two genres in history or in fiction is dissolved; and high and low styles are mixed” (159-60). The rejection of the classical distinction between comedy and tragedy and the decision to join them together is in fact very significant. According to Max Harris:

Although this is, on the surface, a debate about form, it entails, more profoundly, an evaluation of human life. If nothing else, neoclassicism assumes that nobility and vulgarity are easily distinguishable; the Christian, remembering that the son of God was born in a stable and perhaps soiled his swaddling clothes in the presence of the magic, hesitates before that assumption.... The mixed style allows the possibility that nobility may play in the mud without disgrace and that shepherds may visit the Christ without presumption. (96)

In other words, for Harris, the *tragicomedia*, “the mixed style of... theater, in which king and clown,... nunnery and brothel, blank verse and body prose, share the same world...

The mingled drama” (96), comes to be at least in part due to the influence of

1945). These theologians not only had received a Thomist intellectual formation but also were major instruments of infusing the thought of Aquinas into the deliberations of the Council of Trent.” (166).

Christianity¹⁸ and the reality which must be confronted in the Incarnation: “that Jesus Christ, although he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave; coming in human likeness... he humbled himself to be obedient... even to death on the cross... Because of this, God greatly exalted him” (Phil 2:5-15). However, Lope’s decision to fuse the sacred and the profane within many of his most notable works can also be said to stem also from his own understanding of the human condition and therefore what would most readily appeal to his audiences. Ter Horst states that for “Lope... sensuality is spiritual and... spirituality is sensual. In his life and art, Lope thoroughly confuses, commingles, and compounds sex and religion, so that the one becomes a function of the other” (120), and Gonzalez likewise notes that:

[la comedia de Lope] es completamente extraño al espíritu de desilusión que iba a matizar tan fuertemente a sus seguidores, los cuales sienten irse desde debajo de los pies todas las riquezas terrenas y llegan a desconfiar de las apariencias de la vida natural. Para Lope no hay esta dicotomía. (52)

In fact, as the research of figures such as Burningham and Shergold have shown, Spanish theater constantly drew on both of its primary sources- the religious and the popular- to produce its greatest works; thus, the co-mingling of the sacred and the profane, the high and the low, can be found throughout the performative and artistic genres of the Spanish

¹⁸ “The mixture of rough and holy... has its roots deep in the Christian drama of the Middle Ages... this in turn has its roots in the doctrine of the incarnation: ‘the true heart of the Christian doctrine- incarnation and passion- was... totally incompatible with the principle of the separation of styles. Christ had not come as a hero and king but as a human being of the lower social station.... Nevertheless, all that he did and said was of the highest and deepest dignity, more significant than anything else in the world.... That the king of kings was treated as a low criminal, that it was marked, spat upon, whipped, and nailed to the cross- that story no sooner comes to dominate the consciousness of the people than it completely destroys the aesthetics of the separation of styles; it engenders a new elevated style, which does not score in everyday life and which is ready to absorb the sense really realistic, even the ugly, the undignified, the physically base... aloe style such as word properly only be applicable to comedy, but which now reaches out far beyond its original domain, and encroaches upon the deepest and the highest, the sublime and eternal” (Aeurbach; quoted in Harris 101-102).

Baroque.¹⁹ In other words, “pagan and Christian symbols shared a common space. 'Popular', 'learned' and 'official' culture became integrated. This continuous mixture and integration contributed to make Spanish towns and cities during the Golden Age a whole stage, a social arena always ready for the next spectacle” (Royo 189). Likewise, R.O. Jones states that “nothing was that inappropriate for transformation: in an age of faith there is no barrier between the profane and the divine: one can nourish the other” (quoted in Gascón, 162), and while Gascón himself ultimately upholds a conflicting relationship between the divine and the human within the Spanish *comedia de santos*,²⁰ he nonetheless notes:

For those who either detect no such contradictions as I have discussed in these plays between sacred ends and worldly means... the works successfully complete their ritual function of exercising the worldly and celebrating the divine, towards the ultimate purpose of stimulating passion and solidarity for Catholicism... it seems that the creators of the place, the masses that attended them and continued to demand their performance through the 18th century, and the sensors who permitted them to be staged and published generally maintained this view. (163)

Wardropper contributes to this avenue of exploration as well, recognizing the common use of profane love poetry and erotic expression within religious works.²¹ Thus, the

¹⁹ According to Royo, “all these civic and religious rituals had a remarkable impact on the urban space.⁴⁸ The Spanish Baroque itself co-operated by assuming absolutely the emotional and dramatic legacy of the Counter-Reformation... architecture broke the previous harmony of the Renaissance to promote a more dynamic concept of the civic and religious building, where some parts were subordinated to the principal one, which assumed the leading role of expression. Sculpture provided a great number of saints' figures, realistic and expressive at the same time. Paintings developed a great interest - tenebrismo - in the contrast between light and darkness, always present in the main religious and civic ceremonies inside the town” (185).

²⁰ “The religious dramas studied herein ultimately pronounced no absolutes; rather, they end with the same ambivalence between worldly and profane that has characterized the action all along. The place appeared to expel worldly desire and exalt religious virtue; yet, they can only describe salvific grace in the language of earthly desire” (Gascón 34).

²¹ For example, see Wardropper’s article “The Impact of Folk Song on Sacred and Profane Love Poetry in Post-Tridentine Spain,” where he states: “Utilization of profane folk song in these ways is at times not only daring but even shocking. But since the divinization demands an act of faith in the inconceivable, it is not extraneous to the Christian context. Christianity itself is daring and even shocking in its concepts: a Virgin gives birth; a God becomes human; a Victim sacrifices himself. These are just three

interaction between the sacred and the profane, while at times characterized in terms of dichotomy, was multifaceted in its manifestation, and at the very least partially influenced by a teleological understanding of the human experience. Thus, the theater of Lope de Vega and his school can be understood as a vibrant cultural expression not only of the popular aspects of Golden Age society, but of the religious-official elements as well.

This teleological influence on Spanish theater is especially notable within the genre of the *comedia de santos*, a hagiographic drama in the style of the *comedia nueva*. In fact, the *comedias de santos* are recognized for their explicit fusion of the divine and human planes (Gryj; 48, 62; Dassbach 125). For example, Morrison declares that an integration of the divine and human spheres “is perhaps seldom better manifested than in the *comedia de santos*” (19), and Elaine Canning notes the same when she states that in the *comedias de santos*, “it is through the intricate fusion of *lo Sagrado* and *lo profano*, the sacred and the profane, that plot development, action, thematic concerns and audience expectations are determined and explored” (“Sacred Souls and Sinners” 147). Thus, the hagiographic comedy contains and reveals not only the religious element of Spanish Golden Age society, but its profane aspects as well. In addition, the *comedia de santos* bears a certain affinity in its basic plot and elements to many *tragicomedias*, given that it often ends with the death of the protagonist, a situation which is simultaneously tragic

of the many mysteries of the Christian religion. And yet it is precisely mysteries, the mysteries of everyday life, that Spanish folk song discloses poetically, especially those of loving, rejection, and jealousy. The religious counterfeiting of popular songs serves to divinize the mundane, to redeem—for example—those dark-skinned girls who sing their superstitious terror of their color. If the Virgin Mary is dark-skinned but beautiful—“*nigra sum sed formosa*”—there is hope for the peasant girls who adore her. The poetry of the folk is validated in religious experience; a fusion of the everyday and the eternal is achieved” (491).

and triumphant.²² Thomas R. Case distinguishes three integral factors belonging to most plays of the hagiographic genre: the inclusion of a Catholic saint as protagonist, a setting which includes historical-religious elements as well as political ones, and the promulgation of Catholic doctrine, especially as it was pronounced at the Council of Trent (19-20).²³ These three elements noted by Case refer specifically to the hagiographic identity of the *comedias de santos*; that is, to their religious aspect. However, as was already noted, the hagiographic *comedia* was also inundated, both in its essence and its elements, with the popular dimension of Spanish Baroque culture and theater.²⁴ In fact, Mujica notes that it was “one of the most popular dramatic genres of the 17th century ... nearly every major early modern Spanish playwright wrote hagiographic plays” (*A New Anthology* 170). Thus, Dassbach remarks that in the *comedias de santos*:

Existe un equilibrio entre sus tres elementos: religioso, espectacular y profano. En ellas, estos elementos están bien integrados, de forma que, desde sus respectivas funciones, los tres contribuyen al éxito de la comedia; del elemento religioso emana la fuerza dramática de la comedia; del sobrenatural depende el valor visual

²² According to Morrison, “Another paradox exists in the conclusion of many *comedias de santos*. Upon first reading, the death of an aged saint or the violent end of a young martyr seems tragic. But, as the name of the genre implies, seventeenth-century Spanish playgoers seldom saw tragedy in such a denouement. They saw, rather, victory—the ultimate victory of escape from this vale of tears and acceptance into the realm of heaven” (33).

²³ More specifically, Case states: “Now that so many critics have given such serious consideration to what a *comedia de santos* is, especially in Lope's production, we can better give the genre a close definition. First of all, a *comedia de santos* deals with a saint, either canonized by the Catholic Church or by popular acclamation... A second point which is essential for the *comedia de santos* is a historical framework. Saints are the necessary leaders of a militant church. They are also national heroes... A third element which I believe is part and parcel of the *comedia de santos* is the restating and confirming of Catholic doctrine as proclaimed by the Council of Trent... The genre itself owes much of its very existence to these tenets, for the cult of the saints was a very important part of the declarations. This point is not emphasized strongly enough... The *comedia de santos* and the auto sacramental have their origin and theological basis in the teaching of this famous council” (19-20).

²⁴ For example, Gryj states that “el sistema de personajes [en las *comedias de santos*], por ejemplo, es el mismo que el de otras obras de la Comedia Nueva, con las variaciones pertinentes cuando son necesarias. Los protagonistas masculinos y femeninos se configuran como galanes y damas, o tienen rasgos que se aproximan, sobre todo si se trata de santos que tienen una vida secular antes de convertirse o de alcanzar la santidad” (45).

y espectacular de la misma; mientras que el elemento profano proporciona entrenamiento. (164)

This integration of the sacred and profane spheres within the theatrical ambiance is potentially indicative of a teleological worldview on the part of the playwright or the audience. In fact, according to Gonzalez, *a teleological system is essential for understanding the religious theater of the Golden Age*, as it was a prominent cultural attitude of the time:

El teatro teológico abandona el espacio sacro de los Misterios [el espacio de la Liturgia] pero hace al mundo el lugar inescapable de la decisión humana en la historia de la salvación... ni las circunstancias, ni los personajes ni el ambiente general tienen necesariamente nada de religioso o de teológico en el significado técnico del vocablo. El tema de la obra, sin embargo, está matizado *teológicamente*, y el sentido conjunto que da unidad a la pieza es difícilmente captable, si no se penetran la mentalidad y preocupación teológicas del autor según el punto de vista expresado anteriormente. (45)²⁵

Therefore, one can find in the most profound expressions of both the divine and human spheres of the Golden Age – the Lopean school and Catholic mysticism- a teleological integration and interaction of spirituality and carnality.

In addition, a teleological analysis of the sacred and profane planes of the hagiographic *comedia* is beneficial to theater studies for another reason: it clarifies and helps to further explain the function of ‘theme’ within such works as a manner of maintaining dramatic unity. While many intellectuals, such as Thacker, holds that “in the matter of the so-called unity of action he [Lope] reveals himself to be a follower of

²⁵ Gonzalez notes that “en el pensamiento sustancialista, griega o aristotélico-escolástico, las realidades y estructuras del mundo tienen una consistencia casi-absoluta y están relacionadas entre sí según un principio jerárquico que permite el paso de unas a otras en dirección ascendente o descendente siguiendo las gradaciones de una supuesta realidad objetiva. La base de esta convicción desarrolla Santo Tomás las pruebas de la existencia de Dios y de la creación del mundo combinando en síntesis audaz la teoría aristotélica de la causa eficiente, la idea platónica de participación y la noción bíblica de creación.” (53).

Aristotle, arguing that a play should maintain its focus on its central “acción” (plot/story-line) without introducing extraneous episodes or detachable scenes” (113), others maintain that Lope abandoned the three Aristotelian unities of time, space, and action altogether. For example, Mujica notes that “Lope... rejected the three unities of time, place, and action... the unity of action signified that a plot should be cohesive and without subplots or extraneous complications” (*A New Anthology* 8). For Mujica, this apparent lack of dramatic unity is especially present in Lope’s hagiographic comedies, which often focus on isolated moments within a saint’s life rather than presenting a holistically developing plot and include multiple subplots as well (171). Morrison agrees with Mujica, stating that:

At least half of Lope's saints' plays... can be described as a series of events and tableaux joined together only by the presence of the principal character or characters. The evidence suggests that many theater-goers preferred this plan. They liked seeing brief scenes depicting the character or miracles of their saints, rather than a well-constructed conflict building through two acts and resolved in the third. (94)

Such a lack of dramatic unity extends to the relationship which exists between the religious and popular dimensions already noted to be present in many religious works, establishing an artificial division between them. However, as figures such as A. A. Parker have noted, the unity of the Lopean *comedia*, especially in its religious form, can be found in the centrality of a certain *theme*. He states that within Baroque theater:

What the dramatist offers us... is a complete action... that discloses a theme that has a significant bearing on experience, a theme that can be taken out of the particular action and universalized in the form of an important judgment on some aspect of human life. I want to insist upon this distinction between action and theme because it is fundamental ... [in] the Spanish drama... the normal criterion of unity of action must be replaced by that of unity of theme, and it is in this way that the apparent duality of many Spanish plays is resolved. I refer to those that have two plots, a main plot and a subplot with different actions or with a different

dramatic tone. The relation of the one plot to the other must be looked for in the relation of each to the theme. (“Approach to Spanish Drama” 43-44)

In other words, the dramatic unity that exists in the works of Lope and his school is much more a unity of theme than of place, time, characterization, or the development of a central conflict. This centrality of theme and its importance to understanding the Spanish *comedia nueva* is exactly what Gonzalez was referring to in the previously cited passage concerning the necessity of understanding such dramas teleologically. That is, the theme of the drama must be understood as that element which unites each aspect of the *comedia* and which serves as the central point and goal towards which the work moves and in which its conflicts are resolved. An understanding of the role of theme as the unifying element of a drama is also significant as such a viewpoint agrees not only with the observations of Thacker, who postulates that Lope conserves a unity of action in his works (113-14), but at the same time admits the validity Mujica’s observations regarding the presence of a multiplicity of plots within the Lopean drama. Such a multiplicity of storylines no longer necessarily creates a fragmentation of the work, since *tema*, not *trama*, or plot grants the *comedia* unity and intelligibility. It is also important to recognize that the notion of ‘action’ being analyzed in this instance is Aristotelian in its origins. For Aristotle, there is an essential relation between the end or goal of an object and its action and nature. In his *Physics*, for example, he declares: “for the ‘what’ and the ‘that for the sake of which’ are one, while the primary source of motion is the same in species as these” (II. 7. 26-27). That is, there is an intimate union between the end of an object, its essence, and its action. The unity of thematic action potentially conserved by Lope, therefore, can be seen as a teleological unity which recognizes at least implicitly the relationship between the goal – the end of the work – and the components of an object,

which are in this case the action, plot, and characters of the *comedia*. This observation does not mean that Lope was completely Aristotelian in his actual employ of action, time, and place in his *comedias*. Rather, it merely seeks to note that the understanding of the relationship between goal, essence, and action during Lope's time would have been influenced by the theories of Aristotle; hence, an Aristotelian notion of such elements should at least be consulted when seeking to define their functions and relationships. In sum, it is worth noting a quote by Cécile Vincent-Cassy regarding the relationship between the Baroque concepts of the 'real' and 'ideal' within the *comedia de santos*. She states: "Efectivamente, el teatro hagiográfico tiende hacia la perfecta copia no de la verdad en tanto que naturaleza, y sino de esa verdad de otro orden en que el drama tiene la función de enseñar a un público concebido como una Comunidad de fieles" (492). In other words, while in many cases in Spanish theater and literature, the tension between the spiritual and the physical, the tragic and the comical, is not fully resolved, such a reality does not indicate that these spheres were inherently contradictory. Rather, the narratives presented above reveal that for at least some figures of the Golden Age, the relationship between divinity and humanity was both positive and unitive, and one in which an imperfect humanity was called to *theosis*: a holistic perfection through union with the fullness of Divinity.

CHAPTER THREE

Marriage as Unifying Theme: Theatrical and Spiritual Considerations

It is within the debate concerning the presence of a unity of action and the importance of *theme* as a unifying element in the Lopean *comedias de santos*, that the theme of marriage gains its significance. In her book *Marriage in Early Modern Spain: Conjugal Doctrine in Lope, Cervantes, and Calderón*, Gabriela Carrión declares that “Miguel de Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Pedro Calderón de la Barca, among many others, regularly represent marriage in their dramatic works either as the starting point of tragedy or as the happy end of comedy, suggesting the centrality of the conjugal bond” (xii). Likewise, Mujica defines Lope’s *comedia* as “a play featuring characters of the minor nobility that ends favorably for the protagonists, often in a wedding” (*A New Anthology* 666), and she notes that “it was Lope who definitely set the number of acts – called *jornadas* – at three. The formula was *exposición, nudo, desenlace*. In the first act, the dramatic problem is laid out. In the second, the plot is brought to a head. In the third, the dilemma is resolved” (*A New Anthology* 8). In other words, within the Lopean *comedia*, in which “love and honor are the two overriding matters of immediate concern” (McKendrick 74), one can generally expect to find a coherent development of plot which ends with the happy marriage of the protagonists. Anny Guimont and Jesus Peres Magallon note that “Lope recurre al matrimonio en el cierre de sus obras” (163-64), specifically to bring about “el restablecimiento del orden... con el desenlace feliz de las obras” (142), if not always in a particularly profound manner. Thus, at the very

least, the wedding features prominently as the ‘official’ end of the Lopean *comedia*. However, Carmelo Gariano has noted the importance of the nuptial theme to the popular, grotesque side of the *comedia* as well, stating that “el matrimonio es la institución a la cual dirige Lope las indirectas de su humor sin perder la condescendencia con que lo concibe” (253). This ‘hybrid identity’ of marriage was not solely theatrical; as Carrión recognizes, marriage was recognized by post-Trent Spanish society as both a natural and a sacramental reality.¹ Likewise, Hancock-Palmer declares that “the Council of Trent reaffirmed the ‘perpetual and indissoluble’ bond of matrimony as a sacrament, further legitimizing human marriage as a symbol for spiritual betrothal with God” (7-8). As a result, Pedro Ruiz Perez declares that the narrative of the *comedia* as a whole “dará cuenta del proceso seguido por los amantes para alcanzar su unión, identificada cada vez más con el lazo matrimonial, cómo se generaliza en las soluciones de la comedia” (45). In fact, marriage and nuptial imagery are prominent focal points not only within *comedias* of ‘amor,’ but also those which feature ‘honor’ as their prevalent theme.² The centrality of marriage to the *comedia* overall, therefore, suggests its function as a central, unifying theme for the Lopean drama.

¹ For example, Carrión states that “the council of Trent reflects the multifaceted aspects of marriage in that it reinforces marriage’s sacramental status and as a result, legitimizes sexuality, at least within the confines of the conjugal bond. However, despite efforts by the council of Trent to regulate marriage and hence elevate the social status of what had couples, by most 16th century standards, the vow of marriage remains a kind of second best alternative to that of chastity” (xviii).

² According to Royo, “The nucleus of the comedy, the main part of the usual representation in permanent theatres, consisted of romantic troubles between a knight and a lady, mixed often with conflicts of honor” (181). Likewise, Anny Guimont and Jesús Pérez Magallón note that “el matrimonio - feliz o infeliz- resulta ser una manera eficaz- también superficial, aparente de restablecer el orden social. Algunos de los problemas planteados en las comedias lopescas -las diferencias entre las clases sociales, los casos de honor y las diferencias económicas entre los amantes- tenían que acabar con algún tipo de restablecimiento del orden, fuera el que fuese. No existe una solución...como veremos, cada comedia es original y presenta rasgos propios en el planteamiento de la acción así como en la solución del conflicto” (149).

However, the role of marriage as a fundamental, unifying theme is not relegated to the *comedia de capa y espada*. Rather, the wedding is an equally essential element within the *comedia de santos* of Lope and his school, a genre of theater which, as has already been noted, brings the spiritual and material elements of the human experience together in a poignant manner. The presence of marriage, nuptial love, and sexuality as a central theme of the hagiographic comedy finds its roots in both the rough and the holy elements of theater and the society from which it draws. For example, Gryj notes that “comedias sobre santas suelen incluir algún tipo de trama amorosa, siempre afín a la figura dramática de la dama” (45), and Dassbach adds that:

Al adaptar el material hagiográfico a la escena y dar a la comedia de santos una estructura similar a la de la comedia secular, son incorporadas... a la comedia de santos unas situaciones y conflictos propios de la comedia profana que se desarrollan a la par que la materia hagiográfica... Dentro de los elementos profanos que se incorporan a la comedia de santos se encuentran, por tano, una trama secundaria de carácter profano, personajes cómicos y temas seculares. (126)

However, the inclusion of nuptial themes within the *comedia de santos* was in no way confined to secondary plots and characters. More often than not, the main character of a hagiographic drama was characterized as if they were a *galán* or a *dama*, with a strong emphasis (especially in works recounting the lives of female saints) on the virtue of chastity.³ According to Dassbach, therefore:

Dentro de las tramas secundarias, es la intriga de tipo amoroso la que predomina en las comedias de santos. Con frecuencia esta trama tiene como protagonista a la santa o santo y no se desarrolla paralelamente a la trama religiosa, sino que está integrada en la misma... funciona en relación a la trama principal, es decir, a la trama religiosa. (131)

³ See, by way of example, Gryj, who states that “Otros santos masculinos pueden tener atributos del galán (sobre todo el de su linaje y valor), pero intercambian la búsqueda de amor por la del saber máximo, que encuentran en el cristianismo” (45), and Dassbach, who declares: “De las tres virtudes que caracterizan al mendicante, son a castidad y la obediencia las que con más frecuencia se explotan dramáticamente. De estas dos, la castidad ofrece más posibilidades para la creación de tensiones y conflictos; siendo, además, el tema sexual uno que, incluso en estas obras, capta fácilmente el interés del público” (25).

The convergence of primary and secondary plots, of divine and human preoccupations, and of seemingly fragmented scenes of the *comedia de santos* is often brought about through the nuptial reality, and nowhere is this reality made more apparent than in the mystical wedding: the union of the soul with God through a sort of deified marriage. This type of wedding, which appears at the end of dramas featuring mystics such as Teresa de Jesús, but in other genres of religious theater as well,⁴ serves as a unifying theme of the work in an almost identical manner to that of the wedding found at the end of the secular *comedia*. Building upon his already noted definition of the mystics' goal of union between the soul and God, Morrison notes that such a union was based "on the concept of marriage; after all, the Bible portrays a marital union between Christ and His Church and between Him and each elected soul" (17). Given that the highest end of mystic spirituality was commonly expressed using marital terms, it is not surprising that within the Lopean *comedia de santos*, the culmination of the mystics' life- and therefore of the play- might be represented through the saint's marriage with God.⁵ Thus, the wedding serves to integrate the various aspects and elements of the *comedia de santos*, including (and perhaps especially) the divine and profane spheres often so starkly presented in the hagiographic drama. In other words, the marital union of God with humanity extends

⁴ For example, Mujica notes in regard to *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesus* "the culmination of the play is Teresa's mystical marriage and union with Christ in death. Carrying a cross, Teresa kneels and prays, thereby realizing another *tableau vivant*. Teresa was commonly depicted crucifix in hand, above her a cozier with a banner reading IHS, which is sometimes repeated on her breast. Other images show her receiving Christ's hand in mystical marriage, surrounded by angels" ("Performing Sanctity," 197).

⁵ This is especially the case when the saint in question is female. For example, Cécile Vincent-Cassy states that "Hablando sobre los Santos vírgenes y mártires especialmente la clasificación anterior: definidas ante todo como esposas de Cristo, su santidad se definía como presencia a lo largo del señor en el cielo... y precisamente las comedias biográficas que dramatizan su vida y martirio se vinculan directa o indirectamente a esta concepción" (484). Likewise, Gascón declares that "the primary metaphor the dramatist uses to describe her [the female saint's] relationship with God is that of matrimony" (73).

throughout and integrates the other divine and human aspects of the saints' play. In his analysis of the role of the woman saint in the *comedia de santos*, Gascón recognizes this fact, noting that the female saint "often appears as a liminal figure between the human and the divine... the holy woman plays the part of a mediator who negotiates between sacred and secular factions and their conflict. She attempts to reconcile earthly and salvific desires" (37). That is, the saintly woman often serves to unite human society with her Divine Spouse. In a like matter, DiPuccio has noted that the figure of God in the *comedia de santos* is characterized in an especially human, or incarnate, manner. She states: "in the hagiographic tradition... a surprisingly human God courts, marries, gets involved in duels, and feels jealousy. God, as seen in these plays, recalls any number of *galanes* from the secular tradition" (384). This, just as the saint unites the divine and the profane through his or her theosis, so also the Godhead is humanized in a manner that contributes to that same unification. According to Dassbach, in the most successful *comedias de santos*:

Existe un equilibrio entre sus tres elementos: religioso, espectacular y profano. En ellas, estos elementos están bien integrados, de forma que, desde sus respectivas funciones, los tres contribuyen al éxito de la comedia; del elemento religioso emana la fuerza dramática de la comedia; del sobrenatural depende el valor visual y espectacular de la misma; mientras que el elemento profano proporciona entrenamiento... lo profano refuerza dramática y temáticamente lo religioso y lo espectacular aumenta el valor e impacto teológico de lo sobrenatural. Es decir, lo profano surge la mayoría de las veces del elemento religioso y lo sobrenatural ciertamente emana de lo religiosos, de modo que no hay razón para que estos tres elementos... se integren y contribuyan al éxito dramático de las comedias. No solo son mejores las comedias de santos que integran con éxito estos tres elementos sino que la mayoría de estas comedias organiza su material dramático de esta forma. (164)

This equilibrium of elements finds a unifying expression within the theme of marriage, in which divinity and humanity are explicitly united in an intimate manner. The presence of

marriage as unifying theme, therefore, is evident not only in Lope's secular *comedia* but also in its religious counterpart as well.

The use of nuptial imagery to describe the union of the saintly soul with God, although ideal for the schema and plot of the Lopean *comedia*, was not invented by the Spanish stage. Rather, there is a broad precedent within Christian mysticism for expressing the intimate union of the soul with Christ in marital terms. Drawing from the Old Testament's *Song of Songs*, Christian mystics including Teresa de Jesús, Juan de la Cruz, Luis de León, Thomas Aquinas, and Bridget of Sweden elected to describe the height of the mystical experience as nuptial in character.⁶ Teresa Hancock-Palmer notes that "Teresa of Ávila experienced the Song of Songs as an enactment of mental prayer and spiritual marriage, and taught her spiritual daughters to perform it as such" (43), and Bruce Wardropper recognizes nuptiality as a hallmark of nearly all Christian mysticism.⁷ However, as regards the exact nature of the mystical union of the soul with God- that is, of the goal of mysticism in general- there is less consensus. For many intellectuals, sixteenth-century mysticism, following the ideals and spirituality of a strictly neoplatonic understanding of the world, understood the relationship between the spiritual and the physical to be one of conflict, in which "repressed sensuality, in short, is the equivalent of

⁶ Garrigou-Lagrange lists Dyonisius, Augustine, Aquinas, Luis de Leon, and Teresa among those mystics whose mannerisms and theologies are akin to Juan de la Cruz (24-25), and in his article "Mira mis llagas": Heridas divinas en las obras de Brígida de Suecia y Teresa de Jesús," Ryan Giles notes that both Teresa de Jesús and Brígida de Suecia characterize their union with God in marital terms which are strikingly similar (35-36).

⁷ "El misticismo de la Iglesia es fundamentalmente nupcial y está fundado en la relación del amor entre Cristo y la Iglesia, así como entre Cristo y cada alma elegida en particular" (Wardropper, *Historia* 67).

virtuous living” (Parker, *Philosophy*, 45).⁸ Seen in this manner, “in mystical Christianity, a hierarchy existed through which the further one got away from the created realm, including Christ Incarnate, the better, as it tended to represent carnal habits that disallowed mystical pursuit” (Tigchelaar, “Redemption Theology” 115). For example, in *La muerte del Apetito*, a *coloquio espiritual* written by Sor Marcela de San Félix, the character of ‘Apetito’ is literally killed before Alma, the protagonist, is able to draw closer to God: “*Llega Desnudez y hace que ahoga a Apetito... Apetito: ‘que me mata Desnudez / que me acaba; ya soy muerto’*” (vv. 1166, 1172-73). Thus, according to Gascón, the *coloquios* of Marcela reveal that the aspiring saint should “liberate herself completely from desire. Instead of striving for holiness, she should make emptiness the center of her existence.... In these lines Marcela follows Saint Teresa, who states in *Las Moradas*, ‘Es muy cierto que, en haciendo nosotros todo lo que es criatura y deshaciéndonos de ella por amor de Dios, el mismo Señor la ha a hinchir de si’” (57). In other words, for Gascón, the center of mystical sanctity was found in the repression of worldly desires and the ‘marriage’ of the soul with the purely divine. Thus, he notes that within the religious drama and, indeed, the convent as well, “the woman saint appears as the locus of the conflict between sacred and profane, the site of contention where the two forces clash” (Gascón 166). Dassbach expands on this line of thought, noting in regard to the inclusion of love intrigues within the *comedia de santos* that:

Este tipo de intriga amorosa, que generalmente ocurre al principio de la comedia, permite por una parte, pues, hacer visible el rechazo de lo terrenal y la entrada del

⁸ According to Parker, “Plato’s philosophy of love was based on the ascent from the material to the immaterial, and dissent in which the mind is drawn upwards by the love of beauty period from the beauty of material things the mind is led to the beauty of human bodies, from there to the beauty of goodness, and then to the beauty of ideas and from there to the knowledge and love of absolute beauty, which is God. This philosophy demanded the elimination of sex from love to the greatest possible extent on the grounds that it distracts from wisdom and can be condoned only as a meaningless biological necessity” (*Philosophy* 41).

santo en el ámbito religiosos. Por otra parte, y dependiendo del número de galanes y de la tenacidad de los mismos, permite crear tensión e interés dramáticos y proporcionar cierto entretenimiento. (131-32)

Mysticism understood in this manner carries within it a certain element of the ‘Baroque tension’ outlined in Chapter Two: a strictly spiritual union which is, nevertheless, best described in sensual terms.

Although this understanding of mysticism, which sees the spiritual wedding as the total rejection of all things physical in favor of a consummate union with the divine, is not uncommon, such an understanding is hard to reconcile not only with the writings of individuals such as Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús, but also with the very source of nuptial expression within the mystical tradition: the *Song of Songs*. According to Ayala, “es el *Cantar de los Cantares* el documento más singular y excelso de la herencia judeocristiana que enlaza definitivamente el aspecto sensual con el espiritual, vínculo que debería recobrase como revelación de la unidad entre lo humano y lo divino” (468-69). This integration of the sensual and the spiritual foreshadows and echoes the doctrines of the Incarnation and the Eucharist, as well as the words of St. Paul concerning the relationship between Christ and his Church. The Council of Trent’s emphasis on the dual status of marriage as a natural and divine reality in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries reinforced the nuptial theme found in the *Song of Songs* and throughout the Christian tradition.⁹ Thus:

⁹ According to Parker, “The fact that the Christian God is revealed in the human Christ gives an inevitable human dimension to the expression of mystical love, which may not be there in the language of non-Christian Mystics” (*Philosophy* 90) Likewise, Arias declares: “because Christ is the central point of God’s plan towards which everything tends, and because he chooses to remain fully present in the Eucharist, this sacrament is consequently the most important one. All the other sacraments tend towards it and derive their meaning in power from it. It is the center around which revolves the life of the church and its members. Furthermore, all the precepts and the entire moral code are built around it” (*Spanish Sacramental Plays* 28). See also Ryan, Peter F, and Germain Gabriel Grisez: “without using the word covenant, this canon defines the truth that Christian marriage is more than a secular affair. Trent taught in

Asume por entero el misterio de la Encarnación: el Espíritu se hace carne, la Palabra se hace Carne. El alma se inscribe en el cuerpo y el Verbo encarnado aloja lo divino en toda su latitud. Y así Cristo, que es Palabra de Dios, actúa como mediador entre lo absoluto trascendente de Dios y la finitud del hombre. Es por eso que el formato y la temática de la poesía bucólica (naturalista) pueden ser medio de transmisión del mensaje bíblico sin que exista una fisura o forzamiento artificial en ello... Es sólo mediante una lectura simbólica que el amor humano logra ser epifanía del amor divino, pues hay en la naturaleza humana una semejanza o consustancialidad con la esencia divina. El “simbolismo místico-erótico” es el que puede abrir la variedad de significados de la unión amorosa como unión de Esposo y Esposa, Salomón y Sulamita, Yahvé e Israel, Cristo e Iglesia, Dios y el alma. (Ayala 449).

In other words, the basis of a nuptial understanding of the mystical union of the individual with God is anything but dualistic. This same understanding of the mystical wedding can also be found in the works of Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús. In her *Moradas*, Teresa declares that “lo que pasa en la unión del matrimonio espiritual es muy diferente: aparécese el Señor en este centro del alma sin visión imaginaria sino intelectual... siempre queda el alma con su Dios en aquel centro” (111-112). Likewise, according to the Juan de la Cruz:

El dicho matrimonio espiritual entre la dicha alma y el Hijo de Dios, Esposo suyo, el cual es mucho más que el desposorio, porque es una transformación total en el Amado, en que se entregan ambas las partes por total posesión de la una a la otra en consumada unión de amor, cual se puede en esta vida, en que está el alma hecha divina y Dios por participación, en cuanto se puede en esta vida... y así es el más alto estado a que en esta vida se puede llegar. Porque, así como en la consumación del matrimonio carnal son dos en una carne, como dice la divina

the doctrinal preface that Christ's grace confirms marriage's indissolubility; by defining with canon one that marriage is a sacrament that confers grace, the council definitively excludes the notion that hardheartedness is so inevitable in fallen humankind that Jesus never really expected even Christians to live out the God-given indissolubility he affirmed. Jesus not only taught what God intended marriage to be, but by meriting grace for fallen men and women, and by making marriage a sacrament, he enabled every Christian spouse to overcome hardheartedness and remain faithful until death” (398-99). Finally, see Eloy Tejero, who states in reference to Trent: “Define el matrimonio, ha de percibirse ‘según su relación con lo significado; y cómo lo significado, en este segmento, es la Unión de Cristo y la iglesia, y esa Unión no puede significarse mejor que por la Unión exterior, por ello, así como el bautismo se llama ablución, así el matrimonio es llamado esencialmente según su género propio Unión.’ En este mismo sentido afirma Santo Tomás “que la misma Unión es el signo de la Unión de Cristo y la iglesia y no la operación de quienes están unidos. de ahí que puede decirse, en expresión del doctor angélico, que la significación sacramental del matrimonio ‘toca la esencia del matrimonio, es decir, La Unión”” (114).

Escritura (Gn. 2, 24), así también, consumado este espiritual matrimonio entre Dios y el alma, son dos naturalezas en un espíritu y amor de Dios. (*Cántico* 84)

In this passage, two key elements must be noted. First, a union of human nature with divine nature by participation necessarily presupposes that the humanity of the individual in question is not rejected or diminished.¹⁰ As Edward Howells notes concerning the mystical union of the soul with God: “union is to be understood as the interiorization of the divine life of the Trinity into a Christ-like self... union with God is in no way superficial to the self, nor does it remove the self from its authentic created existence, but rather deepens and transforms it” (quoted in Tigchelaar, “Marcela de san Félix,” 42-43). This ‘deepening’ or perfection of one’s own nature by means of such a union is a “una pura transformación por participación de unión [of the soul with God]” (*Subida* V.5). In other words, the mystical marriage can be defined as the almost constant union of the soul with God, a union-in-grace understood to be the highest form of participation in the Divine Life (Garrigou-Lagrange 56). A. A. Parker follows a similar line of thought in *The Philosophy of Love* when he notes that “what the Spanish Mystics claim to experience is actual union with God, the union of spirit with spirit which is achieved by contemplative prayer. St. John of the Cross says that this union is an intellectual intuition of the divinity; but it is at the same time, and above all, an act of love” (75). This ‘loving union’ noted by Parker and traditionally described in nuptial terms can thus be seen as a sort of ‘theosis’ or ‘deification,’ in which the soul:

¹⁰ See, for example, Tigchelaar, who states: “[in] Christian theology: our emotions and corporality do not define the Divine’s, somehow sully them with any contact; rather, it is the other way around: Christ’s “emotions”—most notably, Love—shape ours, as His once-broken body redeems ours. From this standpoint, then “emotionality” and “corporality” in religion, when properly understood, are not only important concepts, but doctrinally central” (“Redemption Theology” 119). However, this passage is not meant to contradict the previously noted emphasis in the works of figures such as John of the Cross on the importance of corporeal purification as a manner of ordering the body and the senses towards their proper end.

queda esclarecida y transformada en Dios, y le comunica Dios su ser sobrenatural de tal manera, que parece el mismo Dios y tiene lo que tiene el mismo Dios. Y se hace tal unión cuando Dios hace al alma esta sobrenatural merced, que todas las cosas de Dios y el alma son unas en transformación participante. Y el alma más parece Dios que alma, y aun es Dios por participación; aunque es verdad que su ser naturalmente tan distinto se le tiene del de Dios como antes. (Juan de la Cruz, *Subida V.7*)

The mystical union between the soul and God, a “new union that is at once most real and most spiritual by which... we are made not only one spirit but in a sense one flesh with Christ” (Juan de la Cruz, *Complete Works* 143), and which requires the purification of human nature but not its annihilation, is consistent with the teleological worldview presented in the second chapter and identified as present in the works of Juan de la Cruz and other Catholic figures.

Furthermore, as Juan de la Cruz notes in the aforementioned passage, this union is not reserved only to heaven; rather, it can be achieved in varying degrees of perfection while still on earth. Therefore, it is not intrinsically opposed to human corporality, which limits, but does not actively attack, such a union with the Divine Godhead. Although this union is fullest in heaven, many mystics, following the teachings of Aquinas, believed that “fundamentally the life of grace and the life of glory are the same supernatural life, the same charity” (Garrigou-Lagrance 121). This sentiment is echoed by Juan de la Cruz as well:

According to Saint John of the cross, the full perfection attainable in this life is found only in the transforming union, or the spiritual marriage.... This state represents the full development of charity; perfect love accepts any work or suffering whatever for God, and even finds a holy joy and suffering.... It is, in short, God himself who communicates Himself to the soul... and transforms it in Himself. (Garrigou-Lagrance 153-54)

In other words, when the relationship between the spiritual and the material is understood teleologically, marriage functions as a symbol used to describe how divinity and

humanity relate in a perfective, actualizing manner. A compatible expression of the teleological relationship between grace and nature can be found in the works of Teresa de Jesus, as well as in other notable Catholic saints.¹¹ For example, at the end of her *Moradas*, Teresa declares that “es menester no poner vuestro fundamento sólo en rezar y contemplar; porque, sino pcuráis virtudes y hay ejercicio de ellas, siempre os quedaréis enanas... porque el amor tengo imposible contentarse de estar en un ser... creedme, que Marta y Maria han de andar juntas” (122-123). For Teresa, therefore, the perfection of the mystical union manifests itself on both a spiritual and a practical level and in the perfect ordering of the entirety of human nature, body and soul, towards the love of God.

In addition, it is important to note that although many of the experiences of the mystic were not common phenomena within what might be referred to as the ‘popular spirituality’ of Catholicism, the nuptial union described by the Spanish mystics is in fact the ‘perfection of being’ to which every Christian is called both in this life and the next. That is, the union described by the mystical wedding is not only the end and perfection of the Christian mystic, but of all Christians both individually and as a community.

Elaborating on this line of thought, Parker declares that:

Luis De Leon says that there are three things to be considered in the marriage of Christ and His church. The first is the ‘uniting and close union,’ and the word he uses for ‘uniting’ is *ayuntamiento*, which was the word for copulation. The second is ‘sweetness and delight’... that results from this union. The third is the circumstances in which marriage finds its expression. Since, he continues, Christ is the husband not only of the church as a whole, but also of each one of its members, these factors must all combine in their relation of the believer to Christ” (*Philosophy* 88).

¹¹ For example, Garrigou-Lagrange states that “whenever Saint Teresa touches on the question of grace, her doctrine is similar to that of Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas. Saint John of the Cross always assumes the truth of this doctrine” (110-11).

In other words, mysticism is seen to be the height of perfection for all Christians, and the mystical wedding is understood to be the highest form of theosis on earth, a theosis which fulfills the entirety of human nature, both soul and body. Carrera recognizes a similar line of thought in the works of Teresa de Jesús:

Teresa emphasizes that the joy and pleasure of union with God can be already experienced on earth... It is thus possible to argue that the 'alta vida' referred to at the beginning of the 'Muero' poem is not simply that of eternal union of the soul with God after the body's death, but it is also the spiritual life of feeling connected with God on earth through love, sorrow and joy, through desire, through hope: 'Valgan mis deseos, Dios mío, delante de vuestro divino acatamiento y no miréis mi poco merecer.'" (741-42)

Thus, the saint, who is mystically married to Christ, finds within themselves the total union and integration of the divine and human spheres of reality, a union to which every individual is called, both personally and societally. As a result, the living mystic, as 'God-by-participation-incarnate,' continually strives towards the fulfillment of God's will on this earth, both through the use of their own natural talents as well as through more divine channels such as the miracle. According to Tigchelaar:

the mystic practitioner is united both imitatively and triadically with an earth-bound [yet Triune] Christ. The erotic love of the mystic union's emphatically agapeic nature suggests from a theological perspective necessary issue in love of other humans, and the obedience highlighted in the process leads specifically toward an ultimate Redemption that once did find its expression on earth, and thus must, even if imperfectly, necessarily continue to do so... ascetic or mystic practice and earthly redemptive activity appear inextricably doctrinally linked, and thus practically so as well ("Marcela de San Félix" 33-34).

That is, the soul which is united to God by the mystical wedding participates most perfectly in the Divine Act and therefore especially in the theological virtue of charity, defined as love of friendship of God and love of others out of love for God (J. Rziha 128). The mystic therefore deifies not only themselves, but to at least some extent their community, both through grace-inspired human actions such as reforming religious

orders and founding convents and through human participation in divine actions, such as miraculous healing. In sum, the wedding, including in its mystical form, can be seen not only as a key theme within the Lopean *comedias*, but also as a central aspect of the religious dimension of Spanish Baroque society.

CHAPTER FOUR

Eucharistic Theology, Dramatic Analogy, and Nuptial Imagery in the *Autos Sacramentales* of José de Valdivielso

The importance of *tema* in understanding the dramatic unity of the Spanish religious drama and the close relationship which existed between every form of the *comedia* and the wedding have both been well-established in the previous chapters, as have their connections to Catholic mysticism and the school of Lope de Vega. However, the unifying role of *tema*, or theme, in the religious drama of the Golden Age is equally fundamental for gaining a full understanding of the *auto sacramental*, a Eucharistic drama unique to Early Modern Spain. According to Oberlander, “the *auto* was as popular with the Spanish public as was the *comedia* and was practiced by such leading playwrights as Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina..., and Pedro Calderón de la Barca” (33-34). While Calderón is perhaps the dramatist most commonly associated with the *auto sacramental*, several critics, following the work of Wardropper, have recognized a second master of this dramatic subgenre: José de Valdivielso, a Spanish priest, poet, and playwright who was a close friend of Lope de Vega, and whose exclusively religious works were recognized by his contemporaries as being of the highest quality and craftsmanship.¹ In fact, according to Wardropper, “el drama Eucarístico de Valdivielso llega a la cumbre de la perfección” (*Introducción*, 312); thus, any study of the Baroque

¹ For example, McKendrick states: “The finest of Calderon’s Predecessors, however, is now acknowledged to have been Jose de Valdivielso, a priest and exclusively religious dramatist who was highly regarded by his contemporaries and who has now been rescued from critical neglect and revealed to be a guide of skill and originality second only to Calderon” (256).

religious drama would be seriously incomplete without reference to José de Valdivielso and his *autos sacramentales*. In their analyses of the works of Valdivielso and his contemporaries, various scholars have been emphatic in their declaration that the *auto* cannot be understood without a true appreciation of the role of the *tema* within Spanish drama.² Likewise, as Gonzalez has pointed out, this *tema* and its relationship to the other dramatic elements of the work must be understood teleologically. This thematic character of the *auto sacramental* is especially evident due to its liturgical, sacramental qualities. Bruce Burningham notes regarding the relationship between theater and liturgical ritual (and therefore sacramentality) that:

Ritual is not the point of departure in an evolutionary chain that leads from lower to higher forms of representation, from primitive to civilized mimesis. Rather, it is one possible point of arrival among many. Ritual itself is a highly evolved type of symbolic performance... ritual is what often emerges from a narrative that has been told and retold countless times. With each retelling, the story is distilled and refined until what remains is an abstract essence whose meaning becomes inseparable from the official ceremonial context in which it is actively remembered. Ritual is a narrative that has ultimately achieved an almost pure symbolic value. (41)

² See, for example, Arellano, who states: “podría decirse que lo característico de estas obras es la presencia nuclear de la eucaristía como asunto esencial. esto tampoco significa que la eucaristía sea el tema exclusivo, como erróneamente han señalado algunos estudiosos, ni que la presencia del sacramento sea siempre explícita en toda la extensión dominante del texto... dicho de otro modo, el auto sacramental se mueve siempre en el territorio de la historia de la salvación, en el que la exaltación del sacramento es un motivo ideológicamente fundamental y ineludible, aunque no siempre ocupa en el plano argumental una extensión textual grande. Es, en suma, un teatro litúrgico marcado por el sacramento de la eucaristía, o, si se prefiere, por el tema de la rendición” (687). Likewise, Oberlander notes that “the word theme, tema, is ambiguous when referring to the autos sacramentales. Calderon resolved this ambiguity by making a distinction between the asunto or theme and the argumento. The asunto of each auto is the Eucharist. The argumento however may vary from one auto to another being whatever subject treated sacredly as long as it sheds light on the asunto, the Eucharist. As the Eucharist is the central key to all dogma it is understood that the argumento of a sacramental play may treat any dogma or facet of Catholic thinking, interpreted in the light of this key... Jose de Valdivielso seemingly held a similar attitude toward the asunto and the argumento in his theory of the auto sacramental” (59). In both cases, the importance of *tema* in characterizing the *auto sacramental* is clear.

In other words, ritual is essentially and especially thematic, and Gascón notes that “the *auto sacramental* is perhaps the dramatic genre most readily identifiable as ritualistic in character... due to its abstract style, its use of conventional character types and symbols, and of course, its sacred purpose: to celebrate the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist during the annual feast of Corpus Christi by recalling and expounding upon the meaning of Christ’s sacrifice” (27). Thus, a full appreciation of the function of *theme* as a dramatic unifier is especially important for any analysis of the *auto sacramental*. As was noted in the second chapter, critics such as Shergold and McKendrick have postulated that “the history of the court stage and of the *corrales* ran parallel to that of the religious drama, and in particular to the ‘autos sacramentales’ of Corpus Christi... the religious theater is much older than the ‘comedia’” (Shergold 415);³ likewise, Wardropper and Gonzalez have pointed out that many of the central elements of the Lopean *comedia* were essential in the formation of the *auto* genre as well.⁴ As a result, a more complete understanding of the unifying role of marriage (and indeed, any other central *asunto*) as a unifier in both the sacred and the secular *comedia* can be gained through an analysis of the *auto sacramental*.

The unique position that the *auto* occupied within Spanish society and culture must therefore be examined, not only in its abstract sense, but also as a concrete, historical, and theatrical phenomenon which was performed before an audience and grew

³ “The public theater grew out of their ritual of religious worship as this ritual gradually overflowed the confines of churches and cathedrals into the streets and marketplaces” (McKendrick 6).

⁴ Wardropper notes that “Los amores y la galantería puede decirse que forma base no solo de la comedia, sino también del auto loresco” (*Introducción* 279), and Gonzalez states “El auto toma de la tragedia y sobre todo de la comedia sus procedimientos dramáticos travistiéndolos: hay una *divinización* ... los conflictos y los resortes del auto no son otra cosa que los de la comedia profana tomados *a lo divino*” (58).

out of a specific post-Trent worldview. In *A History of the Spanish Stage*, Shergold references a 1608 document which called for the painting of stage carts to be used for several different *autos*, among them a work called *El adulterio de la esposa*, which he notes “is fairly certainly Lope de Vega’s *La adúltera perdonada*, the staging of which corresponds perfectly with the scenery and stage effects described in the document” (435). Among its various trappings and effects, the stage contract for this particular *auto*, according to Shergold, called for “two ‘medios carros... en el medio carro en lo alto ha de haber una nube o globo que se abra... en este medio carro ha de haber pintados algunos pesos y espadas y llamas de fuego porque es el carro de la Justicia divina... en el otro carro ha de haber... iglesia... dragón... unas plumadas para subir una mujer arriba” (435). McKendrick mentions this work as well, noting that “the cart of Divine Justice, which was painted with scales, swords, and hell-fire, had to carry at the upper level a blue star-strewn cloud or globe which divided into four to reveal three people; while the other representing the Church, had to carry a throne in the form of a chapel or church and a dragon with seven heads” (246-47). The detailed descriptions of the contracts mentioned by both Shergold and McKendrick reveal that not only was the *auto sacramental* a genre which was regularly performed, but that it was performed with all the lavishness and theatrical flair of the *comedia nueva*. The plot of Lope’s *La adúltera perdonada* illustrates both the general storyline of the *auto* and also its intimate connection with the secular *comedia* themes of love and honor; in fact, Lope composed a *comedia* under the same title.⁵ According to Shergold, this particular drama reveals the conflict which occurs

⁵ For example, Maria Nogues Bruno notes: “a través de una trama propia de una comedia de enredo, como señala González-Barrera, el socorrido tema del adulterio viene tratado «a lo divino»: en este caso, gracias a la Penitencia y la Eucaristía, la esposa es perdonada por el marido engañado y burlado. Tanto en este auto como en el de *La locura por la honra* Lope desarrolla el tema del honor, uno de los

when *Husband* (a representative of God) discovers that his beloved, *Alma*, has had an affair with a rival *Galán, World*. Husband pursues Alma, calling on *Justice* to come to his aid. Justice declares that Alma is to be killed, but *The Church* intervenes, and the Husband relents, moved by the beauty of the Church. Justice, however, appears to retain the upper hand until the Church implores Alma to call upon *Penitence* and especially *The Eucharist*.⁶ Thus, it is only through the sacraments, and most especially the Eucharist, that Alma is saved and reunited with her husband. According to Maria Nogues Bruno, “al final de la obra *Penitencia y Eucaristía* son decisivas para la obtención del perdón... En esta ocasión no asistimos a la celebración de la Eucaristía propiamente dicha como colofón usual y característico de los autos sacramentales, sino que es la misma Eucaristía, en este caso, la que se presenta como personaje salvador de la pecadora” (122). The centrality of the sacraments and especially the Eucharist is characteristic of the *auto sacramental*, whose most traditional definition, according to Wardropper, is found in a *loa* written by Lope, which defines the *auto* as “comedias/ a honor y gloria del pan [Eucharist]/ que tan devota celebra/ esta coronada villa/ porque su alabanza sea/ confusión de la herejía/ y gloria de la fe nuestra/ todas de historias divinas” (*Introducción* 26-27). In other words, “the Eucharist is at the very core of the play” (Arias, *Spanish Sacramental Plays* 117); thus, the *auto* is at its heart a drama based on dramatic, unifying theme, a theme which is often understood to be the Eucharist.⁷

dictámenes que contempla el Arte nuevo de hacer comedias aunque con un tratamiento un poco diverso de lo usual, como veremos” (122).

⁶ See Shergold (435-36).

⁷ See, for example, Oberlander: “The asunto of each auto is the Eucharist. The argumento however may vary from one auto to another being whatever subject treated sacredly as long as it sheds light on the asunto, the Eucharist. As the Eucharist is the central key to all dogma it is understood that the argumento of

The centrality of the Eucharistic theme to the *auto sacramental* finds its coherence and weight within the historical and cultural context in which this unique genre of religious drama arose, a context informed especially by the feast of Corpus Christi and the post-Trent renewal of Catholic theology and liturgy within the Counterreformation. In her study on the *autos sacramentales* of Valdivielso, Oberlander mentions the importance of the feast of Corpus Christi -inaugurated by Pope John XXII in 1317 and with a liturgy written by Thomas Aquinas⁸- as central to Baroque Spanish society and thus to the formation of the *auto sacramental*. She states: “the celebration of Corpus Christi seems to have struck a much more responsive chord in Spain than it did in the other Catholic countries, so much so that in Spain it acquired details peculiar to that country” (36), and she goes on to declare that “the auto sacramental became an extension and embellishment of the Corpus liturgy by dramatizing the exposition of the abstract concepts of dogma” (863-64). In other words, the *auto sacramental*, from its conception, was intimately tied to Eucharistic liturgy and theology. According to Arias, “the liturgy was undoubtedly one of the main sources of themes and topics for the authors of the *autos*. It is true that theological treatises on the Eucharist were more complete.... But the *autos* are closer in spirit to the liturgy than to the somewhat dry expositions of the theologians. The Sacramental plays never lose sight of the happiness which pervade this liturgy of Corpus” (*Spanish Sacramental Plays* 20). The emphasis on a celebration of the

a sacramental play may treat any dogma or facet of Catholic thinking, interpreted in the light of this key” (60).

⁸ Arias states: “another aspect of the feast, a far greater interest for the study of the *auto* involves the Liturgical Office of Corpus, that is, the prayers, hymns, readings, and other text arrange in honor of the festivity. Urban IV asked Thomas Aquinas to prepare the office. The result is a magnificent statement of religious joy and theological precision. It is composed of a rich and varied series of biblical text, beautiful hymns, prayers, instructional readings, and frequent outbursts of joy, all expressing the multiplicity of feelings the faithful experience before Christ present in the bread of life” (*Spanish Sacramental Plays* 18).

Eucharist took on even greater impetus after the protestant denial of the doctrine of the True Presence of Christ within the Eucharist and its subsequent affirmation by the Council of Trent. Trent's response was especially felt within a Catholic Spain heavily influenced by Thomas Aquinas.⁹ Thus, Arellano declares that "la fiesta [del Corpus] empieza a extenderse por el orbe católico y recibe nuevo vigor en el Concilio de Trento... en esta celebración es una respuesta a las actitudes protestantes sobre la eucaristía. la celebración alcanza gran solemnidad, con una serie de fiestas que incluyen distintas actividades teatrales" (*Historia* 685). The status of the Eucharist as source, summit, and center of Catholic dogma, liturgy, theology, and salvation history lent additional importance urgency to its celebration in the post-Trent era.¹⁰ According to Oberlander:

Of the seven sacraments. Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Eucharist, Matrimony, Holy Orders, and Extreme Unction, the central key is the Eucharist. The application of the Paschal Mystery is the object of all the rites, the essential content of all the sacraments, of everything that constitutes the Church's liturgy. Christianity is Paschal. Everything in it consists in the partaking of the mystery of Jesus Christ, which is a mystery of death and of resurrection. (97).

⁹ See, for example, Gonzalez, (26), and Cessario: "What is most significant, however, for measuring the reception of Aquinas at Trent appears in the ninety-four theologians, many of them from Spain, who were present for one period or another at the conciliar deliberations (Walz 1945). These theologians not only had received a Thomist intellectual formation but also were major instruments of infusing the thought of Aquinas into the deliberations of the Council of Trent. All but a few of these Dominicans assisted at only one session of the council. One Dominican bishop, however, Jacopo Nacchianti (d. 1569) of the diocese of Chioggia in Italy, assisted at all three of the sessions" (166). In addition, Gascón states: "it seems reasonable to accept that the counter reformation, the Catholic reform movement, the need to instruct the Spanish population concerning religious doctrine, the public's enthusiasm for theater, and numerous other factors also served as impulses to the *auto*" (28).

¹⁰ Arias echoes and builds upon this line of thought when he declares that "The Mass is the very center and the principal act of Catholic worship. It is a memorial of Christ passion and death period since his entire life was a preparation for those moments, it is also, therefore, a memorial of his entire life. The period before Christ was a preparation for his coming; first, the masses after the culmination of all that preceded Christ. With Christ sacrifice began the 'latter days' and the Mass is the act of worship part excellence in this final. In the history of the world. Thus, in this sense, we can say that past, present, and future meet in a very special way in the Mass" (*Spanish Sacramental Plays* 15). Also see Oberlander (95-100).

Therefore, the feast of Corpus Christi and all that encompassed, including the *auto sacramental*, served not only as a key element of the Counterreformation and the promulgation of doctrine, but also of Catholic popular spirituality in general and its public expression. As a result, “the Corpus festivities are the supreme example of that complete fusion of religious and secular life that characterizes late 16th- and particularly 17th-century Spain” (McKendrick 244). Thus, the *auto sacramental* must be understood within the context of the Eucharistic Celebration of Corpus Christi, a context which, like the doctrine of the Eucharist itself, claimed to embody a paradoxical union of the eternal and the temporal, the sacred and the profane.

This fusion of divine and profane realities, of the theological and the theatrical, was not without its tensions and detractions. Oberlander notes that “the celebration of Corpus Christi throughout Spain was a mixture of scared devotion with exuberant joy and merrymaking of the people. It was this mixture of the ‘divine’ with the ‘profane’ which caused many foreign observers, and indeed, many Spaniards, to criticize harshly the activities of Corpus when the profane elements appeared to overshadow the divine” (37). Royo has noted the presence of carnivalesque elements within the Corpus Christi festivities of Baroque Spain,¹¹ and Gascón has pointed to a similar presence within the genre of the *coloquio espiritual*, a broader form of allegorical religious drama which is

¹¹ “Corpus Christi was not only an official festival. Municipal authorities began to promote public religious drama during Corpus Christi, usually performed in carts, something which was very important with regard to the origins and development of the professional theatre in Spain. Town and city councils, like Murcia, promoted popular devotion by giving a prize to the best altar, cross or dance of the day. The popular joy expressed through games and dances was often criticized by clergymen as sacrilege because of their sensuality. Even the procession was literally invaded by carnivalesque and popular elements: disguised and masked persons, figures of giants and dwarfs. But the dominant figure was the tarasque: a huge dragon, already present in the medieval Corpus Christi of the Crown of Aragon like the dragon of Saint George or Saint Marguerite. This imaginary animal was conceived in Christian terms during the early modern period as the Beast of the Apocalypse, and the woman placed on his back represented the Whore of Babylon and, in a wider sense, symbolized the defects commonly attributed to woman” (Royo 169).

comparable to the *auto sacramental*.¹² A simple yet striking example of the interplay between the sacred and the profane can be found in the parallels between Oberlander's three general classifications of Valdivielso's autos- those that are primarily Eucharistic in style and plot, those that are primarily nuptial, and those which deal with mankind's struggle within Salvation History¹³- and Bakhtin's three major elements of Carnival, which Royo summarizes as "food, sex and violence" (71). The ever-present Baroque tension between the high and the low, associated in an earlier chapter with the carnivalesque impulse, can especially be found in the *auto*'s focus on the conflict between good and evil, where the world, the flesh, and the devil are at times joined together in a battle against the forces of heaven. Wardropper sums up this sort of attitude when he states:

El Mundo y todo lo que contiene- eran mentiras, diversiones, ideales, fórmulas sociales-... El Mundo... [es] el antagonista de Dios -El símbolo de la cárcel donde yace el alma humana, encadenada a la carne-. Muchos creen en la necesidad de renunciar totalmente al mundo... antes de poder vivir... la vida espiritual. (*Historia* 18-19)

Oberlander follows a similar line of thought in an analysis of twelve of Valdivielso's *autos*, stating that "the basic conflict developed in all twelve autos is man's desire to find eternal life and happiness. He must overcome the enemies of temporal life which include his own human nature to attain this goal. Each of the autos portrays man as he is set upon by those forces which would destroy him" (642). In other words, within the genre of the *auto sacramental* there is a strong tendency to heavily emphasize the struggle between

¹² "There is something of the carnivalesque, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, in these short plays, as hierarchy representatives of authority and prohibition a parodied" (Gascón 42).

¹³ See Oberlander (127-28).

good and evil and mankind's situation within such a cosmic confrontation.¹⁴ For example, in Valdivielso's *El Fénix de amor*, the final scene is not a Mass, but a wedding between the soul and God, which takes place after the literal defeat of Satan and his allies.¹⁵ Arias notes that "in *El Fénix de Amor* references to the Eucharist are so few that one is tempted to deny it the title of *auto* and admire it as a beautiful religious version of a cloak and dagger play" (*Spanish Sacramental Plays* 114). Likewise, in *El Árbol de la vida*, also by Valdivielso, *Género Humano*, who has eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and been cast out from Eden, is condemned to death by *Justicia*, and is saved only after a heated debate between *Justicia* and *Misericordia*, the result of which is the torture and death of *El Príncipe* [Christ] in the place of *Genero Humano* and the inauguration of the Eucharist to spiritually revivify the fallen human race.¹⁶ Within this work, although the Eucharist features as a saving element, the main plot is clearly the conflict between death and life, with an extended complication as to the role of justice and mercy within Christianity. Because of this, many authors have taken issue with the traditional definition of the *auto sacramental*, which appears to be overly simplistic, and have suggested that the themes of Salvation History or "Good vs. Evil" function the

¹⁴ Wardropper notes that "otro rasgo distintivo de su concepción dramática es el claroscuro con que pinta El Mundo moral. No es que por falta de sutileza pinta de negro el mal y de blanco el bien. Admite los grados de la virtud y del pecado; Concibe la gradual de la información de los malos en buenos y viceversa. Luego que somete a esta técnica de contrastes extremados, son los hechos fundamentales del mundo moral. Así, para él el problema del libre albedrío se resuelve en contienda entre lo blanco y lo negro" (*Introducción* 315).

¹⁵ See Oberlander, who notes: "*El Fénix de amor* as indicated in its title recalls the renewal of God's promise in the sacrament by analogy with the fabulous bird, the phoenix, and the beliefs held concerning its process of life and death. The love of Christ for the soul arises out of Solomon's Song of Songs (5:1-8; 4:12-15). This love is expressed by analogy with the love of man for woman which is fulfilled by marriage. Into the harmony of love there enters the old debate of the body and the soul. Because there is disharmony, Luzbel is able to pronounce a reto against the Phoenix and the battle ensues between Luzbel and the angel, Michael, as recorded in the New Testament (Rev. 12:7-9; 13:1)" (414).

¹⁶ See Oberlander (388-406).

central *asuntos* of this specific genre. For example, Oberlander notes that although the circumstances of the theatrical presentation of the *auto* are Eucharistic, “in the early years any religious subject was deemed acceptable as the theme for a play to celebrate Corpus Christi” (55-56), and Arias postulates that although the purpose of the *auto* was to give homage to the Eucharist, its dramatic contents were often more aligned with eschatological or soteriological concerns (“Amor de Dios” 282). In addition, the aforementioned representation of the struggle between good and evil within the *auto*, in which the violence of Christ’s death is used to defeat Satan, has been judged to be problematic and confusing from a doctrinal point of view According to Gascón:

Popular enthusiasm for plays like these suggests that the dramatist and the performing companies may have succeeded in inspiring the masses toward a general solidarity for Catholicism. The plays were apparently less successful and clarifying, for their public and against Protestant criticisms, the church’s definitions of virtue. This is evidenced by the fact that many clergy condemned Saints plays, standing incongruities and indecorous combinations of sacred and profane, which they believed compromised the Catholic conception of virtue and could even validate Protestant criticism. (25-26)

In other words, some critics see the *auto* as yet another perpetuation of the ritual aspect of Baroque tension outlined in Chapter Two. For Gascón, “Spanish Baroque religious drama functions like a ritual that enacts a conflict between two forces and culminates with the ultimate exorcism of one of these forces” (32). This ritual aspect of the *auto* and its theatrical counterparts, while helpful in clarifying the role of *tema* as regards the dramatic unity of the Baroque religious drama, seems to problematize the Christian worldview which the *autos* themselves claimed to promulgate. As Gascón notes, ritual “nearly always involves sacrifice, which is by nature contradictory, because it uses violence to end violence. It ultimately perpetuates what it purports to eliminate” (25); that is, “the great paradox of the system of sacrifice... is that religion utilizes violent means to

achieve the proclaimed goal of peace” (Gascón 36). He furthermore states that despite their popularity, the *auto sacramentales* (and the Baroque religious drama in general) “ultimately pronounced no absolutes; rather, they end with the same ambivalence between worldly and profane that has characterized the action all along. They appeared to expel worldly desire and exalt religious virtue; yet, they can only describe salvific grace in the language of earthly desire” (Gascón 34). Thus, Gascón understands the *auto* as yet another manifestation of the Baroque “conflict between asceticism and worldliness, the spirit and the flesh, a dichotomy of spiritualism and sensualism” (165). In sum, the relationship between the *auto sacramental*, the Eucharist, the role of *tema* within the religious drama, and the Baroque narrative of dichotomies is difficult to say the least and deserving of additional study.

However, as has been noted in the previous chapters, a dichotomous understanding of the human experience, while perhaps rather prevalent within Early Modern Spain, was by no means the only manner in which the relationship between divinity and humanity was conceptualized. A deeper analysis of Valdivielso’s *autos* and the role of marriage within them reveals a profoundly teleological conception of reality, in which the Eucharist is characterized in nuptial terms as the consummation of God’s love for humanity. Through the imagery of the wedding feast in *El Fénix del amor* and *El Árbol de la gracia*, Valdivielso reveals a worldview in which the human and the divine are not essentially in conflict, and in which eating, drinking, and sexuality undergo theosis. The teleological role of the Eucharist as source, goal, and summit of Catholic doctrine has already been noted, but it bears repetition and expansion. According to Arias:

Because Christ is the central point of God's plan towards which everything tends, and because he chooses to remain fully present in the Eucharist, this sacrament is consequently the most important one. All the other sacraments tend towards it and derive their meaning in power from it. It is the center around which revolves the life of the church and its members. Furthermore, all the precepts and the entire moral code are built around it. (*Spanish Sacramental Plays* 28)

In other words, according to the traditional Catholic narrative, the Eucharist in its essence must be understood teleologically, especially due to its role as a continuation, or 'eternalization,' of the passion, death, and resurrection of Christ. Benedict XVI sums up the relationship between the Eucharist, the love of God, nuptial imagery, and the Pascal Mystery within Catholic theology in his encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, stating:

Christ's death on the cross... is love in its most radical form. By contemplating the pierced side of Christ, we can understand the starting-point of this encyclical letter: "God is Love" (1 Jn 4:8)... It is from there that our definition of love must begin... Jesus gave this act of oblation an enduring presence through his institution of the Eucharist... He anticipated his death and resurrection by giving his disciples, in the bread and wine, his very self, his body and blood as the new manna... this same *Logos* now truly becomes food for us as love. This Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving. The imagery of marriage between God and Israel is now realized in a way previously inconceivable.... It now becomes union with God through sharing in Jesus' self-gift, sharing in his body and blood. The sacramental 'mysticism,' grounded in God's condescension towards us... lifts us to far greater heights than any human mystical elevation could ever accomplish. (30-32).

The fusion of nuptiality, mysticism, divine love, human nature, and Eucharistic theology which Benedict sets forth is not restricted to current Christian thought. In fact, a similar line of reasoning can be found in the works of Thomas Aquinas, whose influence on the *auto sacramental* genre and the Spanish mystics has already been noted. In the third part of his *Summa*, the Angelic Doctor declares concerning the relationship between marriage and the Eucharist: "But marriage, at least in its meaning, reaches this sacrament, [the Eucharist] inasmuch as it signifies the union of Christ and the Church, whose unity is

represented by the sacrament of the Eucharist, whence the Apostle says, Eph. 5. ‘This sacrament is great, but I say in Christ and in the Church’” (III.65.3). Thus, the union brought about by the reception of the Eucharist is a “new union that is at once most real and most spiritual by which.... We are made not only one spirit but in a sense one flesh with Christ” (Tanqueray 143). This passage from Aquinas, coupled with the teleological understanding of the mystical union of the Soul with God already noted in Juan de la Cruz, Teresa de Jesus, and Luis de Leon, is significant, as it reveals that the spiritual marriage of the mystic’s soul with God must also be understood in light of the Eucharist. Likewise, Anne J. Cruz has identified a similar fusion of Eucharistic and mystical-nuptial love in the poetry of Sor Luisa de Carvajal, a lesser-known Spanish nun whose writings were influenced by Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesus.¹⁷ Cruz states that for Carvajal, “the Eucharist allows for the spiritual lover to transform himself into flesh, uniting physically with his beloved... ‘poetry dealing with the Eucharist celebrates God's incarnation and the intimate union of the soul with him...’ the most obvious mystical reference in Carvajal’s poems is Christ’s physical presence” (265), and she likewise notes that in Carvajal’s “Soneto II,” “the relationship between the lover and beloved is thus described from the start as the soul’s reception of divine grace through the taking of Communion” (268). In sum, the interplay between the Eucharist and the sacrament of marriage was in no way foreign to Baroque Spanish society.

The teachings of Aquinas and the Council of Trent are given dramatic life in the works of José de Valdivielso, where the connection between Eucharist and marriage is highlighted in works such as *El Fénix de Amor*. In this drama, two rival *galanes*, Luzebel

¹⁷ For example, Cruz notes on page 256 that Luisa de Carvajal draws inspiration directly from Juan de la Cruz’s “Noche Oscura” in crafting some of her sonnets.

and Esposo Cristo, fight for the love and consent of Alma, who features as the *dama* of a work whose plot is taken directly from the secular *comedias* of Valdivielso's time but which also bears a striking similarity to the *Cantar de los Cantares*.¹⁸ The nuptial unity brought about at the end of the work is essentially Eucharistic, and it is a unity which affects not only the union of the soul with God, but also the reconciliation of the soul with the body as well, and the latter's subsequent theosis. The *auto* begins with a duel between *Luzbel*, or Satan, and *Inspiración*, an ally of *Esposo Cristo*, in which Luzbel declares his 'amorous intentions' to win over Alma, thereby characterizing himself as a *galán* and initiating the nuptial aspect of the drama. For example, he declares: "Al Alma he de pretender/ amar, regalar, servir,/ si se boluerá a caer" (Valdivielso, *Fénix* vv. 27-30). Likewise, the rivalry between 'Don Luzbel' and 'Don Dios' is set out in the exchange between Luzbel and *Inspiración*, in which *Inspiración*, speaking of Christ's love for Alma, exclaims: "Dios la quiere, Dios la ama,/ Dios la ronda.../ Dios la busca, y Dios la llama,/ y ser Esposo desea" (vv. 61-64), whereas Luzbel responds in kind: "Yo la quiero, yo la amo,/ Yo la rondo.../ Yo la busco, yo la llamo,/ y ser su esposo desseo" (vv. 66-69). The role of marriage as the final goal for all the main characters is made evident once again in the next scene, in which Alma initially rejects the advances of Luzbel, saying: "Mira Luzbel que te auiso/ que no passes por mi calle,/ ... galán que tan poco vale;/ Que pretendo ser esposa/ de mi soberano amante.../ el que con diuino auiso/ me hizo su semejante" (vv. 91-92, 102-108).¹⁹ Likewise, Esposo Cristo identifies himself

¹⁸ See Oberlander, p. 181.

¹⁹ The presence of profane theater in this *auto*, as well as the influence Lope de Vega had on Valdivielso, can be seen in this instance as well: these lines are actually a parody of a *romance* by Lope, which begins "Mira, Zaide, que te aviso/ que no passes por mi calle." See *Poesías líricas*, II, by Lope de Vega.

as a *galán* “muy enamorado.../ que del mismo pecho/ bocado de amor he hecho/, Alma, por darte vn bocado” (vv. 1046-49). However, this identification as *galán* is also connected to the Incarnation and the Eucharist. For example, Esposo Cristo states: “Soy tan galán,/ que rondo al Alma embozcado,/ ya vestido de encarnado,/ ya con lo blanco del pan” (vv. 638-40). In other words, Christ’s amorous actions as a suitor of Alma includes his presence in the Eucharist. In commenting on the manners in which Valdivielso expresses the love of Christ for humanity, Oberlander states that in addition to the use of the Eucharist:

Another method of portrayal of the Lord of Love and Mercy is found in... *El Fénix de amor*. Herein the love of Christ for the soul is made analogous with the love of man for woman which is fulfilled in the sacrament of marriage. The protagonist... is the soul of man which desires the divine *bodas* as the fulfilment of love for *Esposo Cristo*. Herein the divine love of God for man is made intelligible through... marriage (465).

Thus, from the onset of *El Fénix de amor*, marriage, specifically the marriage between Alma and Cristo, functions as a unifying theme and major plot element of the work.

However, Alma is not called to an exclusive unity with Esposo Cristo. In fact, the soul already has as her companion another character: Cuerpo, presented in the role of the *gracioso*. According to Oberlander:

Throughout *El Fénix de amor* the role played by Cuerpo is that of the *gracioso*. This *recurso* from the *comedia* is aptly selected for this auto for a number of reasons. As the *gracioso* he develops as a witty character but one who is lacking in intelligence; that is to say, one not able to direct himself to the grace of God in the world of sacramental reality. Cuerpo is interested in the comforts of the flesh wherein he displays his lack of judgment. He is slow and bumbling, and cowardly. (203).

The weakness of Cuerpo is well-established within the drama, especially in the dialogue between Cuerpo and Alma. In a momento of anger, she states regarding their pursuit by Luzbel: “Todo aqesso por vos passa,/ que sois, Cuerpo, muy pesado,/ enemigo no

escusado/ y, en fin, vn ladrón de casa” (vv. 251-54). Later on she intensifies her complaints, declaring: “yo soy cosa celestial;/ alma, que en ti Dios encierra,/ mas tú vna carga de tierra,/ y vn cuerpo, en fin, animal” (vv. 279-83). Finally, verses 295 through 324 include a lengthy tirade of insults directed against Cuerpo, within which are included phrases such as “eres vn pesado carro” (v. 311), “eres peña que me traua” (v. 302), “eres, Cuerpo, vn mal vezino” (v. 319), and “¡el Cielo de ti me libre/... ingrato!” (vv. 323-24). In other words, no harsh word is spared on Cuerpo, even by his master and counterpart, Alma. Likewise, Cuerpo manifests his own weakness when, left by Alma to keep watch for Cristo, he is unable to stay awake and all but misses the Esposo’s arrival (vv. 453-460), despite having been given strict instructions by Alma to keep vigil (v. 439). In addition, Cuerpo manifests fear at the presence of Luzbel multiple times throughout the *auto*, even when Esposo Cristo and his agents are with them as protectors.²⁰ In sum, the weakness of Cuerpo is abundantly evidenced throughout *El Fénix de amor*.

Nevertheless, although Cuerpo is revealed as worthy of chastisement, he is never identified with Luzbel, and therefore is *not* characterized as intrinsically evil. In fact, as Valdivielso shows throughout the *auto*, although Alma is correct in reminding Cuerpo of his weakness, *her desire to be forever rid of him is not in accordance with the Divine Plan*. That Cuerpo is aware of his own weakness has already been noted. However, just as Alma aspires to be united with Esposo Cristo in her heavenly *bodas*, so Cuerpo as well recognizes his own divine origin and calling. For example, at the close of his

²⁰ For example, at the end of his first encounter with Luzbel, in which Inspiración intervenes on his behalf, Cuerpo exclaims: “Huye como un Luzifer” (v. 243), and near the end of the work, when Cuerpo expresses apprehension about the imminent confrontation with Luzbel, Cristo exclaims: “¿de que temes cobarde,/ desconfias de mis fuerzas?”, to which Cuerpo responds: “No, señor, si de las mias,/ que son mas pocas que buenas” (vv. 1118-21).

aforementioned chastisement from Alma, Cuerpo exclaims: “Mas es que siendo yo tierra/
suba al cielo a ver a Dios,/ que, siendo del cielo vos,/ baxéis del cielo a la tierra” (vv.
291-94), and later on, in response to Alma’s declaration, “Cielo soy,” Cuerpo responds:
“Cielo he de ser” (v. 366). In other words, Cuerpo, along with Alma, desires to become
‘Cielo;’ that is, to undergo transforming theosis. In response to Cuerpo’s words, Alma
continues: “Pues si cielo ser desseas,/ y te le ha de dar mi Esposo,/ ¿por qué eres tan
perezoso,/ que en servirle no te empleas?” (vv. 366-70), to which Cuerpo replies:
“mandarme que vele,/ me azote, que ayune y ore,/ que perdone, surfra y llore” (vv. 383-
85). In other words, Cuerpo desires to purify himself of his “enfermedad” (vv. 437) so
that he might serve Esposo Cristo along with Alma. As part of his purification, Alma
sends him to keep watch while she rests, where he promptly fails in his duties and, as was
already mentioned, falls asleep. However, Oberlander notes that although Cuerpo sins in
this instance, the fault is not only his: “Cuerpo, of course, falls asleep at his post, for if
the soul sleeps, the body is weakened” (196). In other words, both Alma and Cuerpo are
asleep at the coming of Esposo Cristo; thus, the mere fact that Cuerpo fails at his post
does not place him in opposition to Alma. In addition, it is important to note that although
Cuerpo does show fear before Luzbel, in the end he stays true to Esposo Cristo.

According to Oberlander:

The Esposo, beneath the balcony of Alma, calls for her, and is finally answered
by Cuerpo who is unable to function well in his stupor of drowsiness. By the time
Alma has been summoned to the balcony the Esposo has disappeared. He has
hidden Himself to hear what will take place, and He is not unrewarded, for Alma,
in her distress at not finding the Esposo awaiting her, leaves the house to search
for Him. At this moment the Esposo witnesses the arrival of Luzbel and two
demons who have come with a ladder which they raise at the balcony of Alma's
house. Luzbel proceeds to climb up where he encounters Cuerpo who refuses to
give him entry into the house. Inspiración and the angels who have accompanied
the Esposo come to aid Cuerpo when he calls for help. Cuerpo flees within the

house to arm himself. His vestments are the objects of the church, "cruces en la cinta, y hisopo de agua." (197)

Likewise, as the final duel between Cristo and Luzbel draws near, Cuerpo manifests his desire to unite himself with Cristo, stating: "Pues, hechízame a mí, y todo,/ que también yo so Cristiano" (vv. 1054-55), and in addition, he proclaims to Luzbel: "de vos huyo./ Soy de Dios y, si soy suyo,/ vendré a ser Cuerpo de Dios" (vv. 963-65). The Eucharistic imagery of the Body of Christ is evident in the words of Cuerpo, as is his desire to be united with God. Thus, although "Cuerpo is fearful, and cowardly... he does stand with Alma and the Esposo" (Oberlander 198).

However, the characterization of Cuerpo as called to theosis along with Alma is most clearly manifested in *El Fénix de amor* by the words of Christ himself. Although Alma might have a dim view of her *gracioso* and his prospects, the same cannot be said of her Esposo, who reveals his intimate relationship with the material sphere of the human experience, proclaiming: "Hombre soy y soy más que hombre/, yo soy yo." (vv. 623-24). Christ thus identifies himself as the Son of Man, the Word made Flesh for the salvation of humanity. Likewise, when Alma speaks of her future spouse, she notes that "Baxó del Cielo a la tierra;/ siendo Verbo, se hizo carne;/... todo para enamorarme;/... Diome su cuerpo en comida;/ por mi beuida, su sangre" (vv. 115-118, 133-34). In other words, the potential unity of both Alma and Cuerpo with God is possible only because of the Incarnation and Christ's subsequent salvific actions, especially the memorialization of his passion, death, and resurrection in the Eucharist. Thus, Alma's future union of wedded bliss with Christ is contingent upon and intrinsically related to the Eucharist. However, the exchange that takes place between Cristo and Cuerpo themselves is even

more important in understanding the nature of the relationship between divinity, humanity, marriage, and the Body of Christ in Valdivielso's works:

C: Pues, hechízame a mí, y todo
Que también yo so Christiano.
Es: Cuerpo, tengo cuerpo hermano,
que a alma y cuerpo me acomodo
Y en cuerpo me sé quedar.
C: Podéis, que sois gentilhombre.
Es: Alma y cuerpo tengo de hombre,
Y alma y cuerpo os quiero dar.
C: Venga del pan de la boda,
Que esté rabiando de hambre. (vv. 1054-63)

In this exchange, Christ is revealed to be both human and divine, and although he is primarily identified as the suitor of Alma, he professes his love for the body as well due to his own 'taking on' of human nature. Likewise, this love is expressed, among other manners, through the 'bread of the wedding feast,' an image that directly ties the Eucharist to the mystical marriage. According to Tigchelaar:

Christ's perfect corporality determines ours; we do not somehow sully the Godhead through our imperfect fleshly Image-bearing inasmuch as we do not fundamentally degrade God-Love with our own imperfect mirroring... Far from transcending his body, Christ, through His Ascension, remains embodied, even as the entire Godhead does. This divine Corporality, in turn, anticipates the End Times, a point at which all believers will reflect the Godhead wholly (in spirit and body), perfectly and eternally, as they cannot now even in heaven, during the in-between. ("Redemption Theology" 123-24)

Therefore, a positive relationship between God and humanity, a relationship that is not dualistic, but teleological, and founded upon the final end of the whole human person and the reality of the Incarnation and the Eucharist, is explicitly manifested in this passage through the words of none other than Esposo Cristo himself. Within such a teleological worldview, "el Mundo es de Dios y las cosas del mundo deben sacrificarse, consagrarse a Dios. No hay nada indigna de ser el sacrificio. Porque hasta las cosas más vulgares

proceden de Dios. Tal es la actitud de los que, en obras literarias, en la anónima del folklore, en la vida misma, tenían presente del mundo mientras vivían para Dios” (Wardropper, *Historia* 18). This worldview is clearly the same as that identified in previous chapters as belonging to figures such as Juan de la Cruz, Teresa de Jesús, Garrigou-Legrange, and others, and although it embraces the tension of the sacred and the profane, it recognizes that their relationship is not inherently contradictory.

Lastly, it is worth noting that, despite his ‘material nature,’ *Cuerpo* accompanies *Alma* and *Esposo Cristo* to their heavenly wedding feast, which according to Oberlander represents “the mystical union of Christ with the soul” (131). Although marital imagery abounds in this final section of the *auto*, it suffices to point out only a few examples which establish the wedding as the happy end of the work. The first is the final line of the drama, spoken by *Misericordia*: “Con que las bodas del Alma/ llegan a su dulce fin” (vv. 1489-90). Likewise, the conversation between *Alma* and *Esposo Cristo* also prefigures the wedding which is to take place in the final verses of the play: “(E): Vamos, esposa querida./ (A): Vamos, mi querido dueño. ¿Quándo serán nuestras bodas? (E): Amada hermosa, muy presto” (vv.1278-81). This feast is nuptial in character, reflecting not only the happy endings of the *comedia*, but also the traditional expression of the mystical union of the soul with Christ. However, it is also decidedly Eucharistic, as is evidenced by *Cuerpo*’s description: “Venga la boda,/ con el pan del *Padre Nuestro*,/ ave del *Ave Maria*/ y el *verbum caro* del *Credo*” (vv. 1282-85). In these lines, the mystical, nuptial union of the soul with God occurs in tandem with the celebration of the Eucharist, the intercession of Mary and the Church she represents, and the Incarnation, in which the *Logos* is made flesh. However, the relationship between the Eucharistic and nuptial

elements of *El Fénix de amor* is made most explicit in the dialogue between Esposo Cristo, Cuerpo, and Alma before Luzbel's final defeat:

A: Dios, ¿que en tus manos me veo?
E: Y en mi pecho te verás.
A: *Cómaos yo, mi Esposo santo,*
Mientras claro os llevo de ver.
C: ¿A Dios os queréis comer?
¿Dónde os ha de caber tanto?
E: Cuerpo, dexa que me coma
Porque *se transforme en mí;*
Que grano de trigo fui
De mi querida Paloma
.....
A: ¿Estáis *muy enamorado*?
E: *Tanto*, que del mismo pecho
Bocado de amor he hecho,
Alma, por darte un bocado. (vv. 1032-42, 45-49).²¹

In this passage, Valdivielso synthesizes the intimate relationship between the Eucharist, the Song of Songs and Biblical history in general, the nuptial love of Christ for the soul, and the reality of theosis -the deification of the soul to participation in the Divine Life even while on this earth- with astounding profundity and clarity. According to Arantza Mayo, “el pan porque suspira el alma es, naturalmente, el pan de la comunión eucarística, el cuerpo Salvador de su amante esposo” (116). In other words, the reception of the Eucharist is characterized as the consummation of the love of Christ and the Soul, a consummation which is a perfection and elevation of the body as well, and thus of the entirety of human nature. Arias develops a similar line of thought, stating:

La continuidad indivisible del cristiano en esta vida y luego en la otra, esta escatología ya iniciada, aparece con gran belleza en varias ocasiones, pero principalmente en *Fénix*. Aquí se expresa la relación entre Cristo y el Alma bajo el antiguo tema de las bodas espirituales. Es la forma favorita en que Valdivielso describe la unión iniciada “ya” aquí, pero “todavía no” perfecta. (“Amor de Dios” 297)

²¹ Italics added for emphasis.

The theosis of humanity in this life is therefore found within the union of Christ and the soul, a union brought about by Esposo Cristo's "greatest gift to His beloved and intended bride... that of Himself, the Real Presence, while she is yet dwelling on earth" (Oberlander 140). This deification, however, is in no way a mere spiritualization. Rather, as Valdivielso has shown, it encompasses the whole of the human experience apart from sin, including the body and all of its profane, carnal functions.²² This non-conflicting worldview presented in *El Fénix de amor* is therefore clearly teleological, and it is a cosmivision in which mystical wedding and Eucharistic union are intertwined. Within such a worldview, the Eucharist is seen as the source, summit, and perfection (the telos and the first cause) of the Christian life,²³ a life which is understood as coming from God and returning to Him. In addition, by his sacrifice on the Cross and its memorialization in the Eucharist, Christ puts an end to the cycle of ritual violence by defeating evil, which is seen as the absence of goodness, perfection, and existence, thereby ending the 'dualist' nature of a simply human or simply spiritual religion. In sum, in *El Fénix de amor*, marriage (the traditional end to the secular *comedia*) serves as a substitute for the Eucharist, the traditional end to the *auto sacramental*. However, this substitution is in no way exclusionary; rather, the nuptial ending of *El Fénix de amor* must be interpreted Eucharistically as well.

²² Duarte notes the connection between the reception of the Eucharist and the carnivalesque aspect of the human experience, stating: "Para Bajtin, las imágenes del comer y beber están directamente ligadas a la fiesta popular. La fiesta sacramental se caracteriza por el banquete salvífico de la sagrada Forma Consagrada, pero, a este respecto, me parece significativo que el libro de Shergold y Varey, que refleja los gastos del auto en la época de calderón, esté lleno de anotaciones sobre la comida, bebida, vino, refrescos y cena" (45).

²³ See the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Part II, Article 3, Section I, Number 1324: "The Eucharist is the 'source and summit of the Christian life.' 'The other sacraments, and indeed all ecclesiastical ministries and works of the apostolate, are bound up the Eucharist, and are oriented toward it. For in the blessed Eucharist is contained the whole spiritual good of the Church, namely Christ himself.'"

The teleological understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane and its expression through the Eucharist and the mystical wedding found within the *El Fénix de amor* is not an isolated incident. The same teleological, marital-mystical-Eucharistic worldview is presented in an even more potent manner in *El Árbol de la gracia*, a lesser-known *auto sacramental* by Valdivielso whose plot is in many ways similar to that of *El Fénix de amor*. The first section of this *auto* centers around *Luzbel* and *Cupla* “*de galanes*,”²⁴ and features *Luzbel* declaring his purpose: “El Alma y Cuerpo quisiera/ robarle a la Gracia... el Alma y Cuerpo son nuestros” (Valdivielso, *Árbol* vv. 146-47, 181). To whom *Alma* and *Cuerpo* belong is manifested in the next passage, in which *Alma* reveals to *Gracia* that she has spent her time “en oración todo el día,/ junto con mi Cuerpo amado” (vv. 185-86), to which *Gracia* replies: “Ay, Alma hermosa, vestida/ de mi Gracia como veo,/ que ese diuino deseo/ te promete eterna uida./ Tan bien empleada estás/ en pensamientos de Dios/... Mi hermano, el Amor Diuino,/ en su alta Jerusalén/ procurando está tu bien,/... para uenirse a casar/ contigo” (vv. 243-56). In other words, *Alma* is the promised bride of Christ, which she herself confirms only a few verses later, exclaiming: “¡O, si uiniese, señora,/ mi santo y diuino esposo;/ que dicen que es más hermoso/ que el sol” (vv. 271-74). Likewise, although *Amor Divino* does not present himself until almost 600 verses later, he quickly declares upon arriving: “Vusco al Alma, que es mi esposa” (v. 973). Thus, *El Árbol de la gracia* is likewise a work with marriage at its essence, and therefore it must be seen in relation to the *comedia*, to the writings of the mystics, and to the other, similar works of Valdivielso such as *El Fénix de amor*.

²⁴ See the stage instructions before verse 1: *Salen Luzbel y la Culpa, de galanes*.

However, unlike in *El Fénix de amor*, the Cuerdo and Alma in *El Árbol de la gracia* recognize that they are not inherently in conflict with each other; rather they are made to be in union, although this union requires the purification of both before it can be perfectly achieved. As has already been noted, Alma refers to Cuerdo as her ‘amado,’ and Cuerdo’s first lines upon entering are as follows: “El rato de estoi sin ti,/ Alma soberana y bella/ tanuién vengo a estar sin mi,/ que a ti me inclina mi estrella/ desde el día que nací” (vv. 339-43). Cuerdo’s discourse clearly reveals two things: his love for Alma and his realization that he is only complete when he is with her. As their dialogue continues, Cuerdo declares that he has returned from penitential practices and plans to return to them (vv. 399-406), for which Alma embraces him (vv. 407-08). Cuerdo then exclaims: “¡Ay, Alma mia,/ cuándo será el dulce día/ que con más contento vnidos,/ de la eternidad vestidos/ uiuamos en compañía!” (vv. 409-13). In other words, both Cuerdo and Alma are called to eternal life, which will be the fulfillment of all of their desires. In response to Cuerdo’s exclamation, Alma says: “Antes de poder uiuir,/ Cuerdo amado, desa suerte,/ nos tiene que diuidir.... La muerte” (vv. 414-17). Cuerdo and Alma accept death as a natural part of their earthly life (vv. 418-19), but Alma reassures Cuerdo that at the end of the world and the second coming of Christ, “entonces será allí/ nuestra unión/ (C): Valgame Dios,/ ¿Que poluo e de ser sin ti/hasta entonces? (A): Sí... ¡Breue uida!/... (C): ¡Que la muerte nos diuida!;/ ¡muerta ingrata! (A): ¡Ingrata muerte!” (vv. 438-48). In this dialogue between Cuerdo and Alma, Vadivielse characterizes death as a nonnormal separation of body and soul, and one which will end with the resurrection of the faithful and their eternal union with God at the end of time. This vision of the ultimate theosis of the whole human person reveals an intrinsically teleological understanding of human

nature, one which views the soul and the body as not in conflict but in concordance, and one which sees the final end of humanity as a reality which includes a holistic perfection of the entire person. However, for Valdivielso this union of the soul and body with each other and with God is not something which can be achieved without a proper ordering of the entire human. In the passages cited above, both Cuerpo and Alma express their desire for prayer or penitence in order that they might be ready for the coming of Christ. Cuerpo echoes this line of thought once again when he exclaims: “que quiero más la abstinencia/... que el gusto que dexo allí” (vv. 356-58), and when questioned about their whereabouts by Luzbel, Gracia declares: “fue el Alma/ al monte de la oración;/ y el Cuerpo.../ subió por leña al Sión” (vv. 509-12). In this sense, *El árbol de la gracia* is similar to the aforementioned texts of the mystics such as Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús, which likewise note that purification must come before mystical union.

Thus, *El Árbol de la gracia* presents to its spectator an image of the whole human person striving to rightly order themselves toward their divine end. However, drama presupposes complication; therefore, it is in a sense unsurprising that both Alma and Cuerpo fall into sin after they are ‘seduced’ by *Culpa*, *Luzbel*, *Placer*, *Deleyte*, and the *Vicios*, thus finding themselves in even more need of the salvific intervention of Amor Divino. However, it is interesting to note that they fall into sin only after parting ways (v. 458); that is, Cuerpo and Alma are weakest when they are separated from each other. While carrying a cross up a mountain as an act of mortification, Cuerpo is seduced by the promises of Placer, and consequently breaks all ten commandments (vv. 630-690); meanwhile Alma, wandering alone outside the dwelling place of Gracia, chooses a life of ‘gozas’ promised by Deleyte and Los Vicios (vv. 730-765). As a result, both Alma and

Cuerpo lose Gracia; that is, the ability to participate in the Divine Life and to know and love God as he is. Thus, when Cuerpo appears onstage after sinning, he is described as “*Viejo y ciego*” (~v. 765), whereas Alma enters dressed in black (v. 835), which is another sign of (spiritual) death and the absence of (divine) light. Likewise, Luzbel addresses them as “*esclausos*” (v. 935), signifying his power over them. It is interesting to note that only once Alma and Cuerpo are reunited do they fully repent of their sins (vv. 900-930), and that Amor Divino arrives to save them from Luzbel only after this repentance has occurred (v. 945). In response to Cuerpo’s admission that he has fallen from grace due to his own fault, Amor Divino exclaims: “(AD): Aure, Cuerpo, tus dos ojos,/ verás el Amor Diuino/ (C): ¡Ay Señor! (A): ¡Ay, dulce esposo!” (vv. 976-80). The regaining of sight represents, of course, the restoration of grace for Alma and Cuerpo, and likewise calls to mind the beatific vision.

Once grace has been restored to Alma and Cuerpo and Amor Divino has defeated Luzbel (v. 1006), the final section of the *auto* begins. This last section is also perhaps the most noteworthy for this study’s purposes. First, Amor Divino urges Cuerpo: “El uicio te a puesto flaco./ Llega, Cuerpo. Anbirento uienes./ Llega a mi. Toma un bocado.” (vv. 1020-24). The imagery in this passage, which begins the final section of the drama, is decidedly Eucharistic. Immediately afterwards, the stage directions indicate that “*aparece la Gracia sobre un árbol de siete ramos, que son los siete Sacramentos*” (~v. 1024). The sacramental tree of life, from which the *auto* takes its name, highlights once again the importance of the Eucharist and matrimony, along with their five counterparts, to entering into union with God. Finally, Amor Divino proclaims: “Del mundo/ el Alma y el Cuerpo traigo./ Hazlos, ermana [Gracia], que coman/ de la fruta dese árbol,/ pues es árbol

que está enjerto/ en siete diuinos ramos./ (G): Volued, Volued a la Gracia/... y cojed de aquesta fruta/ de la sangre de mi hermano” (vv. 1027-35). The imagery of eating of the tree of sacramental life and of drinking of the blood of Christ is once again explicitly Eucharistic and Edenic. According to Arias:

Estos textos [de Valdivielso] manifiestan el carácter universal de la redención de Cristo y el lugar central de la Eucaristía en el nuevo orden. La creación ha visto su armonía restaurada, el hombre es dueño de nueva vida, y al tributo con que honra a la Eucaristía se unen los ángeles en una liturgia cósmica de adoración celeste y terrestre a la vez, reflejo y anticipo de la eternidad del cielo. (“Amor de Dios” 295-96).

In other words, for Arias, an *auto* written by Valdivielso on Salvation History is also intrinsically Eucharistic and nuptial, because it is through the Eucharist that the human person is saved and is thus able to be united with God in the eternal wedding banquet described in Revelation.²⁵ Likewise, although marriage is not mentioned at the end of *El Árbol de la gracia*, it is worth recalling that the general *trama* of the plot is nuptial in character, and that the Eucharistic celebration which occurs also marks the union of Alma with Amor Divino. In sum, it might be said that the central theme of both *El Fénix de amor* and *El Árbol de la gracia* is in one sense *Eucharistic love*, a love expressed in the theosis and fusion of the divine and the human.

The theme of the nuptial, Eucharistic love of God for the soul and his desire for the soul’s reciprocation can also be found in the Valdivielso’s poetry *a lo divino*. Adam Glover has identified the erotic connotations of both Aquinas’ and Valdivielso’s

²⁵ See Revelation, chapter 21.

Eucharistic poetry, which he notes find their inspiration primarily in the Song of Songs.²⁶

Regarding Aquinas, he states:

St. Thomas Aquinas's famous eucharistic poem "Adoro te devote"... is a poem of eros. Aquinas's "hidden deity," of course, veiled as it is by the bread and the wine, provokes spiritual rather than carnal desire, but the structure of longing is the same...it is precisely because the Eucharist "veils" Christ's presence under the species of bread and wine that it also provokes the poet's "desire" for the full "revelation" of that presence. (19-20)

In other words, the 'carnal' aspect of the Eucharist is also an erotic concealment of the total union with Christ to which the human person is called. Likewise, Glover also notes that Valdivielso was referred to as "the prince of Eucharistic poetry" (21), and he recognizes that some of his works "lend the Eucharist itself an unmistakably erotic character" (32).²⁷ For example, in an analysis of Valdivielso's "Letra al Santísimo Sacramento," he concludes that the work "casts the eucharistic Christ as a kind of rustic shepherd-lover who descends from the hills during Corpus Christi to reveal himself to the faithful" (39). The poem itself reads in part:

Rey enamorado,
Que de amor herido
Vestiste en la sierra
El blanco pellico.

²⁶ "In the most basic sense, after all, "Lyric to the Most Holy Sacrament," like "Adoro te devote," is a poem about the manner in which the figurae of the eucharistic elements "conceal" or "disguise" Christ's body and blood. The frame of the poem, however, suggests that Valdivielso also has in mind a different but related sense of figura. Specifically, by refracting his eucharistic poem through the prism of the Song of Songs... Valdivielso also invites us to interpret figura in a hermeneutical or typological sense: that is, to see the "lover-king," who is himself modeled on the bridegroom from the Song, as a "type" or figura of Christ himself. This, of course, is a perfectly traditional interpretation of the Song, but here it has the added effect of making Valdivielso's "lover-king" what we might call a metafigure: the figure of a figure. Just as the bridegroom is a figure of the Christ, so Christ himself is hidden beneath the figures of the bread and wine. Valdivielso's Christ is thus already doubly figurative and hence doubly concealed: not only under the rustic garments of a humble shepherd, but also under the appearances of the eucharistic elements" (Glover 40).

²⁷ For example, he references "Ensaladilla de la esposa y el esposo al Santísimo Sacramento" as an example of Eucharistic poetry which is also decidedly nuptial, stating that this poem, like *El Fénix de amor*, is "a dramatic account of the relationship between communicant and sacrament modeled unambiguously on the biblical Song of Songs" (30).

Las sienes coronas
 De espigas de trigo,

 Aunque vas disfrazado,
 Galán divino,
 En lo mucho que has dado
 Te han conocido.

 Es tu carne el pan,
 Es tu sangre el vino,
 Y en cada bocado
 Se come infinito (Letra, pp. 19-20).

Once again, Valdivielso's synthesis between Eucharistic reality, erotic innuendo, Biblical imagery, and the aspiration to theosis is striking. Christ is identified as a *Galán*, whose disguise is the Eucharist, a concealment which simultaneously reveals his true nature and which allows his followers to participate in his infinite love. The reference to knowing Christ furthers the idea of theosis by calling to mind the beatific vision and the contemplation of the Triune God, traditionally defined as "the act of knowing and loving God as he is" (J. Rziha 49). According to Mayo, the soul which repents of its sin and receives the Eucharist is able, through the perfective effects of grace, to enter into "comunicación amorosa entre divinidad y pecador" (144); in other words, into a loving, knowing union with Christ. Thus, the characterization of the Eucharist as the consummation of the mystical wedding is carried on throughout the poetry of Valdivielso, just as it is found within the works of Aquinas, whose Corpus Christi Liturgy, as was already noted, heavily inspired the Eucharistic poets and dramatists who followed him.

In conclusion, although it is possible to see Salvation, Biblical History, or the Eucharist as the central *tema* of the *auto sacramental*, it might be most accurate to state that the central them of Valdivielso's *autos* and Eucharistic poetry is the reality of God's

love understood in a teleological manner, a love that finds its most potent and enduring expression in the Eucharist, the incarnation, and the mystical, nuptial union of the soul with God both on earth and in heaven. Thus, a teleological understanding of the relationship between the sacred and the profane is incredibly beneficial for an analysis of the religious dramas of Valdivielso and his contemporaries, as only through such an understanding can a true appreciation of the relationship between the mystical wedding, the Eucharist, and the Salvation of humanity be gained. In addition, the manner in which marriage functions as a central theme and a substitute for the Eucharist within certain *autos* by Valdivielso is important in gaining a better understanding of the role of marriage as a unifying theme within the Early Modern religious drama in general. In other words, the manner in which both the Eucharist and the wedding interact and function as *temas* in Valdivielso's works can shed light on the role of marriage as *tema* in the *comedia de santos*, the *coloquio espiritual*, and beyond. Javier Rubiera provides an excellent example of this inter-theatrical research in his article "Lope de Vega y el nuevo arte de escribir comedias de santos." According to Rubiera, in Lope de Vega's *comedia de santos* titled *Lo fingidlo verdadero*, although the crowning event is the conversion of Genesius, the sacrament which is referenced numerous times is not baptism but the Eucharist. He states:

Lo que llama mi atención es la fuerte presencia de elementos relacionados con el sacramento de la Eucaristía, inesperados en el contexto del sacramento del bautismo y concentrados precisamente en este momento crucial, pues no se encuentran en otras partes de la obra. Es especialmente llamativa la locución "benedicid este pan," que tiene un carácter deíctico, quizás señalador de su presencia en escena. ¿Por qué en este momento Lope de Vega habría decidido introducir una oración que se centra precisamente en la Segunda Persona y en el cuerpo de Cristo? Mi hipótesis es que estas referencias al Sacramento de la Eucaristía tendrían que ver con el hecho de que la comedia fuera probablemente representada durante el día del Corpus Christi, por encargo de algún ayuntamiento

español, y que en este momento clave el protagonista hace esta alusión coherente con la celebración de la fiesta religiosa. (190)

Rubiera goes on to analyze what he claims to be the “tema de la Eucaristía en el momento cumbre de la comedia” (192), concluding that the theme of the Eucharist lends structural coherence to the *comedia* across its three acts (194). In other words, according to Rubiera, the Eucharist functions as the central theme around which *Lo fingido verdadero* is based. Chapter Three pointed out the centrality of marriage as a unifying theme within the *comedia de santos*, and Chapter Six will analyze this claim more fully through an analysis of Lope de Vega’s *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesus*. For the moment, however, it suffices to note that the interplay of marriage and the Eucharist is a reality within both the *auto sacramental* and the *comedia de santos*; thus, a full understanding of how each one functions as unifying theme cannot be gained without an appreciation of the other.

CHAPTER FIVE

Ascetic Purification, Virtuous Living, Mystical Union, and Feminine Actualization in the *Coloquios espirituales* of Sor Marcela de San Félix

The importance of marriage as a central theme to the religious drama extends beyond the *auto sacramental*. The centrality of the mystical wedding as a fundamental unifying theme can also be found in its dramatic counterparts, including in certain *coloquios espirituales*, an allegorical drama with a didactic purpose Gascón defines as:

A theatrical work of middling length written in the convents to be performed at ceremonies or on special occasions, such as Christmas, the feast of Corpus Christi, a novitiate taking her vows, or even the return of the nuns to the convent after an extended absence.... This type of work [is...] characterized by allegorical characters, very little action, doctrinal content, and poetic language. (40)

The widespread application of the *coloquio espiritual* and its use in conjunction with festivities speaks not only to its popularity but also to its relationship with the popular facet of Golden Age theater, especially the Lopean *comedia*.¹ However, its religious nature also meant that the *coloquio* drew just as heavily from theological and devotional sources, including the Bible, the Decrees of Trent, and the Spanish mystical tradition.² This combination of mystical inspiration and Lopean style can perhaps be found no more

¹ For example, Susan Manell Smith notes that two *coloquios* written by Sor Marcela de San Felix employ the traditional love-honor plot of the secular *comedia*. (*Colloquies* 184).

² According to Smith, “The theology of sor Marcela expressed in the four colloquies of the soul’s journey generally reflects, although not always conventionally, contemporary Roman Catholic dicta, traits of Spanish mysticism and the devotion[s]... of her Trinitarian Order. In her works we see the influence of the Teresian reforms of the Carmelites and the Trinitarian reforms of 1599, as well as an acknowledgment to the decrees from session of the Council of Trent” (“A Complex Relationship” 108).

clearly than in the collection of *coloquios* written by sor Marcela de San Felix, Discalced Trinitarian, superior of a convent in Madrid, and illegitimate daughter of Lope de Vega.³

Given the massive number of studies devoted to the life and works of the premier dramatist of the Spanish Golden Age, Lope de Vega, it is surprising that so little scholarship exists on the only child of Lope who followed in his literary footsteps. Among the few critics who have commented on Marcela's poetry and her *coloquios espirituales*, a common interpretation centers on the theme of the struggle of Good against Evil and the necessity of killing bodily desires in order to quell sin and enter into more intimate contact with God. The examinations of Marcela's work tend to focus on her drama *La Muerte del Apetito*; however, this allegorical play is only one of her four *Coloquios del Alma*, which dramatize the journey of 'Everynun's' soul on the path to perfection. While the contributions of these studies are valuable, the context in which they have interpreted Marcela's works has been informed almost solely by the lens of *La Muerte del Apetito*, which, as the title suggests, heavily features the practice of mortification. As a result, they have tended to focus too exclusively on the purgative element of her *coloquios*. A close reading of Marcela's *De virtudes*, which takes into account the context of her four *Coloquios del Alma* as a whole and the wider literary, secular, and religious spheres in which they were composed, reveals a dramatization of the full mystical way taught by figures such as Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús. Within this *via mística*, the purgation of ungodly desires is essential, but only inasmuch as it serves to purify human nature to enable it to more fully enter into a perfective union-by-participation with divinity. Thus, in *De virtudes* and across the *Coloquios del Alma*,

³ For more biographical information on sor Marcela, see Smith and Sabat de Rivers' excellent introduction to *Los Coloquios del Alma*.

Marcela represents the perfection of the Christian religious woman as a holistic theosis of body, soul, and relationships, whose transformative unification of the sacred and the profane best is described through the theme of the mystical wedding.

In their “Introduction” to a rare edition of sor Marcela’s work, Susan Smith and Georgina Sabat de Rivers note the lack of biographical information concerning the life of sor Marcela. However, based on her own writings, convent records, and her father’s letters, they conclude that she was drawn to a religious vocation for both spiritual and practical reasons, that she was instructed in the dramatic art most likely both by her father and her godfather, José de Valdivielso, and that she was an exemplary and highly esteemed nun, poet, and playwright up until her death.⁴ Smith sums up the life of sor Marcela in a different article when she states: “despite the handicap of her illegitimate birth and the limits of being female, her intelligence, skill as a playwright and poet, sense of humor, and her Catholic faith allowed her to enjoy a fulfilling life of eighty-three years” (“A Complex Relationship” 106). In composing her own dramatic works, Marcela drew inspiration not only from the works of her father and José de Valdivielso, but also from Teresa de Avila, Juan de la Cruz, and other notable mystical and theological figures, especially their commentaries on central mystical texts such as the Song of Songs and the

⁴ See, for example, Smith and Sabat de Rivers: “No habría más que decir sobre ella y no merecería más noticia que una nota en las biografías de su famoso padre de ella no hubiera sido, además de hija de Lope y monja ejemplar, también poeta, actriz, y dramaturga. Como autora de poesías religiosas, coloquios espirituales y loas cómicas, nos muestra el talento que heredó de sus padres para versificar y para crear bellas obras de teatro, tanto en el mensaje como en la estructura y el lenguaje. Claramente, había aprendido algo del arte de la comedia de su padre y algo del drama religiosos de su padrino, José de Valdivielso” (16).

dogmas of the Council of Trent.⁵ Electa Arenal recognizes the confluence of popular and mystical-religious thought on Marcela's works, declaring:

Sor Marcela's poetry and plays form part of the impressive flow of visual, literary, theatrical, and musical arts that was fed by many cultural streams in the 16th and 17th centuries. Written toward the end of the golden age, her ascetic-mystical poems are closely linked to Carmelite literature and a popular oral poetry and song, as well as to other genres and to various religious schools of thought. (243)

In addition, Smith notes that Marcela's *coloquios* "emphasize the traits of humility, self-knowledge, and self-denial [hallmarks of the Trinitarian order] with echoes of the mystical writers of the previous century... The dynamic of high/low is constant" (*Colloquies* 8),⁶ and she points out that they "combine traits from both profane and sacred theater" (167). In other words, one finds within the dramas of Marcela de San Félix a fusion of both sacred and profane influences.

⁵ Along with her father and Jose de Valdivielso, Marcela Electa Arenal notes that sor Marcela drew heavily from Teresa de Avila, Juan de la Cruz, and Luis de Leon in her poetic composition, her spiritual devotion, and in her practical tasks of guiding her fellow cloistered sisters (238). In doing so, she also drew indirectly from figures such as Psuedo-Dyonisius, Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, and Luis de Granada, whose commentaries on works such as the Song of Songs served as inspiration for many of the Spanish mystic reformers. Hancock-Palmer notes that "St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard of Clairvoix, and St. Thomas Aquinas, among others, interpreted the Song as "the process of spiritual perfection" (Ackerman 86), an assessment that likewise informed Song usage during the Renaissance" (5), and likewise declares: "Following the tradition of Bernard of Clairvoix's sermons, Song of Songs imagery complemented affective piety to guide sixteenth-century Spanish spirituality. Popular prayer guides assumed a bride-bridegroom relationship between the soul and Christ. In the prologue to his *Libro de la oración y meditación*, a text directed to both laity and religious, Luis de Granada wrote that the subsequent meditations are "otros tantos sermones, en los cuales se da una como batería el corazón humano para rendirlo... y entregarlo en manos de su legítimo esposo y verdadero Señor." Similarly, Francisco de Osuna upheld the Song of Songs bride as a model in his *Tercer abecedario espiritual*." (7). Thus, Smith notes that "The theology of sor Marcela expressed in the four colloquies of the soul's journey generally reflects, although not always conventionally, contemporary Roman Catholic dicta, traits of Spanish mysticism and the devotion[s]... of her Trinitarian Order. In her works we see the influence of the Teresian reforms of the Carmelites and the Trinitarian reforms of 1599, as well as an acknowledgment to the decrees from session of the Council of Trent" ("A Complex Relationship" 108).

⁶ According to Smith and Sabat de Rivers, "Los temas espirituales más repetidos- la humildad, la mortificación y la oración- reflejan preceptos fundamentales de la devoción trinitaria" (24).

Although she wrote over five volumes of theatrical and poetical works, only six of sor Marcela's plays remain intact for today's reader.⁷ Concerning these dramas, Smith and Sabat de Rivers state:

Sor Marcela tituló sus seis dramas con el nombre de *Coloquios espirituales*. El título "coloquio" es menos empleado para los dramas de la época que los de farsa o comedia y lleva la connotación de conversación informal y personal, lo cual entendemos como muy apto al intento de la dramaturga que escribió y presentó estos dramas para divertir y educar a sus hermanas en ocasiones festivas. (20)

In other words, the purpose of sor Marcela's *coloquios* was at least in part to "enseñar deleitando" (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 21). In this sense, "la trama de cada obra básicamente pone en escena las fuerzas del Mal contra las fuerzas del Bien; es decir, los vicios contra las virtudes. Aunque se presentan muchas variaciones y tropiezos, siempre fue preciso que ganara el Bien" (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 18). In this regard, Marcela's works are representative of the *coloquio spiritual* genre as a whole, which, according to Smith, is "always didactic and center[s] on the struggle between God and Evil" (*Colloquies* 36). Two of Marcela's *coloquios*, *Nacimiento del mejor* and *El Santísimo Sacramento*, were clearly written for specific liturgical feasts (Christmas and Corpus Christ, respectively). However, her other four dramas – *La Muerte del Apetito*, *Estmiación de Religión*, *De virtudes*, and *Celo Indiscreto*– are much more general in their scope. According to Smith and Sabat de Rivers, these texts:

siguen una trayectoria temporal en la vida de la protagonista, Alma. A lo largo de la serie, Alma nos presenta la vida de una mujer que desde joven escoge una vocación religiosa, entre en el convento como novicia, toma el velo y, al final, vive en la comunidad con todas las dificultades y las recompensas de dicha vida. (21)

⁷ See, for example, Carniero, who states: "Bajo el título de *Coloquios espirituales*, se custodia en el Archivo del Monasterio de Trinitarias descalzas el único volumen original que existe de la producción de Sor Marcela. Encuadernado en pergamino, sus 508 páginas, tamaño cuarto, contienen 46 piezas divididas en: seis Coloquios espirituales (las obras de mayor extensión), ocho loas, y el resto casi todos romances" (116).

In other words, Alma, which according to Smith is “Everynun” (“A Complex Relationship” 102), serves as a representation of the ‘average’ Discalced Trinitarian. In their classification of the central motifs of sor Marcela’s four interrelated *coloquios*, Smith and Sabat de Rivers note that they follow the two traditional themes of the allegorical religious drama: “la lucha por la perfeccion del alma y la busqueda por la salvacion” (18). More specifically, “los dos primeros dramas se enfocan en... la lucha de Alma contra la atracción del mundo, mientras que los dos últimos se enfocan en... la búsqueda de la perfección” (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 24). In conclusion, therefore, the *coloquios espirituales* of sor Marcela de San Félix manifest an imaginative and engaging theatrical presentation of conventual life in Baroque Spain, a presentation inspired by both mysticism and the *comedia nueva*, and one which aims to instruct its audience in the way of perfection towards ultimate union with God.

Given that, as Smith and Sabat de Rivers have pointed out, the central themes of the *coloquio espiritual* in general appear to be the fight of good against evil and the soul’s search for perfection, a prevalent narrative concerning the central message of Marcela’s *coloquios* is that the soul attains perfection precisely through severe mortification, a repression of all desire, and a total negation of self. An example of this narrative and its textual basis can be found in an analysis of Marcela’s first *coloquio* in her series of four dramas depicting the progression of Everynun to perfection: *La muerte del Apetito*, a drama written in the popular style of the *galán-dama* plays of the secular stage, in which Apetito and Religión (a representative of Christ) battle for the affection of a young Alma who is discerning whether or not to enter the convent. The conflict of the work is resolved when Religión and her fellow virtues – Mortificación, Desnudez, and Oración –

prevail upon Alma to choose Christ and band together to kill Apetito.⁸ According to Gascón, “Marcela shows that desire is a part of human nature, that is it is insatiable, and that it is inspired by or imitated from others” (48); thus, “the aesthetic should aspire to liberate herself completely from desire. Instead of striving for holiness, she should make emptiness the center of her existence”⁹ (Gascón 57). Such an understanding of the mystic-ascetic soul’s path to perfection views the perfection of the soul as “a rejection of the material world... self-abnegation, and the mystical ideal of an ascetic union with God” (Gascón 44). This interpretation complements the aforementioned ideal of the Baroque tension between the divine and the human, Gascón summarizes: “the protagonist of each *coloquio* struggles to cross the bridge, created by humankind through original sin, that separates her from God. In a sentence, the vices featured in each play are really none other than the symbolic representation of the schism that exists between humanity and divinity” (42). Nonetheless, as has already been noted, Marcela did not shy away from drawing from profane sources, particularly her father’s theatrical style, in crafting her works. Smith declares that “Sor Marcela... among other things, reverses the balance of serious and comic, increasing the entertainment by interweaving comedy with the serious allegory throughout” (*Colloquies* 70).¹⁰ According to Electa Arenal, “A ribald buffoonery

⁸ According to Smith: “To be mortified, first of all as a passive verb, means to be humbled, afflicted; as a noun, mortification is self-denial and austerity, ascetic discipline. All are appropriate concepts for the cloister. At the same time, the Latin roots *mors* and *facere* uncover the literal meaning: to make die, to kill. The ‘plot’ of Sor Marcela’s text builds on the struggle between life and death. In the paradoxical theological sense, to kill Apetito brings spiritual life, to live with Apetito brings spiritual death. Mortificación explains to Alma that “el afigirle y matarle (Apetito)/es tan licito y conforme/ a toda vida perfecta.” In order for Alma to live, Apetito must die” (*Colloquies* 146).

⁹ Smith supports a similar interpretation, noting that in the *coloquios* of sor Marcela, “the negative trinity of *carne, mundo, y diablo* join forces to upset the ordained hierarchical relationship of man’s obedience to God” (*Colloquies* 32).

¹⁰ This is present, for example, in *Muerte del apetito*. Smith notes: “Desire complains to Mortification: “By chance, am I a friar / that I have to maintain moderation?” (1441 -42). Well, yes, of

characterizes some of her plays and poems- *coloquios*, *loas*, and *romances*. The mocking self-portrayals and comical caricatures of herself and of other convent leaders must have caused laughter and released tensions through cathartic recognition” (237). This fusion of the sacred and the profane in a work that otherwise appears to set them so clearly at odds, drawing them together in subversion yet never allowing their total unity, is carnivalesque in a Bakhtinian style.¹¹ Thus, while Gascón recognizes that “Spanish Baroque religious drama functions like a ritual that enacts a conflict between two forces and culminates with the ultimate exorcism of one of these forces” (32), he also concludes that many Spanish religious dramas “ultimately pronounced no absolutes; rather, they end with the same ambivalence between worldly and profane that has characterized the action all along” (34). In sum, according to some scholars, sor Marcela de San Felix’s *coloquios espirituales* appear to characterize the world of the Spanish nun as one of total self-negation with the goal of replacing humanity with divinity, a world in total opposition to the secular influences of Golden Age society, and one which was characterized by a life of constant ‘Baroque-esque’ tension.

However, it is important to note that an increased focus on penance and the death of ungodly desires in Marcela’s first *coloquio* does not necessarily indicate that her view

course he is, and he furthermore says Mass at the convent as all the actors and spectators know. Sor Marcela chose the role of Desire for herself so that she delivers the ironic lines of self-incrimination” (“A Complex Relationship” 103). In other words, Marcela not only imbued her religious dramas with humor, but she also directed that humor at herself, thus in a sense poking fun at her roles as superior and playwright as well.

¹¹ Gascón notes that “there is something of the carnivalesque, as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, in these short plays, as hierarchy representatives of authority and prohibition a parodied” (42). This parody is founded in conflict and subversion; therefore, although the sacred and the profane might blend, they remain always at odds.

of religious life was based on the abnegation of all personal pleasure or desire. In fact, according to Electa Arenal:

Sor Marcela... extended the concept and practice of recreation instituted by Santa Teresa as part of daily life in the cloister... a balanced religious practice was not to be confused with laxity. For most women of the reformed Carmelite and Trinitarian order, monastic life was rigorous, disciplined, ascetic- but never void of music and poetry, laughter and dialogue. (237)

Thus, although a strictly dichotomous, carnivalesque narrative regarding the interaction of the sacred and profane within Marcela's *coloquios espirituales* can be maintained (as has been shown by the summary of previous scholarship on *La muerte del Apetito*), such an interpretation becomes substantially more difficult to sustain when the literary, historical, and cultural contexts of the *Coloquios del Alma* as a whole are taken into account. An analysis which acknowledges such contexts reveals that although the mortification of desire is a prevalent part of Marcela's didactic intentions, such mortification is set within a larger path to the mystical perfection of the entire person, body and soul. In fact, a closer examination of the central plots of the four *coloquios* which feature Alma as their protagonist reveal that the themes and lessons they impart closely follow the teleological mystical way outlined in the writings of figures such as Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús.

In order to identify the presence of this teleological *via mística*, it is important to recall that the four dramas in question "have a serial nature, shown by the clear progression in the maturity of the protagonist" (Smith, *Colloquies* 9). In other words "en total estos cuatro dramas del alma... forman unas lecciones que podemos llamar 'el arte de hacer monja'" (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 23), as they recount the protagonist's "desarrollo personal y espiritual a través de los cuatro coloquios" (Smith and Sabat de

Rivers 23). According to Smith and Sabat de Rivers, in the first two *coloquios*, which feature the theme of Good conquering Evil, Alma is not yet a professed nun (21). Rather, “at the end of her novice year in the second play, she then claims Christ as her true husband, professing her love for him and choosing the Trinitarian Order as her home” (Smith, “A Complex Relationship” 103). Thus, as has already been noted, the third and fourth *coloquios* change their focus from the conquering of evil to the search for a perfect union with Esposo Cristo. The didactic nature of Marcela’s works, coupled with their sacred and profane sources,¹² strongly suggest that this series of dramas on the spiritual perfection of a Spanish nun must be analyzed as an application of the three steps of the *mystical way*: purgation, illumination, and union. According to Gascón:

The experiences about which the Mystics write... have [been] generalized... into three stages... the *via purgativa*, in which the soul purged itself of the world, lust, and sin; the *via iluminativa*, where in the soul communes with and imitates Christ through meditation and prayer; and the *via unitiva*, in which the soul achieves this spiritual union with the divine. (45)

Given the influence of mysticism on the formation of Marcela and her order, it should come as no surprise that she might present the same themes in a series of didactic plays for her fellow nuns. Indeed, a brief analysis of the main plots of each of the four works reveals just such a presentation. The first drama, *La muerte del Apetito*, which has been the focus of the majority of the scholarship on sor Marcela, has already been

¹² Among the profane sources of Marcela can be included the *comedia nueva*, its central theme of marriage, and the poetic style of her father and his contemporaries. In fact, Smith and Sabat de Rivers note regarding the four *coloquios* of Everynun that: “Los dos primeros son dramas de tipo “dama-galán.”-Este tema del teatro popular refleja la vida de una joven fuera del convento cortejada por dos hombres - el galán y su rival. El problema dramático es esencialmente una lucha entre el galán y el rival por la mano de la joven. En el caso de los coloquios alegóricos de sor Marcela, se presenta este triangulo amores “a lo divino.” El galán es un concepto terrenal y el rival es Cristo.... Es el galán el que pierde la lucha cuando el Alma acepta a Jesucristo, el rival, como esposo” (31).

summarized,¹³ and the central message of this *coloquio* is clearly one of purgation, in which the soul is called to purge itself not from all desires, but from unholy, disordered vicious inclinations.¹⁴ In the second *coloquio*, which is titled *Estimación de la Religión* and which also features a *dama-galán* plot, recounts the efforts of the antagonist Mundo and his assistant Mentira to wrench Alma's loyalties away from Religión and Verdad.

Smith and Sabat de Rivers sum up the action of the work as follows:

Mentira le presenta a Alma su compañero, Mundo, que intenta convencerla de que vivirá mejor con él. Verdad responde presentándole a Religión quien trata de convencerla del contrario, de que vivirá mejor con ella. Al final, la desengañada Alma puede ver claramente la falsedad de Mentira y Mundo, No sólo decide vivir con Religión sino que escoge la Orden de las Trinitaria Descalzas de Madrid. Alma entra en el convento acompañada por Verdad y deja atrás Mundo y Mentira. (32-33)

As Gascón has noted, while the *via purgativa* is concerned with the purification of the body and its accompanying senses and thus the rejection of sin, in the *via illuminativa* the soul focuses on choosing Christ -the Logos and the ultimate Truth- by means of embracing various virtuous and religious activities. In other words, it deals with choosing to live a life of worship, love, and service to God, and therefore a life of religion. The plot of *Estimación de la Religión* mirrors this stage of the mystical way almost perfectly, especially due to the fact that at its end, Alma chooses to become a Bride of Christ through her religious profession.

¹³ Smith and Sabat de Rivers' own summary of this drama is as follows: El Alma... es la dama deseada por Apetito, el galán. El rival es Religión que representa el camino hacia Cristo... El trio de virtudes -Mortificación, Oración, u Desnudez- le enseñan al Alma sobre el peligro de Apetito y sus demandas crecientes. Más valen los regalos que recibirá al aceptar a Cristo, as pesar de que exige una vida de autocontrol frente a los placeres. Al final, las virtudes la ayudan a matar a Apetito. (32)

¹⁴ Sabat de rivers and Smith support this observation, stating: "Aunque Apetito obviamente representa la gula, las monajs seguramente entienden que por extensión es un personaje compuesto. Así le ofrece a sor Marcela una oportunidad para criticar otros pecados de exceso, como la avaricia y la lujuria" (32).

The *via unitiva*, the third step of the mystical way, thus follows. Therefore, the third and fourth *coloquios* together, both of which are several hundred lines shorter than the first two, appear to represent this third stage. Although the plot of the third *coloquio*, *De virtudes*, will be analyzed in depth later in this chapter, it suffices to say that its central theme is the perfection of Alma by means of a greater communion with God through prayer. In other words, it teaches how to grow in loving union with God, who is presented as Alma's divine spouse. This theme of unity is present in the fourth *coloquio*, *Celo Indiscreto*, as well, although with a different focus:

Reaparece un antagonista masculino... un clérigo, probablemente un superior o confesor. Esta figura causa daño al perturbar la paz de la comunidad. Al principio, Alma lo admira por su celo, pero al cabo de 100 versos queda desengañada y en el resto del drama, junto con dos virtudes, Sinceridad y Paz, hace planes para echarle del convento.... El momento climático es todo un proceso "judicial" en que las virtudes juzgan a Celo Indiscreto de loco y peligrosos y le dan una sentencia de destierro a una isla remota y sin gente a quien pueda molestar. (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 33-34)

In this final drama, the focus of the *via unitiva* shifts from personal to communal, as Alma, who "vive en la comunidad con todas las dificultades y las recompensas de dicha vida" (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 21), strives to help rectify a problem which is afflicting the general peace and wellbeing of her religious community and therefore the vocations of each nun in the convent. Thus, the 'unity' at stake is both unity with God through the ability to live out one's calling and also the unity of the convent as a whole; in this sense, *Celo Indiscreto* can be seen as an extension of the themes dealt with in *De virtudes*. The presence of Paz as a central virtue in this final drama is also indicative of its setting within the *via unitiva*, as peace and happiness are found most fully for the Christian in the intimate union of the mystical wedding. In sum, the pattern followed by Marcela's four *coloquios espirituales* of Everynun is clearly that of the *via mistica*. By following this

pattern, Marcela would be teaching her nuns to embrace the words of Juan de la Cruz, who “reminds his readers of the active process of purification that precedes the ecstasy of union” (Weber 193), and also the teachings of Santa Teresa, who exhorts her sisters: “Es muy cierto que, en vaciando nosotros todo lo que es criatura y deshaciéndonos de ella por amor de Dios, el mismo Señor la ha a hinchir de si” (quoted in Gason, p. 57). Such an exhortation is not merely a command to divest oneself of desire, but to direct one’s desire towards love of God, which for Juan de la Cruz and Teresa was the ultimate inclination of the human person. In other words, although unhealthy and sinful desires must be quelled through purification, this process is so that desire for God may grow, and not so that all desire is dispelled. In sum, the context in which Marcela’s four works must be read is that of the *via mística*, a context which recognizes the importance of prayer, virtue, and mortification, but which recognizes that all such elements and their various manifestations exist for the purpose of bringing the soul closer to God in a union best described in nuptial terms.

In addition, a reading of Marcela’s *coloquios* which finds the perfection of religious life in the annihilation of all human desire is inconsistent with the teleological understanding of human nature and the relationship between divinity and humanity already noted in the works of Juan de la Cruz, Teresa de Jesús, and others, whose teachings must be seen as the literary and thematic context of Marcela’s dramas. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to embark on a study of all four *coloquios*, an analysis of Marcela’s *De virtudes* within the context of the *via mística* will attempt to demonstrate that for Marcela, mysticism is not a denial of the human experience, but rather a holistic, practical theosis of its many aspects, a theosis which comes about

through the reality of the mystical wedding between the soul and God. In *De virtudes*, marriage functions as a unifying theme which unites the spiritual realities of mysticism with the material, mundane, and humorous facets of the everyday life of a nun. Through this imagery of the nuptial, mystical union, Marcela reveals that a life of theosis is in fact a life of virtue; that is, of perfective actualization of the entire human person: body, soul, and relationships. This perfective union is, of course, the spiritual wedding of the *via unitiva*, which is likewise described as a perfective union of theosis brought about by the effects of grace on human nature. In other words, whatever other themes and messages they may contain, the central theme which unifies the plots and actions of all four of Marcela's *coloquios* is precisely the mystical wedding, since this wedding is the end and perfection towards which the Christian is called both in this life and the next. In sum, one should expect to find in sor Marcela's works a path towards mystical marriage as the perfection of the individual, a path which includes mortification and asceticism, but which ultimately moves beyond a purification of the senses to a perfection of the entire person, body and soul, in concordance with the actions of God.

The theosis of the individual within the unifying mystical marriage can be found in sor Marcela's *coloquio* commonly referred to as *De virtudes*, which, significantly, is also known as *Del Amor Divino* (Gascón 41). In this drama, "una monja floja (Tibieza) muestra flaqueza en sus ejercicios espirituales y trata de convencer a Alma que no es saludable tanta perfección" (Smith and Sabat de Rivers 33). To begin, it is worth noting that even though *De virtudes* is not explicitly a drama in the style of the *dama-galán* plays, many of the same themes apply.¹⁵ The major difference, of course, is that since

¹⁵ It is also worth re-emphasizing that the first two *coloquios*, which take place before Alma is married to Christ, are in fact in the style of *dama-galán*.

Alma has already professed vows, she is seen as the spouse of Christ at least to a certain extent, and not a *dama* over which two eligible bachelors fight. Nonetheless, the primary manner in which Christ and Alma refer to each other is still nuptial; thus, Tibieza's temptations can to some extent be seen as an attempt to convince Alma to be unfaithful to her spouse. The nuptial character of the relationship between God and the soul can be seen, for example, in the words of Oración, who refers to Amor Divino as Alma's "esposo" (san Félix, *De Virtudes* v. 333), and who likewise states regarding him: "Tiene tu esposo querido / Alma dichosa, un palacio / digno de su majestad / con soberano aparato. / Las puertas son de cristal, / margaritas y topacios / las guarnecen y hermocean / con artificios muy raros. / ... no hay en esta casa luz, / que el cordero soberano / es la antorcha que la da" (vv. 475-95). These verses are a direct allusion to the book of Revelation, and more specifically to the passages which describe the preparation for the wedding feast of the Lamb of God, who is Christ.¹⁶ In addition, the use of terms such as 'esposo' and 'Amor Divino' to refer to Christ and his relationship to the soul is a continuation of the language employed in the Song of Songs.¹⁷ In other words, the Biblical context of *De virtudes* is nuptial in character. It is also mystical, as in characterizing the love between the soul and God as erotic, Marcela followed in the footsteps of Teresa de Avila. Weber notes that the poetry of Teresa and Juan de la Cruz:

¹⁶ See Revelation 21: 1-20.

¹⁷ According to Hancock-Palmer: "the biblical love poem Song of Songs represented a key element of the transatlantic spiritual environment in which early modern Hispanic nuns wrote...these... women... interpreted the Song as mystical ascent, utilized the poem as a guide to daily convent life, developed relationships with the divine Bridegroom, and upheld the Virgin Mary as the quintessential Song bride and model. The Song of Songs narrative therefore constituted a fundamental script for early modern nuns' spiritual transformation and comprised a significant element of early modern Catholicism throughout the Hispanic world. Nuns sought to emulate the bride in word, action, and disposition" (v).

bears obvious debts to secular love poetry- its lexicon (dolor, herir, juntar, acabar, nudo, and atar) has erotic correlatives in *cancionero* and burlesque poetry... [and in] Hebrew nuptial songs in the scripture [which] had, since the 3rd century, provided expressive legitimation for the use of sexual language to describe the relationship between God and his people or God and the individual soul... Juan, who studied theology and philosophy at the university of Salamanca, was steeped in this tradition. (190-91)

The nuptial characterization of the relationship between Alma and Amor Cristo is further supported by the words of Alma herself, who states: “el Amor desnudo y fuerte/ anhelo con tanto afecto/... confío en mi esposo” (vv. 549-552), and in the words of Amor Divino near the end of the work, when he exclaims: “Ven, Alma mía, y hare/ que descanses en mis brazos” (vv. 779-80). In addition, this nuptial union is identified by Oración as one of theosis; that is, of the perfective participation of the individual in the Divine Nature. In her monologue as representative of Amor Divino and his promises to Alma, Oración declares that those who come to Amor’s palace “a Dios ven, con Dios están/ Unidos y transformidos” (vv. 503-504). According to Parker, “the concept of transformation is central to the experience of mystical union... The union... in God is that union of love, and the universal principle that governs love is that it creates a likeness or similarity between the two persons who love: the more perfect the love, the more perfect is the likeness” (*Philosophy* 99). Thus, in the full perfection of the mystical marriage, which is found at the end of Alma’s journey, humanity is not annihilated but perfected through its union with divinity. Lastly, it is worth noting that the main theme of *De virtudes* (and, by extension, all four *coloquios*), the soul’s search for a greater perfection of its union with God, is in itself nuptial. As has already been noted in both previous chapters, for the Spanish mystic, and indeed, the reformed Spanish religious, a perfect union with God is precisely that of the mystical marriage-by-grace between the divinity and humanity.

Thus, although its presence may not be explicit, marriage can be understood an implicit theme of *De virtudes* which strengthens the work's dramatic unity.

In addition to functioning as a dramatic theme within *De virtudes*, marriage also serves as the element which unifies and integrates the already identified sacred and profane aspects of the work in a teleological manner. In order to understand how the wedding acts as a teleological unifier of the divine and the human, however, it is necessary to analyze the role of Tibieza (the antagonist of the work) and the differing conceptions of virtue presented by Marcela in more detail. In her attempts to sway Alma in her devotion to Amor Divino, Tibieza claims that Alma has lost all balance in her life and has devoted too much time to prayer and fasting. She states:

Alma, que no te conozco
solías ser más tratable,
más cortes, más agradable,
.....
casi no te puedo hablar,
tan extraña, tan austera. (vv. 20-28)

In other words, according to Tibieza, Alma's extreme devotion to the austerity monastic life is making her unpleasant and difficult to be around. Insisting that she has Alma's best interests in mind (vv. 44-46), Tibieza states that in her current state Alma is living dangerously:

Como con ella [Oración] te veo
las horas y los momentos,
presume que te trae cuentos
dañosos para tu vida,
que te gasta sin medida
el tiempo, y que no le tienes. (vv. 107-114)

Two items must be noted regarding this passage. First, Tibieza clearly sets herself in opposition to Oración and, by extension, to Amor Divino. Thus, her view of virtue cannot

be the one which Marcela wishes to present to her spectators. Second, the main argument presented by Tibieza is not that Alma's fervent devotion to prayer and fasting simply makes her unpleasant to be around, but that it is actually harmful to her life, which she is spending without reserve. Although she resists at first, Alma is eventually swayed by Tibieza, and exclaims:

Y, considerando todo,
parece que estoy más tierna,
que si Oración me gobierna
con tanta severidad
pienso que me ha de acabar
las cortas fuerzas que tengo.
También sus penas me da. (vv. 131-37)

In other words, Alma fears that submitting herself to the rigorous life required of her by Oración will in effect end her own life by overwhelming her. By claiming that she desires balance for Alma, Tibieza is identifying herself with the classical understanding of virtue, defined by figures such as Aristotle and Aquinas as "the mean between the excess and the defect" (J. Rziha 113). According to J. Rziha, "the virtues that perfect the appetitive powers (will and emotions) exist as a mean between an excess and a defect... too much or too little desire of a particular... is a vice" (129). In this sense, Tibieza claims to make an excellent point; although an Alma who shuns human necessities completely and fasts and prays constantly might fit the stereotype of the self-denying female ascetic of the Golden Age, this is an unsustainable lifestyle and one that is not in accord with a teleological understanding of the relationship between divinity and humanity.

In this regard, it is especially noteworthy that of all the virtues Marcela could have set in opposition to Tibieza, she chose Oración. Prayer was, of course, a central virtue for the nun and for the Christian in general, as "the soul communes with and

imitates Christ through meditation and prayer” (Gascón 45). In other words, prayer is a virtue ordered towards love and worship of God. When Oración arrives and finds Alma shunning her prescribed religious activities, she exclaims: “el remedio de este daño solo puede ser Amor” (360-70). This point is significant, as, according to J. Rziha, “the theological virtues of hope and charity [love of God] do not have a mean... there is no limit to how much humans should love God... there is no limit to how much humans should desire to be with God” (131). In other words, a finite creature whose very existence and salvation depend on an infinitely loving God is literally unable to love that God too much. By setting Tibieza against Oración, Marcela is specifically creating a situation in which the ‘balance’ between excess and defect does not exist. Marcela confirms such an understanding of the virtue of prayer when, at the mention of her spouse, Amor Divino, Alma is brought back to her senses. In anguish she repents of her lapse, exclaiming to Oración:

¡Ay, mi querida Oración,
 quién la viera ya en su pecho,
 que de contrición deshecho
 lágrimas destila y vierte

 ¡Ay mi amor, ay mi querido [Amor Divino],
 qué ingrata he sido! (400-411)

The fact that Alma repents not merely of her lapsed fidelity to Amor Divino’s wishes, but also of her ingratitude towards Him, reveals her understanding of God’s love as one which is infinite and which can never fully be reciprocated. This same boundless love which inspires charity (love of God) is demonstrated when Amor Divino arrives soon after. He dispells Tibieza (427-35), forgives Alma, and, in the drama’s central passage, instructs her further on how to love Him and therefore best unite herself to Him:

La mayor ciencia y el arte
Mas breve y de más primor
Es ejercitar a Amor
En palabras y en acciones,
El sufrir persecuciones,
El abrazar las virtudes
Todas, y, en particular,
Las que son de más estima.
Esta es la cumbre y la cima,
Del monte de perfección. (629-39).

In the words of Amor Divino, therefore, the perfection of the soul's mystical union with God is not manifested in a total negation of self, or in a quiet slipping into the nothingness of meditation, but rather in the active exercise of virtues within one's state of life. In characterizing the nuptial union of the soul with God as one of fruitful, active, and virtuous living, Marcela follows in the footsteps of Santa Teresa, who declares at the very end of her *Moradas*: "es menester no poner vuestro fundamento sólo en rezar y contemplar; porque, si no procuráis virtudes y hay ejercicio de ellas, siempre os quedaréis enanas... porque el amor tengo imposible contentarse de estar en un ser... creedme, que Marta y María han de andar juntas" (122-123). According to Smith, "to reach the top of the mount of perfection takes strength, hard work and sacrifice. In other words, as Santa Teresa advocates, spiritual devotion requires a *mujer varonil*" (*Colloquies* 129). This *mujer varonil* is not the female character who is at times presented negatively in the secular *comedia*, but rather the woman of valor mentioned in the crowning chapter of Proverbs and by Luis de Leon:¹⁸

Lo que aquí decimos mujer de valor, y pudiéramos desear mujer varonil... llama a las casadas perfectas; así que, esto que decimos varonil o valor, en el original es una palabra de grande significación y fuerza, y tal, que apenas con muchas muestras se alcanza todo lo que significa. quiere decir virtud de ánimo, y fortaleza de corazón, industria y riquezas, y poder y aventajamiento, y, finalmente, un ser perfecto y cabal en aquellas cosas a quien esta palabra se aplica. (283)

¹⁸ See Proverbs 31:10-31.

This active understanding of the reality of the nuptial union of the soul with God is particularly teleological, as it insinuates a transformation of the entire human person -as virtues cannot be lived out on this earth without a body- and one which is not only erotic but agapeic; that is, one in which the soul becomes an instrument of God's will through loving acts of service to his or her community. In characterizing this union, Oración declares that those souls which are united to and transformed by God "cantan y alaban a un tiempo/ entonando; "Santo, santo,"/ que, repetido tres veces,/ lo trino manifestando,/ dan al Alma más aprecio/ de este misterio sagrado" (529-35). Thus, this 'fruitful,' or agapeic, love of Marcela's mystical marriage and the individual's subsequent theosis is also profoundly Trinitarian. In other words, Marcela emphasizes that union with God is specifically union with the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Alisa J. Tigchelaar, one of the only critics to extensively analyze some of Marcela's theatrical works which are not part of her four *Coloquios del Alma*, has arrived at an almost identical conclusion regarding Marcela's understanding of the relationship between divinity and humanity.¹⁹ Tigchelaar has noted the influence of Augustine's understanding of the Trinity on Sor Marcela's dramatic works,²⁰ and in her analysis of Marcela's colloquy *Breve Festejo* and the nun's mystical characterization of the soul's transformative or deified union with God, she states:

Christ's perfect corporality determines ours... we do not fundamentally degrade 'God-Love' with our own imperfect mirroring. These truths, going back to the nuns, unproblematically permit transfigured human flesh into mystical

¹⁹ Tigchelaar has published at least two articles on Marcela's theater. The first, "Redemption Theology in Mystical Convent Drama: 'The Already and the Not Yet' in Hildegard of Bingen's *Ordo Virtutum* and Marcela de San Félix's *Breve Festejo*," analyzes Marcela's *coloquio* titled *Breve Festejo*, and the other, "Marcela de San Félix's Mystic Theology through Drama: Platonic and Augustinian 'Influences,'" examines *El Santísimo Sacramento*.

²⁰ See Tigchelaar, "Marcela de San Félix's Mystic Theology," p. 28.

exchange... They allow the communication of Marcela's mysticism to be distinctly corporeal... Far from excluding the corporeal, biblical Trinitarian theology embraces it... Christ, through His Ascension, remains embodied, even as the entire Godhead does. This divine Corporality, in turn, anticipates the End Times, a point at which all believers will reflect the Godhead wholly (in spirit and body), perfectly and eternally, as they cannot now even in heaven. ("Redemption Theology" 123-24)

The analysis presented by Tigchelaar reveals that the cosmivision presented in Marcela's other dramas is also teleological. In addition, aside from its relation to the special devotions of her order, Marcela's Trinitarian description of the soul's mystical union with God is likewise significant as it harkens back once again to the Biblical sources of the Song of Songs and St. Paul, which present a dual imagery of both the individual and the entire Church as the bride of Christ.²¹ It also references Marcela's mystical sources, such Luis de Leon. According to Parker:

Luis De Leon says that there are three things to be considered in the marriage of Christ and his church. The first is the 'uniting and close union,' and the word he uses for 'uniting' is *ayuntamiento*, which was the word for copulation. The second is 'sweetness and delight' but that results from this union. The third is the circumstances in which marriage finds its expression. Sent, he continues, Christ is the husband not only of the church as a whole, but also of each one of its members, these factors must all combine and the relation of the believer to Christ. The marriage bond is a tight knot tying two different beings together, a tying which is preceded, accompanied and followed by an ineffable sweetness. (*Philosophy* 88).

Thus, for Marcela, the perfect union to which the soul is called is that of participation in the eternal relationship of the Trinity, and it is a union which, although infinitely personal, does not come at the expense of the exclusion of one's community. A Trinitarian understanding of theosis and the mystical wedding is likewise teleological in nature because, as J. Rziha states, "not only are humans made in God's image as persons, but they are also in God's image as a community. Just as God is three persons who are

²¹ See, for example, Ephesians 5:25-33.

united, humans are made to be united within loving relationships. Humans are social by nature and can only properly develop within a community” (16). In other words, an understanding of nuptial theosis which includes the active practice of virtues in loving service of one’s peers is one which is based on the ‘perfection,’ or ‘telos,’ of the entire human experience: soul, body, and relationships. In sum, Marcela’s *De virtudes* manifests a profoundly teleological understanding of the relationship between divinity and humanity, individuality and community, and it utilizes the theme of marriage as a unifier of the many facets of the human experience.

In conclusion, it is worth pointing out that a debate still exists over whether figures such as Marcela should be properly considered as mystics, especially due to the lack of an abundance of ‘mystical encounters’ found in what is known of their lives, as well as to their rather ascetic, practical approaches to the everyday workings of the convent. Despite the mystical themes present in her plays and poetry, Tigchelaar has pointed out a hesitancy in classifying Lope’s daughter as a *bona fide* mystic (“Marcela de san Félix” 41). However, regardless of the unknowable nature of Marcela’s personal spiritual life, a mystical characterization of the nuptial union of the Soul with God is present in her works in a manner which is in no way diminished by her communal life in the convent, but expanded when applied to it. Thus, while it might be impossible to clearly define her as a mystic, it is imperative that she be recognized as a mystical writer. Tigchelaar has noted the mystical element of Marcela’s writings and has connected it with the works of Juan de la Cruz and Teresa de Jesús, stating: “for these mystics ...union is to be understood as the interiorization of the divine life of the Trinity into a Christ-like self...union with God is in no way superficial to the self, nor does it remove the self from

its authentic created existence, but rather deepens and transforms it” (Marcela de san Félix” 42-43). Lamentably, sor Marcela is not well-known for any visions she may have experienced, nor is she especially recognized for her writings. However, in a teleological understanding of mysticism and the nuptial union of the soul with God, an understanding that recognizes the communal, Trinitarian end of humanity both in this life and the next, Marcela can be classified at the very least as a teacher of mystics and thus a figure to be studied and acclaimed with renewed literary, academic, and spiritual interest. In her *coloquios espirituales*, the nuptial reality functions as a thematic space in which divine love and human desire intermingle and bear fruit through the practices of prayer and virtue. In this sense, Marcela’s works can be seen as a meeting point between the mystical treatise and the secular *comedia*; in both, marriage often serves as the unifying end which resolves conflicts and inspires action. However, this unifying function of marriage was not confined to the convent and the feast of Corpus Christi. As the final chapter will show, the wedding functioned as a thematic space in which the high and the low were brought together in another genre of Spanish theater as well: the *comedia de santos*.

CHAPTER SIX

Marriage as Unifying Theme in *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*¹

The mingling of the sacred and profane elements of Catholicism, theater, and the human experience of Baroque Spain finds perhaps its most well-recognized and obvious personal and artistic expression in the life and works of Lope de Vega, and most especially in his *comedias de santos*. According to Robert ter Horst, Lope was a dramatist for whom “sensuality is spiritual and... spirituality is sensual. In his life and art, Lope thoroughly confuses, commingles, and compounds sex and religion, so that the one becomes a function of the other” (120); that is, for Lope, the divine and human were inseparably intertwined within the *comedia*, just as they were within the human condition itself. The fusion of the sacred and profane spheres within the dramatic space of the religious play by means of nuptial, sexual, and sacramental elements has already been noted in both the *coloquios espirituales* of Sor Marcela and the *autos sacramentales* of Jose de Valdivielso. However, as has already been noted in passing, the *comedia de santos* presented possibly the most perfect blend of religious and secular theater, and therefore of their sources, elements, and inspiration. Morrison states that a true integration of the divine and human spheres “is perhaps seldom better manifested than in the *comedia de santos*” (19). Elaine Canning notes the same when she states that in the *comedias de santos*, “it is through the intricate fusion of *lo Sagrado* and *lo profano*, the

¹ This chapter has been developed in part from an essay I published under the same name, which appeared in volume 53 of the *Cincinnati Romance Review* in 2022, under the following citation: “Marriage as Unifying Theme in *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*.” *Cincinnati Romance Review*, vol. 53, 2022, pp. 109-130.

sacred and the profane, that plot development, action, thematic concerns and audience expectations are determined and explored” (“Sacred Souls and Sinners” 147). Thus, the hagiographic comedy contains and reveals not only the religious element of Spanish Golden Age society, but its profane aspects as well. In other words, the Lopean *comedia de santos* is a genre in which marriage and nuptial interest feature heavily as central, unifying themes.²

This phenomenon has already been briefly touched on in Chapter Four, where the relationship between the Eucharist and marriage within the religious drama was analyzed and a general line of comparison was drawn between their use in Valdivielso’s *autos* and Lope de Vega’s *Lo fingido verdadero*. However, the presence of marriage as unifying theme can be seen much more clearly in the Lopean saints’ play *La bienaventurada Madre*, which Mujica classifies as “a straightforward celebration of a woman who, in Lope’s day, was bringing prestige to Spain and restoring national pride through her

² McKendrick notes concerning the *comedia de santos*: “In the hands of its able to practitioners it might better be described as a form of play whose structural principle is normally dramatic causality, whose unity, for all the dynamism of its action, tends to be thematic, and which uses imagery as a major instrument of structural and thematic cohesion. It utilizes the love intrigue and the honor plot as popular strategies to dramatize a wide range of aspects of human behavior and experience, and this above all committed to an exploration of the relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives” (75-76). Likewise, commenting on the role of marriage within Lope’s works, Anny Guimont and Jesus Perez Magallon declare: “En resumen, Lope recurre al matrimonio en el cierre de sus obras como un modo metafórico de aludir al esperable y deseable final feliz de una comedia, pero también como una forma de escapar a la posible censura de los moralistas que asediaron la comedia a lo largo de... su vida. Al mismo tiempo, ofrece una serie de posibilidades en cuanto al papel del matrimonio en ese cierre, aunque debe insistirse en que cada caso es verdaderamente único y específico. Por un lado, alimenta en algunas -aunque no sin ironía, pues a la vez que es principio del catolicismo contrarreformista, no responde a la práctica social- la idealizada creencia en la fuerza del amor y la posibilidad de alcanzar en la vida de hoy y ahora la felicidad humana mediante el enlace con la persona amada. Por otro lado, presenta en otras la boda final como una solución aparente a los problemas que la obra ha desarrollado, pero proporcionando suficientes elementos para crear en el público una ansiedad evidente ante la mas que previsible infelicidad de la(s) pareja(s) configuradas en el cierre de la comedia” (163-64).

canonization” (*A New Anthology* 170). One of three works relating the life of Santa Teresa attributed to Lope (Mujica, *A New Anthology* 170) and most likely published by 1614, this drama is composed of three acts which center upon three important ‘epochs’ in the life of the protagonist St. Teresa: her decision to enter the convent and reject secular life; the transverberation, divine intervention in her life, and the continuation of Teresa’s founding of reformed convents; and finally, her miracles and death, which results in her total union with God (Mujica, “Performing Sanctity” 188-89).³

The presence of a mystic as the central figure within a dramatic genre which drew heavily for inspiration from its secular counterparts suggests from the outset that a nuptial theme should be very present throughout *La bienaventurada Madre*; after all, the wedding and its accompanying sexual and unitive symbolism served as a hallmark for the writings of both the mystics and the Lopean school, as has been established in previous

³ Various scholars in recent years have affirmed the Lopean identity of *La bienaventurada Madre* and the strong possibility of Lope as the author, including Bruerton and Griswold (498), Mujica, who notes that “most scholars believe that Lope wrote *Santa Teresa de Jesus* either for the beautification of Teresa de Jesus in 1614 or for her canonization in 1622” (*A New Anthology* 170), and Velasco, who likewise states: “theatergoers could see moving images depicting scenes from Teresa’s life in two hagiographic plays during the period when Teresa’s supporters were preparing her case for beatification and canonization that were attributed to Lope de Vega (*La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*, written between 1590–1604, and *Vida y muerte de Santa Teresa de Jesús*, written between 1620–1630), as well as in post-canonization plays” (222). Drawing on the research of Bruerton, Elisa Aragone Terni, and others, as well as on the existence of a 1606 comedia *La Madre Teresa de Jesús*, mentioned in *Diario de un estudiante de Salamanca. La corónica inedita de Girolamo de Sommaia (1603-1607)*, and the 1614 mention of a work titled *La vida de la Santa Madre* performed in celebration of the beatification of Teresa, Joan Oleza Simó and the contributors of ARTELOPE (artelope.uv.es) postulate that *La bienaventurada Madre* is most likely originally by Lope, although the version that exists today is a revision of the original work, probably done by Vélez in 1638. DiPuccio encapsulates this current of thought, recognizing at the very least the Lopean identity of the work in question, when she notes that “in all likelihood, somewhere between 1604 and 1622, merely 22 to 40 years following her death in 1582, Lope, or possibly another Golden Age dramatist, wrote a play, or perhaps two different plays, about Teresa” (398). However, it is worth mentioning that given the prevalence of the sacred and profane and their diverse manifestations within the society of Lope’s time, their influence can be said to extend to the other dramatists of his school as well. Thus, while many intellectuals have indicated the strong Lopean identity of *La bienaventurada Madre*, even if Lope himself were not the author, the cultural reality within which the work was written, of which Lope was perhaps the pinnacle, remains more or less the same as regards its importance to the composition and comprehension of the drama.

chapters.⁴ Nonetheless, the consensus of several scholars is that *La bienaventurada Madre* is better characterized as a cut and paste tableau of religious artwork and propaganda than as a unified, holistic work of theater. For example, Mujica also struggles to find a true dramatic unity of action within many of Lope's works, especially his hagiographic comedies (*A New Anthology* 171), due to the fragmentation of plot development and in the juxtaposition of divine and human dimensions that appear in the works (*A New Anthology* 171). More specifically, in regard to *La bienaventurada Madre*, she notes that "the first act portrays Teresa in the secular world. Here Lope uses all the tried and true devices of a *comedia de enredos* and exploits the traditional themes of honor and love" ("Performing Sanctity" 189); however, acts II and III "depict Teresa in another dimension, already a saint in intimate contact with God. The play omits most of her 20 formative years" (*A New Anthology* 174). Likewise, Gascón notes that "the Baroque hagiographic drama usually features a *doble trama* in which the author develops some action of historical interest alongside the hagiographical argument" (29), and Morrison declares that:

At least half of Lope's saints' plays... can be described as a series of events and tableaux joined together only by the presence of the principal character or characters. The evidence suggests that many theater-goers preferred this plan. They liked seeing brief scenes depicting the character or miracles of their saints, rather than a well-constructed conflict building through two acts and resolved in the third. (94)

Thus, in *La bienaventurada Madre* there is at least the appearance of a lack of unity among the drama's three acts. Elizabeth Howe provides an analogous level of support to

⁴ For example, Gryj states that "el sistema de personajes [en las *comedias de santos*], por ejemplo, es el mismo que el de otras obras de la Comedia Nueva, con las variaciones pertinentes cuando son necesarias. Los protagonistas masculinos y femeninos se configuran como galanes y damas, o tienen rasgos que se aproximan, sobre todo si se trata de santos que tienen una vida secular antes de convertirse o de alcanzar la santidad" (45).

this conclusion through her analysis of *La Vida de la Madre Santa Teresa de Jesus*, a second *comedia de santos* attributed to Lope de Vega which presented the life of Spain's most celebrated female religious. According to Howe:

en realidad, la trama se desarrolla en dos planos. Por un lado, Lope presenta el plano historico-realista basado por la mayor parte en los propios escritos de la santa... por otro lado, Lope presenta el plano religioso-alegórico en la cual figuran los personajes sobrenaturales... el punto de convergencia entre los dos planos en la comedia es el personaje, el único de la obra que percibe ambos mundos... la santa misma (474).

Although Howe is speaking of another drama in this instance, her general analysis can be applied to *La bienaventurada Madre* as well: the hagiographic comedy is a bundling of multiple realities which only functions theatrically due to the presence of a well-known historical-religious figure.

This lack of dramatic unity in the *comedia de santos* extends to the relationship which exists between the religious and popular dimensions of the work as well, and to the actions which take place within each sphere, establishing an artificial division between the human element of the first act and the divine ambiance of the others, which, according to some scholars, were fused together merely for entertainment purposes and to please Church and civil authorities. Gascón summarizes this trend of thought:

Popular enthusiasm for plays like these suggests that the dramatist and the performing companies may have succeeded in inspiring the masses toward a general solidarity for Catholicism. The plays were apparently less successful in clarifying, for their public and against Protestant criticisms, the Church's definitions of virtue. This is evidenced by the fact that many clergy condemned Saints plays, citing incongruities and indecorous combinations of sacred and profane, which they believed compromised the Catholic conception of virtue and could even validate Protestant criticism (25-26).⁵

⁵ Gascón states, "by tolerating and not resolving these various reactions, the Church achieved two results. By allowing the dramatists to freely combine secular and sacred, it indulged the public desire to be entertained by spectacle, but at the same time one enthusiasm for the Saints and Catholicism in general" (166). Likewise, McKendrick notes that "the golden age theater was the servant of many masters - authors, actors, *corrales*, more list, literary theorists, sensors, municipal and central authorities and a socially and

In other words, both in the 17th century and today, the most common criticism leveled against the style and quality of the *comedias de santos* revolved around their supposedly ‘artificial’ fusion of the sacred and profane elements of the human condition. This artificiality extends to the role of the wedding in such works as well, and Carrión notes that “upon closer examination, the path leading to and from the altar [in the *comedia*] is far more circuitous and less predictable than might first appear. It is befitting the Baroque aesthetic of unexpected and often violent twists and turns, where renaissance ideals of balance in nursing prosody give way to imbalance and discord” (121). The tendency towards the unexpected and the disorder of reality is yet another manifestation of the aforementioned narrative of ‘Baroque tension,’ “a conflict between asceticism and worldliness, the spirit and the flesh, a dichotomy of spiritualism and sensualism” (Gascón 165), in which the sacred and profane might be joined together but never reconciled. Within such an interpretation of *La bienaventurada Madre* and the *comedia de santos* genre overall, the fragmented nature of a given work due to a multiplicity of plots, elements, and interests reveals a lack of any real dramatic unity. Thus, while marriage might feature prominently throughout *La bienaventurada Madre*, any integration it effects between the sacred and the profane is superficial at best.

However, as the previous chapters showed, this Baroque tension, as significant as it was in Spanish culture and art, was by no means the only way the inhabitants of Spanish Golden Age society understood the world. Natalia Fernandez Rodriguez

geographically heterogeneous public- all of whom had to be reckoned with. The result was a triumph of compromise, a balance of external pressures and artistic imperatives made possible by the production of richly complex, nuanced texts” (200).

disagrees outright with the aforementioned analysis of the relationship between divinity and humanity. In her viewpoint, “Esa crítica adversa a las comedias de santos, que se cebe las más de las veces en la convivencia de lo sacro con lo profano, olvida la complejidad y ambivalencia intrínsecas a un fenómeno, el teatro sacro, que participa de un doble impulso, religioso y festivo; y que es, fundamentalmente, creación poética” (187). Elaine Canning notes the same when she states that in the *comedias de santos*, “it is through the intricate fusion of *lo sagrado* and *lo profano*, the sacred and the profane, that plot development, action, thematic concerns and audience expectations are determined and explored” (“Sacred Souls and Sinners” 147). Thus, the hagiographic comedy contains and reveals not only the religious element of Spanish Golden Age society, but its profane aspects as well. According to Dassbach, this union of the divine and the human was not drawn along the lines of heaven and earth, but blended the two through the theme of marriage, a theme which Dassbach notes is equally prevalent even in dramas whose protagonists are figures who have taken a vow of chastity, and which brings about the integration of plot, theme, and action:

Dentro de las tramas secundarias, es la intriga de tipo amoroso la que predomina en las comedias de santos. Con frecuencia esta trama tiene como protagonista a la santa o santo y no se desarrolla paralelamente a la trama religiosa, sino que está integrada en la misma... funciona en relación a la trama principal, es decir, a la trama religiosa. (131)

The analysis of the function and context of dramatic theme in chapters two and three, especially regarding the role and function of the wedding, concluded that a full appreciation of the unifying *tema* of the Spanish drama -religious and otherwise- can only be gained through a teleological understanding of the relationship between comedy and tragedy, God and humanity, divinity and carnality. In addition, the investigation of the

works of the mystics and the religious theater of two playwrights very close to Lope de Vega in chapters four and five revealed a similar need for such a teleological cosmovision in order to fully grasp the significance of the role of the wedding in both religious and theatrical contexts. Marriage in the religious drama, both in the *auto* and the *comedia*, is Eucharistic and mystical, and thereby as effects theosis both within the individual and society. Thus, it brings humanity into union with God in a manner which also perfects and increases the human experience. In fact, the theme of marriage in *La bienaventurada Madre* functions similarly, uniting the divine and profane spheres of the work not only in a superficial manner but in a teleological fashion which brings about the elevation, or perfection, of both facets of the drama and their corresponding elements and characters. Thus, in *La bienavnturada Madre*, the union brought about through the marriage of Teresa with God (and the nuptial motif in general) is in no way artificial; rather, it represents a restoration of the true order of nature and thus a deepening, or theosis, of reality. In other words, marriage functions to heal the Baroque tension of high-low, which both represents a fallen, sinful reality, and at the same time points towards the ‘true’ reality of Edenic restoration. The wedding’s already noted role as source, summit, and center of both the *comedia nueva* and the Christian expression of God’s love for humanity only serves to strengthen its potency as a thematic symbol of the teleological unity between the high and the low.⁶ In his analysis of Lope de Vega’s *Peribañez*, which is often hailed as the playwright’s most definitive work on his understanding of the nature

⁶ In fact, according to Wardropper, “La forma nuclear de la tensión entre lo sagrado y lo profano se encuentra en la interpretación del amor... Ya advertimos que gran parte de la atención espiritual surge de la ambigüedad de fluir semántico entre los símbolos y las metáforas y demás manifestaciones literarias de lo religioso y lo secular. El Mundo, por ejemplo, representa a rival y adversario de Dios; Pero visto bajo otra luz, El Mundo es la creación de Dios por la cual se revela a los hombres” (*Introducción* 57-58).

of marriage and the relationship between husband and wife, Boorman notes that the relationship between divinity and humanity in *all* of its aspects - human nature, freedom, love, and perfection, among others - is inherently teleological. He states:

The linking together of *divina ley* and *derecho humano* at the beginning of *Peribañez* is of considerable significance for the subsequent shaping of the play's action and imagery. The very presence of the Priest— not a common figure in the *comedia*—draws attention to the fact that the single act uniting Peribañez and Casilda is both a valid contract in the eyes of the law and an indissoluble sacrament in the eyes of Heaven. The beauty and love of Casilda are themselves a gift of God. (12)

More importantly, he goes on to note that: “it is... worth observing that Lope shows another kind of change working in... [the evil Comendador], a degradation of his dignity and freedom as a human being. This entails a betrayal of his human nature and therefore of the God who made it” (13). In other words, those actions which are in accord with humanity’s final end of loving union with God actually increase and perfect the various qualities of the individual, including their freedom and their very nature, whereas actions which run contrary to humanity’s ‘telos,’ -sinful actions- are in reality *dehumanizing*. This understanding of the relationship between divine and human nature, freedom, and law is extremely teleological, and it is this same teleological viewpoint which is expressed in *La bienaventurada Madre* through the theme of marriage.

The theme of marriage and nuptial imagery is not difficult to find in the first act of *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*, which presents itself with all the elements of a secular *comedia*. According to Mujica, “as a master playwright, Lope knew that no matter how appealing his subject, he must entice his spectators. The first act portrays Teresa *in* the secular world. Here Lope uses all the tried and true devices of a *comedia de enredos* and exploits the traditional themes of honor and

love” (“Performing Sanctity” 189). Thus, one would expect to find nuptial motifs throughout the first *jornada*, and indeed, such elements are integral to it. The centrality of the wedding is manifested firstly in the actions of the two *galanes* that seek to obtain the hand of Teresa: Don Ramiro and Don Diego. In reference to this aspect of act I, Dassbach declares:

La comedia comienza con una intriga amorosa que tiene como protagonista a Teresa, a la que se disputan dos pretendientes. Esta situación propia de la comedia de capa y espada se desarrolla en un tono desenfadado y alegre. Se presenta a la futura santa como amante de diversiones mundanas... los pretendientes aparecen compitiendo por su mano y creando una serie de situaciones típicas de la comedia profana... mensajes amorosos... entradas secretas en el aposento... celos y malentendidos... y peleas. (132)

The introduction of two *galanes* serves another important function as well, which is the characterization of Teresa as a *dama*; that is, as a recipient of amorous desires. According to J. Dann Cazés Gryj, the *comedias de santos* “suelen incluir algún tipo de trama amorosa, siempre afín a la figura dramática de la dama” (45). Therefore, the identification of Teresa as a *dama* reveals that, in addition to being the protagonist of the primary plot (the story of her life), she will also be the principal recipient of the amorous intentions of various suitors throughout the drama. In addition, the characterization of Don Diego and Don Ramiro as suitors who are truly interested in marriage (as opposed to merely *burladores*) can be found in their own words. For example, thinking that he has the favor of Teresa and her father, Don Ramiro exclaims, “ya puedo llamarme esposo” (Vega, *La bienaventurada Madre*, I, v. 278), and believing the same a little later, Don Diego states: “llegar quiero como esposo” (I, v. 637). Likewise, Teresa herself, speaking with Don Diego, admits that “caso que yo sea casada, vos, primo, seréis mi esposo” (I, v. 765). Thus, the amorous intrigue that permeates the first act of *La bienaventurada Madre*

is essentially nuptial in character. This wedding motif, despite its connection with the woman who would later become Spain's greatest saint, nonetheless contains profane and even carnivalesque elements. To begin, the setting of the first act is identified by Don Ramiro and Don Diego as that of a 'Courtly festival,' which includes elements such as horse racing and gambling. For example, Don Diego exclaims: "Grandes fiestas se previenen /... Fiestas de corte han de ser. / Tal nombre en Avila tienen" (I, vv. 1, 4-5), and then the two spend the next 45 verses speaking of horse racing and winnings, employing terms and phrases such as "costosas galas saquemos" (v. 7), "talle y bazarria" (v. 9), "buenos caballos tendreis" (v. 11), and "bayo de don Favila" (v. 34). In addition, Teresa's vocation crisis is catalyzed at a festive dinner (v. 304, 474) whose preparation and presentation include amorous advances and their consequences (vv. 632-668), dancing (v. 755), a humorous verbal exchange between the *criadas* Lebrija and Petrona, who also function as *graciosas* (vv. 402- 466), and eating and drinking (vv. 309-311). According to Royo, Carnival and its three major elements of food, sex, and violence were closely linked to the festival (171-72), a sentiment Bakhtin himself echoes in *Rabelais and His World*, stating:

Carnival is the people's second life, organized on the basis of laughter. It is a festive life. Festivity is a peculiar quality of all comic rituals and spectacles of the Middle Ages. All these forms of carnival were also linked externally to the feasts of the Church.... Even more significant is the genetic link of these carnivals with ancient pagan festivities, agrarian in nature, which included the comic element in their rituals. The feast (every feast) is an important primary form of human culture. (8)

In other words, the festive atmosphere of the first act of *La bienaventurada Madre* is inherently popular and includes various carnivalesque elements, including nuptial intrigue and its accompanying humorous aspects.

The presence of marital elements in act I of *La bienaventurada Madre* as found in the characters of Don Diego, Don Ramiro, and Teresa and the scenes in which they operate is therefore very evident; however, such a presence does not necessarily indicate that the theme of nuptial love will feature as an integral aspect to the entirety of the drama, or even throughout the entirety of the first act. As has already been mentioned, a large part of the act I revolves around the decision of Teresa to enter the convent, thereby rejecting the reality of marriage and choosing that of chastity instead. Thus, it is extremely significant that the figure of God is presented, not only in the first act but across the drama, as a *galán* that seeks to marry Teresa as well. The actions and will of God, which clearly occupy a central place in the work, are thus intimately connected with mystical union and therefore the theme of marriage. DiPuccio recognizes this tendency across the genre of the *comedias de santos* in general, stating:

Perhaps the most stunning divergence from Golden Age aesthetic as well as religious practice is the unorthodox characterization of God as possessive suitor. Lope... exploits the mystical poets' talent for casting God or Jesus as the Spouse or Lover and portraying unions with God as simultaneously existing on the mystical and sexual levels. One need look no further than Santa Teresa's own ¡Oh, dichosa tal zagala! ... These ideas are even more provocative when they move from the conceptual poem to the visual stage... to *La bienaventurada madre*. Furthermore, the staging of a human God becomes even more intriguing when He competes with other males for the object of His desire and maintains a very Golden Age attitude... the dramatists rearrange the dynamics of the traditional love triangle. (384-85)

The characterization of God as a suitor presents itself most clearly in the first *jornada* through the comic dispute which occurs between “El Sacristan” and Leonido. This conflict is also the conversation that Teresa interprets as the will of God, after hearing (and misinterpreting) only the words of the Sacristan, “con Cristo se puede ir” (I, v. 818), as an answer to her question: “Dios, ¿con cuál marido iré?” (I, v. 817). This calling of

Teresa by the veiled Christ, “esta voz misterio [que] esconde” (v. 824), is reminiscent of the *Song of Songs* and the aforementioned Eucharistic and mystical poetry it inspired; thus, along with being extremely funny, it is in a certain sense erotic as well.⁷ Likewise, the role of the Sacristan as a representative of the Church, the convent, and in this scene, God, is not difficult to see. However, it is important to note that Leonido is also the *criado*, or servant, or Don Diego, the cousin with which Teresa wanted to marry. Thus, the Sacristan and Leonido can be understood as representatives of their “Lords;” that is, of the two rival *galanes* that both seek Teresa’s hand. The characterization of Don Diego and ‘Don’ Dios as rival suitors is made more evident by the literal fight that takes place between the Sacristan and Leonido, as is noted in the stage directions before verse 834: “*Dale Leonido un rempujón al Sacristan,*” and in the debate, which the Sacristan wins, between the two about who can and cannot ‘enter’ into the convent, the place where the heart of Teresa is literally located. Additionally, the identity of God as victorious suitor and future husband is furthered in the words of Teresa, who declares, “Pues ya Dios mi esposo es, / quiero quedarme en su casa” (vv. 925-26), and in the words of her father, Don Alonso. Upon hearing the decision of Teresa to enter the convent, he comments: “tuyo [Dios] ha de ser el esposo,” (I, v. 901). Likewise, the words of Don Diego, the defeated suitor, reflect the same understanding when he exclaims: “de esposo se ha mejorado” (I, v. 934). According to Dipuccio, “in the hagiographic tradition... a

⁷ Commenting on the ‘hidden’ aspect of erotic love and its relationship to the Song of Songs, the Eucharist, and the Incarnation, Glover states: “the effect of deploying these incarnational images within a eucharistic poem modeled on the Song of Songs is to highlight the erotic character of the Incarnation itself. In one sense, of course, the Incarnation is an act of divine eros: a process, in other words, whereby God goes “out of himself” (cf. Phil 2:7) in pursuit of a lost and dying humanity.⁶⁴ But Incarnation is also an act of divine eros designed to provoke human eros in response. If Christ is, as Paul says, an “icon of the invisible God” (Col 1:15), then what we see in Christ is divinity itself; and yet, as Paul also says, whereas in the future we shall see that divinity “face to face,” we now see only “through a mirror, in an enigma [ἐν αἰνίγματι] (1 Cor 13:12).” (38-39).

surprisingly human God courts, marries, gets involved in duels, and feels jealousy. God, as seen in these plays, recalls any number of galanes from the secular tradition” (384). Thus, the identification of God as a suitor serves to maintain the centrality of marriage in relation to the plot and action of *La bienaventurada Madre*.

Additionally, the presence of the theme of marriage in the first act of *La bienaventurada Madre* serves as a “thematic space” within which the interaction and union of the spiritual and popular dimensions of the work can occur. To begin, the festive ambiance of act I mirrors the nature of the wedding, which is a festivity that is at once public and private, sacramental and sexual, popular and official. In other words, the festive character of the first act, coupled with its nuptial elements, signifies a blending of high and low on a cultural level, one which the spectators of *La bienaventurada Madre* would have both understood and experienced in their own lives. Royo notes that “in reality there was a real mixture between both 'popular' and 'learned' culture in Spanish festivities” (188), and Valls likewise declares:

los elementos religiosos... están sólidamente arraigados en la fiesta publica del siglo XVI, tanto si está motivada por una circunstancia de carácter religioso como si no. La fiesta religiosa, con sus tradiciones e ingredientes específicos (desde ceremonias religiosas a representaciones, danzas o procesiones), contamina cualquier tipo de celebración pública. Pero al mismo tiempo la celebración religiosa puede llegar a verse invadida también por manifestaciones festivas de carácter más profano. Probablemente las interferencias entre las manifestaciones profanas y religiosas de la fiesta debieron ser más habituales de lo que las relaciones oficiales dejan ver. Es cierto que la fiesta pública, cualquiera que sea su motivación, se rige por unas pautas estrictamente establecidas por las autoridades a través de ordenaciones municipales, que no sólo sirven para regular la aquiescente participación en la fiesta de los diferentes representantes sociales, sino para exigirla o asegurarse de ella. A pesar de esta estricta reglamentación, la fiesta es capaz de generar en torno suyo espectáculos diversos, y toda una parte constitutiva de la fiesta puede deberse a una iniciativa particular que podía llegar a escapar en la práctica del control de los organizadores y, por ello, quedar al margen de las relaciones oficiales. (130-31)

Thus, the first act of *La bienaventurada Madre* presents from its very outset a world in which the sacred and the profane are fused.

This fusion is perhaps most strikingly manifested through the blending of profane humor with divine providence. According to Robert Jammes, “la risa es, por esencia, un acto subversivo. La burla es rebelión contra el orden” (9); as a result, humor was most commonly associated with the popular-profane element of Spanish theater. Regarding its incorporation into the *comedias de santos*, Dassbach observes that:

Al adaptar el material hagiográfico a la escena y dar a la comedia de santos una estructura similar a la de la comedia secular, son incorporados... unas situaciones y conflictos propios de la comedia profana que se desarrollan a la par que la materia hagiográfica... Dentro de los elementos profanos... se encuentran... una trama secundaria de carácter profano, personajes cómicos y temas seculares. (126)

In other words, the integration of humor with the divine element of *La bienaventurada Madre* strongly implies an integration of the carnal and spiritual spheres of the work in general. This union can be easily identified in the already referenced scene between the Sacristan, Teresa, and Leonido. Mujica notes that “curiously, the few scholars who have examined this play do not comment on the very funny circumstances under which Teresa decides to take her vows...The entire first act is secular and suffused with humor... although Lope insinuates that Teresa is always guided by God” (*A New Anthology* 174). In other words, humor is central to the first act of this *comedia*, but divine providence is just as integral, and for Lope, the two were not necessarily in conflict. This complementarity of the divine and human spheres of the work is obvious in the aforementioned scene, even more so when the *criado*, or servant, statuses of Leonido and the Sacristan are taken into account. As Royo has already noted, the function of the

servant in the *comedia* was often to provide popular, comic relief; thus, the *criado* many times also served as the *gracioso*. According to Fernandez Rodriguez:

En el ámbito de la comedia hagiográfica, la presencia del gracioso era crucial para expresar esa «compleja visión del mundo del dramaturgo barroco» que mencionaba Rubiera. No solo hacía las delicias de los espectadores, sino que encarnaba —hiperbólicamente, claro— a todos y cada uno de ellos en su condición más entrañablemente humana. Y su visión a veces carnavalesca de la vida no solo hacía reír, sino que testimoniaba de una forma muy plástica el choque entre el contexto mundano al que pertenecía y la trascendencia a la que, súbitamente, tenía que enfrentarse. (188-89).

The humorous scene in which Teresa discovers God's will through the bumbling confrontation between two *criado-graciosos* represents the union of the high and the low at its fullest. This union is, of course, especially Lopean as well, given its relationship with the essence of the *tragicomedia*. Harris places the debate between classicists and Lope's school over the style of the *tragicomedia* into the context of the philosophical question of the relationship between the sacred and the profane on a moral, cultural, and anthropological level, stating:

although this is, on the surface, a debate about form, it entails, more profoundly, an evaluation of human life. If nothing else, neoclassicism assumes that nobility and vulgarity are easily distinguishable; the Christian, remembering that the son of God was born in a stable and perhaps soiled his swaddling clothes in the presence of the magi, hesitates before that assumption.... The mixed style allows the possibility that nobility may play in the mud without disgrace and that shepherds may visit the Christ without presumption. (96)

The *comedia de santos* allows for the dramatization of just such a mixture, by permitting the divine will to become incarnate and human impulses (including humor) to 'become divine.' Dassbach states that "la causación divina es una parte orgánica del argumento de la comedia de santos" (95), and Mujica likewise declares that:

It may seem curious that Teresa's first spiritual awakening takes place during a humorous scene... Rather than diminish the sacredness of the moment... humor might have had the contrary effect. Distracted by laughter, spectators may have

been suddenly jolted into the realization of God's mystical communication with Teresa through the Sacristan's words. The humor may well have heightened the audience's awareness of the mysterious and unexpected ways in which God imparts spiritual knowledge and of Teresa's receptiveness to God's will. ("Performing Sanctity" 191)

In addition, the same integration of popular humor and the Divine Plan can be found in the "prophetic" words of Teresa's father, Don Alonso, when Teresa first tells him (as a way to get out of trouble) that she wants to be a nun. According to Morrison, "Alonso, in sarcasm -and prognostication- says that he can see it all now: a convent of descalzas, Teresa's shining example, heaven opening to her, the fasts of her days and the prayerful transports of her nights, blood coming from her body even after burial, and great respect for her relics" (105); "Ya te imagino una santa; / Milagros podrás hacer..." (I, vv. 574-75). However, Teresa's response, "lo que me dices burlando / podrá Dios hacer de veras" (I, vv. 602-03), signifies the intimate relationship which exists between human activity and divine causality.

Finally, the same fusion of the divine and material realms of the human experience through the theme of marriage can be found in the aforementioned characterization of God as a suitor and rival to Don Ramiro and Don Diego. Parker notes that "The fact that the Christian God is revealed in the human Christ gives an inevitable human dimension to the expression of mystical love" (*Philosophy* 90). In other words, within Christian mysticism, humanity is not simply subsumed into divinity, but remains fully human as well by virtue of the fact of the Incarnation. According to Ayala:

Es por la creación del hombre a imagen y semejanza divinas, y con mayor rotundidad, por la Encarnación, como podemos entender que el orden de lo espiritual y el de lo natural quedan definitivamente fusionados y que se unifican en el discurso amoroso. El misterio de la Encarnación permite la sacralización de la naturaleza y la corporeidad del espíritu. (448)

In other words, the doctrine of the Incarnation informs the Christian understanding of the world and its relationship with God. The passage from Harris cited in the previous paragraph, as well as the analyses performed in previous chapters, thus applies in this instance as well: the center of Christianity – the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ and its perpetualization through the Eucharist and the Church’s other sacraments and functions- can be understood as an inherently teleological unity and perfection of the divine and the human, initiated by and directed towards a love which finds expression through the imagery of marriage. In sum, the existence of a marked connection between the divine and secular spheres of the first act of *La bienaventurada Madre* is evident, as is the fact that this connection takes place within the “thematic space” of marriage.

Nuptial love is therefore clearly a fundamental aspect of the first *jornada* of *La bienaventurada Madre*. This is not surprising, given the prevalence of the wedding as theme and end of the secular *comedias* of Lope, which are the model for this first section of the dramatized history of Santa Teresa. However, nuptial language is perhaps most explicit in the second act of the text, especially (although not exclusively) in the presentation of three principal events: the transverberation, the ecclesial notice granting Teresa permission to found her new convents, and the debate between Teresa and the Christ Child concerning ‘cruces y higas.’ Regarding the first of these elements, Mujica notes that in the second act, Teresa already occupies the ‘divine sphere’ of the human condition and is “in intimate contact with God” (*A New Anthology* 174). However, following the tradition of mystical theology, she also recognizes that “the culmination of the play is Teresa's mystical marriage and union with Christ in death [in act III]” (“Performing Sanctity” 197). In reality, however, one can speak of the presence of a

‘double marriage’ between Teresa and God in *La bienaventurada Madre*.⁸ The first takes place in the second act during the transverberation scene, which can be defined as an act of consummation, and the second at the end of the work in the total union between God and Teresa that occurs with the latter’s death.⁹ Thus, Antonio Cao is not incorrect when he states that “el segundo [...acto] se centra en su matrimonio espiritual” (301), and neither is Morrison when he notes that “the mystical nature of Teresa’s relationship to God is underlined several times; in act II, she addresses the Child Jesus as ‘husband’ and directs to Him words of tender endearment” (110). The language and action of the transverberation scene; that is, of the mystical union of the soul of Teresa with the love of God (Amor Divino), is completely nuptial in character. Such nuptiality can be seen in the response of Teresa after receiving

⁸ The most obvious issue with the presence of a mystical wedding at this point in *La bienaventurada Madre*, apart from the structural tradition of placing the nuptials at the end of a work only, is found in the second scene of act II, which features, among other things, a debate between the forces of heaven and hell for the soul of Teresa. At one point, *Demonio* reveals a flaming chair that he claims was constructed specifically for Teresa in hell, “por sus pecados merecida / por livianos intentos y descuidos” (1154-55). Obviously, if Teresa was at such a state spiritually that she merited hell, any sort of intimate mystical union with God would be impossible. However, the trickery of the devil is manifested at the same time through Lope’s text: an intimate encounter with God *has* just occurred; thus, Teresa’s soul must be of the state where she can experience heaven at least partially on earth. In this sense, the devil functions much in the same way as Tibieza in Marcela’s *De virtudes*: as an evil character who claims to desire a good- in this case, “justicia” (II, vv. 1114, 1130, 1150)- but who in reality aspires to the exact opposite. The true intentions of the devil are revealed in his own words at the end of the scene, when he declares: “aqui de mi poder, aqui Discordia” (v. 1169). In other words, the devil functions as a bringer of discord against the unity and right order of heaven and creation, and therefore specifically a bringer of injustice. This understanding of evil as a disorder of the good is teleological in its essence, as disorder assumes an order which is directed towards an ultimate “telos.”

⁹ The presence of multiple mystical weddings and a gradation of the soul’s union with God can be better understood by recalling the previously quoted section from Garrigou-Lagrange, in which he states that “fundamentally the life of grace and the life of glory are the same supernatural life, the same charity, with two differences. Here on earth, God is known only in the obscurity of faith, not in the clarity of vision. In addition, we hope to possess God in and in inadmissible manner; but as long as we are on earth, we can lose him through our own fault. In spite of these two differences, it is the same life” (121). In other words, the union of the mystic’s soul with God on earth and in heaven are different not in essence, but in degree. The degree to which an individual can participate in the Divine Life on this earth, even if he or she does so as perfectly as they are able, is obviously a lesser perfection due to the defects of the body and the limits of the human intellect and will while bound by this world. Within the Beatific Vision, the extent to which one can know and love God is obviously greater.

the ‘golpe’ of the angelic lance that symbolizes Divine Love, a love that causes “pena, dolor, contento y alegría” (II, v. 953):

Herid, herid con golpes más continos;
Dejadme el pecho, si gustáis, rasgado
.....
Pues a vos, dulce Esposo, os dio Longinos
.....
En cuyas aguas vivas dé a mi fragua
El dardo el fuego, y vierta fuente el agua. (II, vv. 963-75).

The title of ‘Esposo’ that Teresa gives to God makes the marital element of this encounter between the two explicit. Likewise, the contraposition between ‘dolor’ and ‘placer,’ pleasure and pain, which is traditionally associated with both mystical and erotic love, is very strongly manifested in the words of Teresa quoted above. In addition, the staging of the transverberation scene is significant. According to Mujica, “after the Angel disappears, Teresa collapses onto a bed and remains there during the entire first half of the second act” (“Allegories” 66). This statement is supported by the stage directions before verse 1035, which note that Teresa has collapsed into a near-death state: *Corre una cortina, y está Teresa como que se está muriendo* (A New Anthology p. 197), and in the later stage directions before verses 1092 and 1158, both of which mention Teresa as lying on a bed.¹⁰ The imagery of Teresa on a ‘marriage bed’ is significant from both sacred and profane standpoints. First, O’Reilly states that John of the Cross utilizes the imagery of the marriage bed, as drawn from the Song of Songs, to represent the “second person of the Trinity, where divinity and humanity meet and are ‘made flesh’” (8), and likewise, Gascón notes that “the image of Christ’s nuptial bed is common in Mystic literature” (77). In other words, the nuptial bed where Teresa reclines represents the

¹⁰ “*échase Petrona a los pies de la cama,*” and “*tiembla Teresa en la cama.*” (A New Anthology pp. 197, 98).

Christian dogma of the Incarnation and, by extension, the aforementioned teachings of the Eucharist and the theosis of humanity. Regarding the carnal aspect of such an image, Gascón also states: “by alluding to the bed... Lope extends the concept of marriage beyond the simple description of God in Teresa's husband and wife to include the sexual aspects of matrimony as well” (77). Thus, the inclusion of sexual innuendos within an intimate encounter between a saintly virgin and a divine being is quite obviously carnivalesque, but at the same time strikingly mystical. Finally, the action of this scene, which is the penetration of Teresa with the lance of Divine Love, has connotations which are clearly sexual in nature.¹¹ Therefore, the transverberation can be understood to function as the spiritual consummation between ‘la Dama Teresa’ and ‘el Galán Dios,’ a consummation that divinizes the humanity of Teresa, permitting her to participate in the life and love of her husband.

The nuptial union between Teresa and Christ that supposedly exists after the moment of the transverberation is manifested once again in the scene between Teresa, Mariano, and the Abbess within which the priest Mariano reveals to Teresa the ecclesiastical notice approving her plans to found reformed convents. In this encounter, Teresa, already the spouse of Christ at least to a certain extent, chooses to change her name to that of her husband: “desde hoy, Teresa de Jesús soy / y este nombre se me da” (II, vv. 1233-34). This decision signifies the new identity of Teresa as the bride of Christ,

¹¹ For example, Giles states: “Varios escritores han señalado la conexión entre la lanza blandida durante la Pasión y el mito de Cupido... Mitógrafos, teólogos y poetas medievales ya habían reinterpretado a este antiguo dios greco-romano, creando una alegorización cristianizante. Se combinaban en el proceso motivos que se pueden rastrear hasta las obras amatorias de Ovidio, así como el corazón herido en el Cantar de los Cantares (4: 9), que había leído Teresa con tanto cuidado, y el evangelio de San Juan, don de se lee la famosa frase “Deus caritas est” (4:8). Como un dios de amor totalmente purificado de cupiditas, una gran cantidad de escritores medievales representaban a Cristo no sólo como receptor, sino también como autor de heridas amorosas, ya sea directamente o a través de mensajeros celestiales alados, generalmente con flechas, lanzas o espadas” (43-44).

an identity which includes a union of persons and therefore of wills. Thus, after the transverberation, Teresa functions as a representative of her husband and His salvific desires in the world. This aspect of the identity of Teresa is manifested in the notice she receives from the Church authorities giving her permission to found her reformed convents, a work that is not only her will but that of God as well (II, vv. 1471-74). Although it is the Church that grants Teresa permission to continue her efforts, it is Teresa herself that takes on the active role in founding such convents in the first place and in asking the ecclesial hierarchy for their permission to go on doing so. Thus, it is significant that when Teresa receives her authorization from the Church, Lope presents it in prose, and not in verse. (Mujica, *A New Anthology* 201). Mujica notes that “es una convención literaria que los galanes empleen el soneto para sus notas mientras que las damas utilicen la prosa, que es una forma menos culta” (*A New Anthology* 136), but in this drama, the only sonnet is recited by Teresa in the third act, just before her death (III, vv. 2458-70), and the letter from the official Church is the only example of prose. This last fact, coupled with the traditional status of the Church as “the ultimate wife, wedded to Christ, the ultimate husband” (Carrión 22), suggests that the prosaic response of the ecclesiastic authorities to the ‘advances’ of Teresa emphasizes the masculine characterization of Teresa as a “mujer varonil y fuerte” (v. 1003) and at the same time the reality of her marital union with God and the Divine Will.¹²

¹² This masculine characterization of Teresa is consistent with the manner in which female mystics often expressed the reality of their union with God. For example, Elizabeth Rhodes states that “in the case of women and men alike, the way in which the ecstasy of union is represented may gravitate toward the inversions of standard social expectations (women empowered, men released into restful bliss), if for nothing else than to emphasize the distinction of the experience from that which is known” (208).

A third section of the second act which emphasizes the identity of Teresa as already married to Christ is the scene of ‘cruces y higas,’ in which Teresa, striving to follow the misguided counsels of her confessor Mariano (who thought that her visions were from the devil), gives ‘unas higas’ to the Christ Child when he appears to her.

According to Velasco,

The higa, in fact, was an obscene phallic figure that dated back to antiquity... a symbol of the ancient god Priapus whose primary attribute was a hyperbolic erect phallus... its origin is not only superstitious and idolatrous but so lewd and abhorrent that a religious person can't even think about. (224-225)

At the beginning of this scene, Teresa is obviously traumatized at the idea of having to ‘dar la higa’ to Christ.¹³ Nonetheless, she obeys her confessor, saying to the Christ Child: “los pasos tomado tengo; higas y cruces prevengo” (II, v. 1375). However, what is notable is Teresa’s response after Christ assures her that it really is He, and not the devil, who is appearing to her. To demonstrate her love for Him, Teresa exclaims: “tomad mil higas, mi Esposo;/ que en nadie mi dulce amor/ las puede emplear mejor/ que en un Niño tan hermoso” (II, v. 1427-30). Thus, in this scene Teresa can in some sense be seen as reciprocating the erotic acts bestowed upon her by Christ at the moment of the transverberation. The connection between the words ‘higa’ and ‘Esposo,’ described by Cao as “los símbolos respectivos de lo sacro y de lo indecorosamente profano” (301), and which appear almost next to each other in the same line, is quite evident, as are the obscene, profane, and sexual connotations of the ‘higa’ gesture. Likewise, the paradoxes

¹³ Lope’s audience would have likewise been shocked at the use of such a gesture by a saint, especially when directed towards a divine figure. Velasco recognizes this reality, stating: “Lope took full advantage of his and his audience’s knowledge of both popular and learned notions of the higa... Lope responds to the risk of shocking (and potentially alienating) his audience by rewriting Teresa’s traumatic experience into one of poignant piety” (225, 229). Thus, the ‘higa’ scene is a prominent example of the fusion of the sacred and profane.

of ‘pleasure and plain’ and of ‘sacred and profane,’ exemplified in this scene by the ‘higa’ and the ‘cruz,’ once again suggest sexual relations and therefore nuptial ones as well. The divinization of such a vulgar gesture manifests the function of marriage as a unifier of the divine and human dimensions of *La bienaventurada Madre*. However, at the same time it reveals the humanization of God. In other words, in this drama there is no subsumption of the profane sphere and its total replacement with the spiritual; rather, with the deification of the banal comes the incarnation of the divine.¹⁴ As a final note, it is significant that “Lope plays on the phonological [and orthographic] similarity between ‘higas de obediencia’ and ‘hijas de obediencia’ (figs/daughters of obedience)” (Velasco 230). This exchange reinforces the identity of Teresa as spouse of God and therefore as a spiritual mother of the sons and daughters in her reformed convents, a vocation noted in the text by Mariano: “siendo virgen hallada,/ con sus hijos se ha de honrar” (II, vv. 1005-06). Thus, the nuptial relationship between Teresa and God, a relationship which includes a fusion of the carnal and spiritual elements, is highlighted in the aforementioned scene.

Finally, the last scene of act II of *La bienaventurada Madre*, although small in importance, clearly manifests the continuation of the secular *comedia* themes of love and honor which were presented in the first act of the work, thereby concretizing the existence of both the divine and sacred planes of the human experience throughout act II,

¹⁴ Concerning the relationship between divine and human nature in religious Golden Age literature, Barbara J. Oberlander states: “This insertion of the supernatural into the natural is the union which is the basis of the elevation of the human race to a participation in the divinity of the Head... the flesh of the God-man, which contains the fullness of the divinity, becomes a revivifying flesh from which supernatural life comes forth to man. By the fact and manner of the Incarnation the Son of God has made of His corporal union with the human race the basis of His supernatural union with it” (94-95). Likewise, Tigchelaar notes that for the mystic, “union is to be understood as the interiorization of the divine life of the Trinity into a Christ-like self... union with God is in no way superficial to the self, nor does it remove the self from its authentic created existence, but rather deepens and transforms it” (“Marcela de san Félix” 42-43).

despite its lofty scenes of the transverberation and the Courts of Divine Justice. In this final episode, Don Juan del Valle goes to Teresa to ask permission for the hand of her sister, Doña Juana, which Teresa gives, stating: “yo digo que se haga hoy,/ pues gusta de ellos mi hermana” (vv. 1784-85). Upon witnessing the joy of the soon-to-be-married Juan and Juana, Don Diego, who featured as a suitor of both Teresa and her sister, is outraged and vows revenge, which he will attempt to carry out in act III: “mi furia crece... quiero, y no puedo matalle [en este momento];/ pero bien podré alzancalle/... con los rayos de mis celos” (vv. 1841, 1845-46, 1851). Although this final scene of the second *jornada* might seem inconsequential, it serves as a manner of continuing the ‘secular’ nuptial intrigue presented in the first act. In sum, marriage and nuptial love are central to act II of *La bienaventurada Madre* with respect to plot development, the action of the drama, and the characterization of its central characters.

The function of the wedding as a central theme which unifies and gives intelligibility to the action of *La bienaventurada Madre* continues in act III, and its presence is perhaps just as clear in the third act as it is in the second. While the same emphasis on marriage is kept, especially at the end of the work, Lope builds on the ‘higas/hijas’ motif and replaces sexual language with maternal imagery in order to signify the characterization of Teresa as spouse of God and therefore mother of His children. According to Mujica, “the third act of the play is devoted to Teresa’s miracles” (*A New Anthology* 177); that is, to the divine intervention which God works through the intercession of Teresa. The theosis of Teresa that occurs in the second act thus extends throughout the third by means of the miracles she works, miracles which are not anti-natural, but supernatural, and at the same time spectacular. Dassbach notes that “para el

creyente, el poder sobrenatural del santo constituye el principal atributo de santidad”

(91). That is to say, in the *comedias* of Lope and in Catholic theology in general, miracles serve as a sign of the sanctity of its worker, and thus of his or her intimate union with God and their participation in the perfection of the Divine Act. Therefore, the miracle not only demonstrates the union that exists between the saint and God, but it also elevates, or divinizes, the world around the saint, who functions as an ‘incarnation’ of the Divine Will. In doing so, the miracle *perfects* or *actualizes* creation in a manner which makes it not only more ‘divine,’ but more ‘natural’ as well. Vincent-Cassy declares that “el teatro hagiográfico tiende hacia la perfecta copia no de la verdad en tanto que naturaleza, y sino de esa verdad de otro orden que el drama” (492). In other words, the ‘reality’ presented in the *comedia de santos* is not the reality of Baroque society as it currently is, but rather the ‘reality’ of all creation as it was created *to be*, and in that sense its ‘true reality.’ This reality is brought about through God’s actions on earth, including miracles, which impart grace, understood as “a participation in the divine nature precisely insofar as it is divine, a participation in the deity, in that which makes God, God, in his intimate life.... a mysterious participation in this essence” (*Garrigou-Legrange* 55-56), to all of humanity and the created world. The miracle is, of course, a radical example of this joining of the human and the divine through the grace of God, a joining which effects the ‘true reality’ of things and which resolves the Baroque tension between the divine and the material. According to Dassbach, “a través del poder milagroso del santo se consigue... mostrar el poder divino y la presencia de la divinidad en este mundo, al mismo tiempo que se hace más asequible al creyente el mundo del más allá” (93). Thus, the miracles worked by Teresa are not only evidence of her own union with God, but also of the process of the

divinization of her society, a process which manifests the unification of the spiritual and material dimensions.

Among the miraculous actions of Teresa in act III, there are two which receive substantial attention from Lope: one, the miracle of the miraculous blood of Teresa which saves Don Juan del Valle, and two: the resuscitation of Teresa's nephew. In addition to revealing the intimate union between Teresa and her Divine spouse, each miracle is notable in that it also characterizes Teresa as a spiritual mother and thus as a mother of the children of God. First, in the miracle of Don Juan del Valle, the handkerchief of Don Juan, covered with the blood of Teresa, saves him from the murderous intentions of Don Diego (previously the suitor of both Teresa and her sister). Upon seeing that he has failed in his evil intentions due to the intervention of God, Don Diego repents and decides to enter one of the reformed convents founded by Teresa, exclaiming: "que yo no quiero enemigo / por quien Dios milagros hace.../ Pues tan encendido estoy, / que propongo desde hoy / ser fraile" (III, vv. 2033-34, 2045-57). After expressing this desire, he declares as he exits: "disponga el Eterno Padre/ lo que a mi corazón cuadre" (III, vv. 2109-10). Upon hearing this, Teresa tells him, "adiós, hijo," and he responds in kind, saying: "adiós, mi madre" (III, vv. 2112-13). Don Diego's identification of God as his spiritual father and Teresa as his spiritual mother within the space of ten lines reinforces once again the identity of Teresa as the spouse of Christ. Regarding the second miracle, Mujica notes that "Teresa's best-known miracle is probably the resuscitation of her dead nephew" ("Performing Sanctity" 196). Upon encountering the sadness of her sister and brother-in-law at the untimely passing of their child, Teresa insists that the boy is in fact not dead (III, v. 2278), and then begins to pray to God that he be resuscitated, saying:

“viva este niño, mi Dios... /cumplid, aunque es fuerte cosa / esta palabra que he dado; / que el esposo está obligado / a cumplir la de la esposa. / ¿No me habláis, niño querido?” (III, vv. 2290, 2294-98). The first two words of the boy when he awakens, “¡Madre, tía!” (III, v. 2299), can be read, of course, as greetings to his mother and to Teresa (¡Madre! ¡Tía!). However, they can also be understood as an exclamation of frustration or surprise directed solely at his aunt. Although it is impossible to be certain about how Lope intended this line to be read, it is worth noting that almost immediately afterwards, the child does in fact complain to Teresa for having taken him out of heaven and back into this world. Regardless of the true significance of these words, the prayer of Teresa, within which she refers to herself and God as husband and wife, is nuptial in essence. Likewise, the giving of the ‘spark’ of life (‘dar la luz’ is, of course, a manner of saying ‘to give birth’) to a child ‘from heaven’ implies the maternal identity of the protagonist. Therefore, the theme of marriage is entirely intertwined with the miracles of Teresa. Regarding the maternal facet of Teresa and its connection to her miracles, DiPuccio declares:

Teresa... registers two... functions, namely wife and mother... In *La bienaventurada Madre*, the more obvious example of this proxy parenting occurs when Teresa resuscitates her moribund nephew... If his mother, Doña Juana, brought life to Gonzalo the first time, Teresa brings him back to life for a second. A second example of Teresa's maternal propensities involves a former suitor... Don Diego, who earlier wooed Teresa as a potential spouse, now refers to her as ‘mi madre’... In a sense, his love evolves from the sexual to the filial, given that Teresa goes from being the object of desire to mother superior who conceives a spiritual son. (390)

In other words, the unifying function of marriage manifests itself throughout the third act of *La bienaventurada Madre* through of the subtheme of the miracle, thereby revealing

the union between God and Teresa by means of the fulfillment of the divine will in this life and world.

Finally, the last scene of *La bienaventurada Madre*, the death of the protagonist and her total union with God in heaven, can be defined as the wedding scene with which the majority of Lope's *comedias* end, as well as the goal and resolution of the drama's action. Speaking of this scene, Mujica declares that "the culmination of the play is Teresa's mystical marriage and union with Christ in death... here *Amor Divino* (Divine Love) appears in the form of Christ carrying his crown of thorns. Recognizing him as true spouse, she takes his barbed headdress, which in her hands becomes laden with roses" ("Performing Sanctity" 197). Morrison likewise observes that "toward the end of act III Teresa and Christ exchange such pledges of mystical devotion as that about the thorns becoming roses" (110). Although there is much that could be said about this scene, the presence of the nuptial theme is simply clear. Teresa refers to God with phrases such as "mi divino Esposo justo" (III, v. 2501) and "mi Amor" (III, vv. 2558, 2574, 2588), and God responds to her in kind, saying "Esposa, no tengas miedo" (III, v. 2589), and "estrellas se han de volver, / Esposa" (III, vv. 2576-77). Additionally, the contraposition between 'rosa' and 'espina' once again manifests the paradox of pleasure and pain which indicates both mystical and sexual imagery, and DiPuccio notes that humor is once more fused with divine intention: "In this scene, Teresa and her Spouse clearly meet on equal footing. Furthermore, the disparity between the action, Teresa's Calvary to heaven, and the tone, a silly lovers' quarrel, humanizes the saint as well as the God" (386). Finally, the death of Teresa and her eternal union with Christ, a union traditionally described in nuptial terms, concretizes the matrimonial

reality of this final encounter between Teresa and God. This union between Teresa and Jesus is reminiscent of the Lopean *tragicomedia*: on one hand, it is a joyous reunion between lovers, but on the other hand, it includes the death of Teresa and the sadness of her earthly associates. In addition, the death of Teresa brings about one final miracle: the healing of Petrona's faculties of smell (vv. 2688- 2695). Although this miracle is only briefly mentioned in the final lines of the work, it is significant for two reasons. First, it reveals Teresa's ongoing participation in God's redemptive actions in the world and thus her continued status as bride of Christ and doer of His will. Second, by completing *La bienaventurada Madre* with the healing of a woman already characterized as a *criada* and a *graciosa*, Lope completes his integration of the sacred and profane spheres of the work. With the healing of Petrona, Teresa brings about the theosis, or divinization, of every aspect of her society which was presented in the first act: her family, divinized in the miracle of the resuscitation of her nephew; her suitors, redeemed through the miracle of the miraculous blood; her religious community, deified through her presence as founder and their miraculous growth;¹⁵ and finally, the most grotesque and carnivalesque aspect of society according to the *comedia*: the *criado-gracioso*. According to Norton, in Lope's *comedias de santos*:

Lope brings his *graciosos* to the foreground. Genuinely keen to ensure his plays' didactic efficacy, he invites the spectator to find religious inspiration not only in the *santo*, but also in the unaffected goodness that, at times, does show through the comic personae of these humble *graciosos*. One function of these *graciosos* is, it seems to me, to provide a model for the successful resolution of very ordinary, inner tensions between the worldly and the spiritual self. (22)

¹⁵ Although it is not analyzed in this chapter, the second-to-last scene of Act II contains a miracle whereby Teresa employs the forces of God to overcome the attempts of the devil to thwart the building of a reformed convent through financial and physical obstacles. See act II, vv. 1587-1779.

In other words, through the miracle bestowed on Patrona, who follows Teresa at every stage of her life, growing in holiness and yet retaining the traditional elements of the servant-comic, Lope presents the ultimate resolution of the Baroque tension between the worldly and the spiritual, a resolution which takes place through God's grace manifested in miracles, mystics, and even simple servants. This resolution of the sacred and the profane in the *comedia de santos* is meant to reveal the 'true reality' of creation and its proper relationship with God, and it is one that finds expression through the unifying theme of the wedding.

In conclusion, the fundamental role of marriage in unifying the action and permitting the development of the plot of *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús* is evident, as is the function of marriage as the "place" within which the divine and profane spheres of the human experience are synthesized. In this Lopean drama, marital imagery and language permeates almost every aspect of the work. This permeation includes the secular elements of the first act, the divine plane of the second, and the divinization of Teresa and her community through the miracles presented in the third. All-powerful God is presented as a suitor, with nuptial intentions, and Teresa, a human, is characterized as the bride of Christ, with an intimate participation in the actions of her divine Spouse. Therefore, the wedding, which is the happy ending and the final reason for which the plot of the *comedia* exists, is the element which unifies the vast diversity of themes, actions, spaces, and spheres presented throughout *La bienaventurada Madre*, thereby permitting Lope to express the human condition of Spanish Baroque society.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion: Towards a more Nuanced Understanding of the Baroque Question

To summarize, it is clear that the nuptial element of the *comedias de santos*, *autos sacramentales*, and *coloquios espirituales* is extremely relevant for any sort of study concerning the existential question at the root of Baroque tension and its manifestation in theater and society. Nonetheless, the conclusions reached in this thesis should not be confined only to a study of religious drama, nor are they in any way conclusive. In her book *Theatre in Spain: 1490-1700*, McKendrick declares:

To describe the *comedia*'s formulaic identity, therefore, goes only part of the way to characterizing it fully. In the hands of its able practitioners it might better be described as a... play whose structural principle is normally dramatic causality, whose unity, for all the dynamism of its action, tends to be thematic, and which uses imagery as a major instrument of structural and thematic cohesion. It utilizes the love intrigue and the honor plot as popular strategies to dramatize a wide range of aspects of human behavior and experience, and this above all committed to an exploration of the relationship between the individual and the society in which he lives. (75-76)

This passage both underscores the importance of the research outlined in the previous chapters and at the same time highlights their insufficiency; much more work must be done in order to fully appreciate the dynamism and multifaceted nature of the Lopean *comedia* and therefore of the society which shaped and was shaped by its many forms. Nonetheless, as Max Harris notes, "it is in its decision as to the nature of conflict and the means, if any, of resolution that a play most clearly declares its evaluative stance" (130). Thus, while many more avenues of research remain to be explored regarding the Lopean *comedia* and especially its hagiographic version, the question of marriage and its role as

unifying theme is an ideal starting point for cultivating a greater appreciation of the worldviews of the Spanish Baroque and its understanding of the human condition, especially the relationship between the divine and the human, the high and the low, and the sacred and the profane.

By examining the role of marriage within the religious drama of the Golden Age, this thesis has shown that in at least some instances, the nuptial reality overcame the tension which existed between the spiritual and the material, bringing about an integration of the two in a manner which excluded neither divinity nor humanity. Through an analysis of José de Valdivielso's *autos sacramentales* and poetry *a lo divino*, the *coloquios espirituales* of Marcela de san Félix, and Lope's *comedia de santos* most commonly referred to as *La bienaventurada Madre Santa Teresa de Jesús*, this thesis has demonstrated that the wedding served as the manner through which the loving union between God and humanity was most often expressed. This union was found to be one of theosis –that is, of the divinization of humanity due to the Incarnation of divinity- and it was shown to be a union which must be understood in a Eucharistic, mystical, Trinitarian, and practical manner. In addition, this theosis brought about by the soul's union with God was explicitly revealed to be non-exclusionary; the elevation of the individual to participation in the Divine Act was seen to extend not only to the body, but also beyond to one's community as well.

The worldview revealed by the unifying theme of marriage, therefore, can be understood as a teleological, or unitive, conception of the nature of humanity and its relationship with divinity. Within this teleological system, although the sacred and the profane might find themselves at odds throughout much of history, their ultimate, and

most real, relationship is one of a ‘trinitarian-like’ unity, a unity which does not discount the foremost existential questions of the Baroque, but which does claim to answer them in a radically different manner, a manner that has rarely been explored within modern language studies. According to Arellano, within the *comedia*, “el orden inicial y el restaurado final no son el mismo orden” (*Historia* 115). Up to this point, much of the scholarship on Baroque theater has focused on the ‘orden inicial’ of the *comedia*, as its conflicts and worldviews occupy the central place on the stage for the majority of any play. However, even within a single *comedia* one finds multiple assertions as to the manner in which the order of the world is composed; thus, a deeper examination into the ‘final, restored order’ brought about in the *comedia* should be undertaken. In addition, this teleological worldview was not confined to the religious stage; rather, it is present in the writings of some of Spain’s most prominent religious figures. Tigchelaar notes that “Saint Teresa of Avila, the sixteenth-century Spanish reformer and mystic, was a key motivator behind the Catholic Church’s sanction of the mystical way as an important part of Counterreformation Catholic identity. Not only that, she was a primary figure, along with San Juan de la Cruz, in revitalizing the mystic practice in the Spanish Church during this time period” (“Redemption Theology” 113). In other words, the teleological ‘way’ must be seen as present in the heart of Spanish society during the Golden Age.

However, as this thesis has pointed out, such a worldview can also be identified in the works of figures such as Thomas Aquinas, Dionysius, St. Paul, and in the Gospels themselves.¹ Thus, although it was not always the dominant view, some sort of teleological moral anthropological system has existed since the beginning of Christianity.

¹ See J. Rziha (1), Garrigou-Lagrange (24-25).

Likewise, it should come as no surprise that such a cosmivision does not end during the Spanish Golden Age. Rather, the same teleological strain of thought can be found in the writings of more contemporary Catholic figures as well, including Therese of Lisieux, Leo XIII, John Paul II, and Benedict XVI.² In fact, John Paul II's *Theology of the Body*, a group of lectures delivered on the proper understanding of human nuptiality and sexuality and its relationship to love of God and others, were heavily influenced by the writings of Juan de la Cruz.³ In other words, the teleological understanding of the relationship between God and man analyzed in this thesis is not an isolated incident.

Therefore, with these conclusions in mind, several possible avenues for future study must be pointed out. The first, and most obvious, is a renewed analysis of the Early Modern religious drama and its evaluation of the interaction between the sacred and the profane. As this thesis has shown, this fundamental question of the Baroque era is posed, pondered, and potentially answered time and time again in the religious drama in an especially profound manner. A second avenue of future study centers around the identification of a teleological system of thought in the writings of other Baroque authors. It is important to recognize that a teleological understanding of the relationship between the spiritual and the material is not limited to the religious texts of Golden Age Spain, nor should it be treated in this manner. Rather, the evidence of a teleological system within Golden Age literature and beyond suggests the need to examine this element further.

² J. Rziha 1

³ See, for example, Michael Waldstein, who states that the "trinitarian core of John Paul II's vision can be traced back to... the poetry and theology of St. John of the Cross," (21), specifically the mystic's conception of transformation and union of love (30). Likewise, he notes that JPII's "theological and philosophical concerns have their roots in the spousal poetry and theology of St. John of the Cross" (3), and he declares: "according to St. John of the Cross, the marriage analogy is appropriate across the whole breadth of the Christian experience... it is most applicable, however, to... the spiritual marriage" (30-31). In addition, John Paul II's doctoral dissertation was titled *Faith According to St. John of the Cross*.

Third, a serious look into how the audiences of Spain's Baroque era interpreted or misinterpreted the messages transmitted by these religious dramas would be beneficial, especially given the more active role assigned to audiences of the theater even today.

According to Gascón:

Evidence suggests that the players confused Church tenants by intermingling the sacred and profane to a greater degree than they clarified... doctrine. The abundance of clerical diatribes condemning the combining of pious and profane and the portrayal of divine figures by actors and actresses of dubious reputation has been well documented and extensively commented. The plays seemed, nevertheless, to have successfully promoted enthusiasm in solidarity for post-Trent Catholicism, as evidence of frequent performances, foreign imitations, and public demand may indicate. (30)

In other words, the immense popularity of these plays, coupled with their eventual censorship and condemnation, suggests that they were subject to subversive interpretations at least to a certain extent; thus, the relationship of these dramas to both popular and official audiences must be analyzed further. A fourth area which invites additional study is the expression and understanding of theosis in the religious literature of the Golden Age, especially in relation to the sacraments and mystic spirituality. One's understanding of the manner in which humanity is perfected, when this perfection occurs, and what effects this perfection brings about is intrinsically tied to one's understanding of the human condition and its relationship to any sort of afterlife or deity. Thus, a closer look into the manners in which Baroque Spanish playwrights, poets, and authors affirm, deny, or describe the transformative union of the individual with God will allow a greater insight into the Early Modern understanding of the human person. Finally, the presence and role of the wedding, specifically in its 'mysticomedic' manifestation in the Lopean *comedia de santos*, is an area of study deserving of much more attention. Although the conclusions drawn in this thesis do not apply to every *comedia de santos* or *auto*

sacramental written during the Golden Age, the importance of the wedding to both the popular and religious spheres of Spanish culture has been amply demonstrated, as has the interaction of the nuptial elements of both of these spheres within the ‘mysticomedic’ *bodas* of the *comedias de santos*, a lamentably understudied field of literature due in part to a misunderstanding of the teleological worldview often presented in these works.

According to Fernandez Rodriguez:

En el caso de la *comedia de santos*, podríamos decir, al impulso del arte nuevo, que convierte la comicidad en ese guiño que todos apreciaban y esperaban, podían unirse, por un lado, la tradición cómica del drama religioso románico, y, por otro, el sustrato folclórico y antropológico que vinculaba naturalmente risa, fiesta y religión. El resultado: una matriz de impulsos *en ningún caso contradictorios* cuyo sentido *último y unitario* descansa en un contexto celebrativo que no excluye la devoción. (188)⁴

In other words, the *comedia de santos* manifests the Baroque mixture of the sacred and profane in a plethora of manners: through its high and low characters and registers; its synthesis of religious and secular theater; its proclamation of a world in which humanity and divinity are united without conflict or contradiction; and its use of drama to embody a celebration of Catholicism which was not purely spiritual or physical, individual or communal, but which combined the public joys of festivity with the intimate contemplation of the mystical wedding. On the year following the 400th anniversary of the canonization of Teresa de Jesús and the 50th anniversary of her elevation to a Doctor of the Church, a closer examination of the mystical wedding and its expression in popular devotion and drama is especially appropriate. In conclusion, an analysis of the theme of marriage within the Early Modern religious drama reveals that the reality of nuptial love unifies the vast diversity of themes, actions, spaces, and spheres presented, thereby

⁴ Italics added for emphasis.

permitting the works in question to express the human condition of Spanish Baroque society in a holistic manner.

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