



INTERFERENCE AND PERSISTENCE: DYING IN MEDIEVAL SPANISH LITERATURE

*Injerencias y persistencias.
El morir en la literatura española medieval*

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Abstract

Our current society seems to require a sharp separation between what can be tolerated in public and what must remain hidden. There is explicit and implicit censorship of both the subject of death and of the crying and suffering of surviving relatives and friends. Medieval literature and literary studies, however, show how the experience of dying and its appropriate manifestations of grief seemed to be more integrated into everyday life, as opposed to the apparent 'disintegration' of nowadays. It is possible to begin to detect this evolution already in medieval Hispanic literature itself, from an apparently more public, visible and integrated death in 13th century Hispanic literature to a more private, concealed and disintegrated death in 15th century Hispanic literature. This process will continue its journey to the present society of eternal springs and summers from which we have eradicated autumns and winters, seasons as necessary for the cycle of life –for personal, psychological and social balance– as the first two.

Key words: death, mourning, crying, medieval literature, 12th-15th centuries.

Resumen

Nuestra sociedad actual parece presentar una tajante separación entre lo que puede ser tolerado en público y lo que debe permanecer oculto. Hay una censura explícita e implícita tanto del tema de la muerte como del llanto y el sufrimiento de los familiares y amigos supervivientes. Sin embargo, la literatura medieval y los estudios literarios sobre la misma muestran cómo la experiencia del morir y sus apropiadas manifestaciones de dolor parecían estar más integradas en la vida cotidiana en

contraposición a la aparente ‘desintegración’ actual. Es posible comenzar a detectar esta evolución ya en la propia literatura hispánica medieval, desde una muerte aparentemente más pública, visible e integrada en la literatura hispánica del siglo XIII hasta una muerte más privada, oculta y desintegrada en la literatura hispánica del siglo XV. Este proceso continuará su recorrido hasta una sociedad actual de eternas primaveras y veranos de la que hemos erradicado los otoños e inviernos, estaciones tan necesarias para el ciclo de la vida, para el equilibrio personal, psicológico y social, como las dos primeras.

Palabras clave: muerte, duelo, llanto, literatura medieval, siglos XII-XV.

1. PRESENT SOCIETY: THE DYING PERSON’S EXPERIENCE

Death is a general experience, ‘*independiente del hecho de que se sea aborigen de Australia, hindú, musulmán, creyente o ateo*’,¹ and independent of age, gender and socio-economic status, since it is ‘*un acontecimiento puramente humano*’² as natural as the time of birth.

Nowadays, technical advances and the way of life have altered the perception of death and modified behaviours to deal with the agony, or with the last moments of life, of a close friend or relative. According to Kübler-Ross,³ dying nowadays is a lonely, impersonal, mechanical and dehumanised experience, because the dying are often snatched from their family environment and taken to an emergency hospital ward. We have increased emotional suffering even though we have managed to decrease physical suffering. The needs of the dying person, however, ‘have not changed over the centuries, only our capacity to gratify them’.⁴

Philippe Ariès argues that the initiative in facing approaching death has passed from the family to a medical team who will strive to achieve — for the patient — ‘an acceptable style of living while dying, an acceptable style of facing death’. On the contrary, ‘an embarrassingly graceless dying’ disturbs the living because it triggers too strong an emotion, which should

1 [...] independent of whether you are an Australian aborigine, Hindu, Muslim, believer or atheist. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *La muerte: un amanecer*, Barcelona, Luciérnaga, 1996: 22.

2 a purely human event. *Ibid.*

3 Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying. What the Dying Have to Teach Doctors, Nurses, Clergy and Their Own Families*, London & New York, Routledge, 2009: 6-7.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

be avoided inside or outside the hospital. ‘One does not have the right to become emotional other than in private, that is to say, secretly’.⁵

Five are usually the phases that configure the process of dying, although they do not all always occur or take place in the same order: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. It is easier for the dying person to reach the acceptance phase if they feel accompanied by people who love them.⁶ Perhaps it is at this point that we begin to see the seriousness of the matter under discussion here. As Kübler-Ross states,⁷ if death has become lonely, impersonal, mechanical and dehumanised, then our need to be accompanied by someone who loves us in that final phase will not be fulfilled. This makes it impossible for us to successfully reach the fifth phase, the acceptance phase.

As Iosu Cabodevilla states, we must not forget that:

Nada tranquiliza tanto en estos momentos difíciles como el diálogo confiado y abierto. Nada agrava tanto el dolor y la ansiedad como la soledad, la sensación de abandono y la imposibilidad de expresar el final de la vida a las personas que aman.⁸

But what are the needs or experiences that characterize the moment of death? Arnaldo Pangrazzi in his book, *La pérdida de un ser querido: Un viaje dentro de la vida*, quoting Simmons, says:

En la medida que he vivido, puedo permitirme morir. Si considero mi vida insuficiente, gris o desdichada, no quiero dejarla; insisto en vivir más, para tener más oportunidades y ocasiones, que de hecho no tengo. En cambio, si logro congraciarme con mi vida, si puedo saludarla, perdonarla y amarla, entonces puedo separarme de la vida sanamente y con satisfacción. Para obtenerlo, tengo que perdonarme los errores que he cometido, apreciarme, mostrarme agradecido por las cosas que me he dado, aceptar aquello que ya no se puede cambiar, abrazarme a mí mismo y darme una mano para hacer frente a la mayor de las pérdidas: mi muerte.⁹

5 Philippe Ariès, *Western attitudes towards death: From the Middle Ages to the present*, Baltimore, MD, & London, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974: 89.

6 Kübler-Ross, 1996: 47.

7 Kübler-Ross, 2009: 6-7.

8 Nothing is more reassuring in difficult times than trusting and open dialogue. Nothing aggravates so much pain and anxiety as loneliness, the feeling of abandonment and the impossibility of expressing the end of life to the beloved friends and relatives. Iosu Cabodevilla, *La espiritualidad en el final de la vida*, Bilbao, Desclée De Brouwer, 2007: 77.

9 As long as I've lived, I can afford to die. If I consider my life insufficient, grey or unhappy, I don't want to leave it. I insist on living longer to have more opportunities

When we are going to die, our whole life seems to rewind again and again before us, and we remember: ‘*con obstinada repetición, los proyectos inconclusos, los sueños abortados, los traspies de toda índole, las amistades descuidadas, los amores traicionados*’.¹⁰ For those of us who have worked and continue to work with people on the threshold of death, we discover a need for them to be at peace, to leave behind certain issues that concern them, to meet with loved ones who have long since left their lives or with those who had lost contact because of conflicts, to tell secrets that seem to burn inside them. The difficulty in expressing these concerns varies greatly from one case to another. For instance, sometimes they need the help of someone they trust who gives them permission to open up and verbalise what they want to leave resolved or communicated. In order to have a peaceful and calm death:

Algunas personas se percatan de que necesitan una reconciliación. Otras necesitan de unas circunstancias particulares para morir en paz: elegir el momento de su muerte, o la presencia de una persona determinada, o la ausencia de alguien. Otras quizás, lo que necesitan es la expresión de unos sentimientos profundos, reprimidos durante muchos años.¹¹

The acceptance phase is almost void of feelings, so one should not assume that it is a happy phase. Rather, ‘It is as if the pain had gone, the struggle is over, and there comes a time for “the final rest before the long journey” as one patient phrased it’.¹²

Sometimes we find not only this serene consciousness but also a sudden improvement in the final moment, at least as far as physical pain is

and occasions which in fact I don’t have. On the other hand, if I am able to ingratiate myself with my life, if I can greet it, forgive it and love it, then I will be able to separate myself from life healthily and with satisfaction. In order to obtain it, I have to forgive myself for the mistakes I have made, to appreciate myself, to show myself grateful for the things I have given myself, to accept what can no longer be changed, to embrace myself, and give me a hand to cope with the greatest of losses: my death. Arnaldo Pangrazzi, *La pérdida de un ser querido: Un viaje dentro de la vida*, Madrid, San Pablo, 2004: 19.

- 10 [...] with obstinate repetition, unfinished projects, aborted dreams, setbacks of all kinds, neglected friendships, betrayed loves. Cabodevilla, 2007: 74-75.
- 11 Some people realize they need reconciliation. Others need particular circumstances in order to die in peace: to choose the moment to die, the presence of a particular person, or the absence of someone. Others perhaps need the expression of deep feelings, repressed for many years. Cabodevilla, 2007: 76-77.
- 12 Kübler-Ross, 2009 :92.

concerned;¹³ and in some cases of dementia, a certain degree of lucidity. Later, Kübler-Ross points out: ‘*aun los enfermos más rebeldes y difíciles se calmaban poco antes de su muerte y se desprendía de ellos una paz solemne apenas cesaban los dolores, aunque sus cuerpos estuvieran invadidos por tumores o metástasis*’.¹⁴

In the same vein, Jorge L. Tizón goes a step further by giving more validity to the information gathered from the words of the dying person than to the information gathered from medical examinations. The author defines this last moment of life as decahexis, distancing, detachment or the moment of final integrity:

[...] sus manifestaciones a menudo son tan claras que pueden predecir la muerte mejor que las exploraciones analíticas o médicas. El paciente puede decirnos o decir a sus familiares que «quiere hablar ahora, pues sabe que mañana será demasiado tarde».¹⁵

2. THE RELIGIOUS SITUATION AND ITS REPERCUSSIONS FROM THE 12TH TO THE 15TH CENTURY

2.1. The dying and their experiences

The term ‘tamed death’, which ‘covers a long chain of centuries, approximately a millennium’, is contrasted by Philippe Ariès¹⁶ with the current term ‘wild death’; as he believes that the tamed death ‘was both familiar and near, evoking no great fear or awe’, while the present-day ‘wild death’ is so frightening that ‘we dare not utter its name’.¹⁷ This ‘tamed death’ began to change from the 12th century onwards and during subsequent centuries.

13 Kübler-Ross, 1996: 21.

14 [...] even the most rebellious and difficult patients calmed down shortly before their death and a solemn peace was given from them as soon as the pains ceased, even though their bodies were invaded by tumors or metastases. Kübler-Ross, 1996: 75-76.

15 [...] their manifestations are often so clear that they can predict death better than analytical or medical examinations. The patient can tell us or their relatives that “he or she wants to talk now, because he or she knows that tomorrow will be too late”. Jorge L. Tizón, *Pérdida, pena, duelo. Vivencias, investigación y asistencia*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2004: 157-158.

16 Ariès, 1974: 2.

17 Ariès, 1974: 13-14.

What were the characteristics of this ‘tamed death’? Ariès describes it as a conscious moment, because, ‘knowing that his end was near, the dying person prepared for death. [...] lying on the sickbed’ as last wills and testaments would state over several centuries.¹⁸ Once in bed, the ancient ritual of *mort gisant*, synthesised by the author into five moments, began:¹⁹

1. The time to express sorrow over the end of life: a sad but very discreet recollection of beloved beings and things.
2. The time of the pardoning of the companions and helpers who surrounded the deathbed and the time of the farewell.
3. The time to commend the survivors to God.
4. The time to forget the world and commend to God. It is the time of the prayer and the priest’s absolution, who read the psalms, burned incense over the dying person, sprinkled them with holy water.
5. The time to wait for death in silence.

As far as the dying is concerned, it’s a moment organised by them; and as far as those around them are concerned, it’s a public moment. Death constituted a public ritual both presided over and organised by the dying person themselves.²⁰

We can now pay attention to the similarities between the organised and public *mort gisant* ceremony and the timeless needs described in the first part of this article.

1. The time to express sorrow over the end of life reminds us of Cabodevilla’s words about our review of what we have lived, of what we have not achieved, etc., before we die.
2. The time for pardoning also finds its correlate in the first part of this article when speak-ing of the need for reconciliation and the resolution of all that is still in the hands of the dying to solve. This includes the need to ask for forgiveness and to forgive others as well as to forgive oneself.

18 Ariès, 1974: 7-8.

19 Ariès, 1974: 9-11.

20 Ariès, 1974: 11-13.

3. The third time is the time to consider the surviving, those who are going to remain in this world. Although the religious nature of the commendation to God has not remained the same over time, the need of the dying to tie up issues that concern the survivors, to discuss practical facts about what will happen after death and to maintain control of decisions has remained the same. At that point, these decisions are impossible to make without the presence of someone meaningful at our side.
4. The fourth time refers not only to the religious factor, but also to the farewell to the world. Perhaps this is where the consciousness of one's own death is most evident: the consciousness that everything that was in our power to solve has been carried out, accepting what can no longer be changed.
5. The fifth time is the time to wait for death in silence. At this time, there is no need for words and the tired and weakened person needs to rest or sleep more. This is the void of feelings phase that Kübler-Ross describes.

Without a doubt, people need the company of others in these five moments because they must be organised by the dying, without anyone's boycott of their leading role, and they must be public to ensure that those who the dying needs to be present are present. I know that it may sound anachronistic to compare two realities separated by centuries, but the intuitions that emerge when contrasting the timeless needs of the dying and the lucidity of Ariès' study are quite revealing.

2.2. Changes in the Final Judgment

Before the 12th century, the inspired-in-Revelation iconography of the Last Judgment represented a Christ in his glory, surrounded by the four living winged ones, the four evangelists, and by the twenty-four elders of John's Revelation. This Christ appears when returning to the end times, the moment to which the resurrection of the dead and the judgment are relegated, because 'The dead who belonged to the Church and who had entrusted their bodies to its care [...] went to sleep [...] until the day of the Second Coming'.²¹ Those who had entrusted their body to the Church

21 Ariès, 1974: 29 and 31.

and given their body *ad sanctos* were also saints by contact and, consequently, the uneasiness for salvation did not disturb them, since they ‘were at rest until the day of the Second Coming, of the great return, when they would awaken in the heavenly Jerusalem, in other words in Paradise’.²²

From the 12th century onwards, the mentality changed progressively. The iconography inspired by the Revelation coexisted with another inspired by the evangelist Matthew, which included the resurrection of the dead, the separation of the just and the condemned, the judgment itself and the weighing of souls by the archangel St. Michael.

Later, with the arrival of the 13th century, Matthean iconography triumphed at the expense of Revelation iconography. Christ no longer appears in his glory, but on a throne as a judge, surrounded by the apostles and not by the evangelists (tetramorphs). In Matthean iconography, the weighing of souls and the intercession of the Virgin and Saint John become more important. Now, ‘each man is to be judged according to the balance sheet of his life. Good and bad deeds are scrupulously separated and placed of the appropriate side of the scales’.²³ As Minois points out,²⁴ judgement is individualised and loses its collective nature, and the depicted *liber vitae* — ‘conceived of as a cosmic book, the formidable census of the universe’ — becomes (at the end of the Middle Ages) “an individual account book” where the balance sheet is written.²⁵ These transformations are closely linked to the birth of purgatory,²⁶ since its emergence implies a double judgment, ‘*le premier au moment de la mort, le second à la fin des temps*’.²⁷ The tranquillity of waiting for the Judgment at the end of times while sleeping fades away before the emergence of a previous Judgment and the ensuing period of purgatory.

22 Ariès, 1974: 31.

23 Ariès, 1974: 32.

24 Georges Minois, *Historia de los Infiernos*, Barcelona, Paidós, 1994: 226.

25 Ariès, 1974: 32.

26 The noun *purgatorium* appears in the last third of the 12th century (Jacques Le Goff, *Lo maravilloso y lo cotidiano en el Occidente medieval*, Barcelona, Gedisa, 1985: 44). This intermediate place is situated, from the temporal point of view, between individual death and the final judgment and, from the spatial point of view, between Paradise and Hell. Purgatory replaces the pre-paradises of the *refrigerium* and the bosom of Abraham (Jacques Le Goff, *La naissance du Purgatoire*, Paris, Gallimard, 1981: 16-17) that - in a state of almost paradisiacal bliss - accommodates the deceased until the arrival of the judgment at the end of time. Purgatory accommodates them for a shorter period, specifically until the end of the atonement for their faults (Le Goff, 1981: 71 and 73).

27 Le Goff, 1981: 15.

In order to understand the emergence of purgatory we must bear in mind some relevant facts. In the 12th century, the economic power of monasteries was reduced by declining donations and by the development of both trade and cities. This situation prompted the Church to institute collection mechanisms that would make it possible to alleviate the situation by appealing to the solidarity between the living and the dead through alms, donations for prayers, and donations for masses.²⁸ Since these mechanisms and their effectiveness were vague and mysterious, however, it was decided to solve the situation through the ‘birth’ of purgatory, which definitively sealed the solidarity of humanity and the union in space and time.²⁹ This mixture of worlds, this caring relationship between the living and the dead, has a legal implication and a character of remarkable significance, since:

Hasta el purgatorio, la vida y la muerte separaban el fuero eclesiástico y el fuero divino, el poder de jurisdicción de la Iglesia y el de Dios. Los vivos respondían ante el tribunal de la Iglesia, los muertos ante el de Dios. Con el purgatorio, la jurisdicción se volvía mixta. La Iglesia tiene influencia más allá de la muerte.³⁰

At a time of efforts to rebuild a Church that was divided in two due to the 11th century schism, an attempt was made to make the Eastern Church accept the existence of this intermediate place. For that purpose, Innocent IV sent a letter to the authorities of the Church of Cyprus in 1254, a letter which Le Goff considers the ‘birth certificate’ of purgatory.³¹ Its doctrinal formulation came with the XIV Ecumenical Council (Lyon II), convoked by Gregory X in 1274.³²

Returning to the iconographic chronology of the hereafter, a new iconography appears in the 15th and 16th centuries, reflected in the *artes moriendi*. Here, eschatological time — which existed between the death of each individual and the judgment that was to take place at the end of times — has disappeared. Now, the judgment takes place ahead of time

28 Jacques Le Goff, *En busca de la Edad Media*, Barcelona, Paidós, 2003: 146.

29 Le Goff, 2003: 104.

30 Until purgatory, life and death separated the ecclesiastical and divine charter, the power of jurisdiction of the Church and that of God. The living answered before the tribunal of the Church, the dead before the tribunal of God. With purgatory, jurisdiction became mixed. The Church has influence beyond death. Le Goff, 2003: 104.

31 Le Goff, 1981: 379-380.

32 Minois, 1994: 231.

and is situated in the dying person's own room, around their bed. Returning to the scene in which the dying person is surrounded by their friends, and their relatives have disposed of their last wills, we find other 'participants' who star in an eerie variant. According to Ariès, 'supernatural beings have invaded his chamber and cluster about the bed of the recumbent figure'. On one side of the headboard are the Trinity, the Virgin and the celestial court, while on the other are Satan and a monstrous army of demons. The change is significant: 'the great gathering which in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had taken place on the last day, in the fifteenth century had moved to the sickroom'. It should not be forgotten that, as Ariès reminds us, this 'invasion' cannot be seen by either friends or relatives, only by the dying person.³³

The *artes moriendi* strictly prohibited the closest family members, such as their husband and wife, children and other relatives, from approaching a dying person's bedside. a priest could be present and — if this was not possible because of the shortage of priests due to Black Plague outbreaks — a lay person who belonged to a brotherhood or fraternity of the mendicant orders.³⁴ We are no longer before a judgment, but before a struggle in which God has ceased to be a judge and has

33 Ariès, 1974: 34.

34 Tomás González Rolán, Pilar Saquero Suárez-Somonte and José Joaquín Caerols Pérez, *Ars moriendi: el "Ars moriendi" en sus versiones latina, castellana y catalana: introducción, edición crítica y estudio*, Madrid, Ediciones Clásicas, 2008: 45. In the XXII ecumenical council (Lateranense IV) convoked by Innocent III in 1217, the creation of two orders was approved: the Franciscans and the Dominicans; the Friars Minor of the Poverello d'Assisi and the sons of Saint Dominic which developed rapidly in the cities (Francisco Javier Fernández Conde, *La religiosidad medieval en España: Plena Edad Media (siglos XI-XIII)*, Gijón, Trea, S. l., 2011: 290). Their preaching brought a "truly popular" character to Christianity (Le Goff, 2003: 34) and, in the case of the Dominicans in particular, their confessor's manuals are the most famous in helping in the task of examining the faults and of manifesting them to the priest, after the emergence of the auricular confession in that same XXII Council (Le Goff, 2003: 57-58). Le Goff emphasizes the importance of auricular confession because of its individual and secret character in the priest's ear (Le Goff, 2003: 58). The public request for forgiveness on the part of the dying person will go from taking place in the company of loved ones to being individual and secret in the priest's ear. Whether or not on the deathbed, auricular confession "becomes obligatory. Thus, each one must examine his faults and manifest them so that the priest may determine the penance to be applied to them" (Minois, 1994: 227). The Church takes on the role of obligatory intermediary for the attainment of salvation. "Conversely, no salvation is possible without the mediation of ecclesiastical recourse" (Ariel Guance, *Los discursos sobre la muerte en la Castilla medieval (siglos VII-XV)*, Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León, 1998: 52).

become an arbitrator. The balance scale has lost its usefulness and only the accounts favourable or not to the deceased remain. This struggle that has replaced the trial can have two interpretations: it is either ‘a cosmic struggle between the forces of good and evil who are fighting for possession of the dying man’,³⁵ assisting the latter as a stranger, or the last trial or temptation of the dying, arbitrated by God and his court. In the second case:

The dying man will see his entire life as it is contained in the book, and he will be tempted either by despair over his sins, by the “vainglory” of his good deeds, or by the passionate love for things and persons. His attitude during this fleeting moment will erase at once all the sins of his life if he wards off temptation or, on the contrary, will cancel out all his good deeds if he gives way. The final test has replaced the Last Judgment.³⁶

The dying person is forced to risk their salvation at the last moment of their life, separated from their loved ones. As we can intuit, as they cannot be wrapped up and comforted by loved ones, the dying person will end their days alone in the face of such a decision, and terrified of such a spectacle, without their timeless needs being addressed. Death ceases to be a ceremony organised by the dying person and public for the rest, to become something impersonal, dehumanised, lonely and more private.

3. THE EXPERIENCE OF DEATH IN WORKS FROM THE 13TH, 14TH AND 15TH CENTURIES

The reality of an era is reflected in its literature, since every author lives ‘*en una sociedad concreta, encuadrada en una época y espacios determinados*’³⁷ which — consciously or unconsciously — he describes in his creations as indicated by Isabel Mira Miralles:

La literatura refleja ambientes, costumbres, modos de pensar y problemas colectivos, por lo que es válida para estudiar el pensamiento y la forma de vivir de esa sociedad. Por otra parte, la obra literaria se convierte en producto social,

35 Ariès, 1974: 36.

36 Ariès, 1974: 36-37.

37 lives in a specific society, framed in a specific time and space. Isabel Mira Miralles, ‘Muerte que a todos convida’: La muerte en la literatura hispánica medieval», *Revista de lenguas y literaturas catalana, gallega y vasca*, 14, 2009: 291).

e influye, a su vez, sobre la sociedad de la cual ha surgido, suscitando adhesiones o repulsas, que muchas veces dan lugar a otras obras literarias. [...] No obstante [...] la obra literaria no es un producto social, sino obra de arte. Los dos aspectos no se excluyen, sino que se complementan.³⁸

This interrelationship between reality and literature helps us to identify the data previously collected from the selected texts. The themes of the dying, their final dispositions and religious beliefs, as well as the presence or absence of relatives are included. We will also see how the natural and undramatised character of the Early Medieval vision of death gives way to a terrible and threatening vision. From the 12th to the 15th century, death protagonism will progressively increase, appearing '*de una manera obsesiva en la literatura, en la iconografía y en los sermones de los predicadores, lo que conlleva una actitud cada vez más común de miedo hacia la muerte, y más concretamente, hacia las ideas de pecado, de juicio y de infierno*'.³⁹

The literary division into two periods made by Martínez Gil of the texts selected for this article is noteworthy.⁴⁰ On the one hand, the works of Berceo (1230-1264) stand out within the 13th century as texts that reflect a kind death, without doubts or fears; while on the other hand, within the 14th and 15th centuries, the texts of the *Libro de buen amor* (1343) and the writing of the *Danza General de la muerte* (1440-1450) stand out as texts that reflect death in all its horror. Differentiating both periods, we observe within the first how the Church, '*estamento [...] interesado en la conservación del sistema feudal, no sintiese la necesidad de imponer, como luego haría, su idea de la muerte de un modo combativo y amedrentador*'.⁴¹ In the second one, this gives way in the 14th century to a speech '*cargado de crispación, de una inseguridad que le hace llegar a la explotación de lo*

38 Literature reflects environments, habits, ways of thinking and collective problems, so it is valid for studying the thought and way of living of societies. On the other hand, the literary work becomes a social product, and also influences the society from which it has emerged, giving rise to adhesions or repulsions, which often give rise to other literary works. Nevertheless [...] a literary work is not a social product, but a work of art. The two aspects do not exclude each other, but complement each other. Ibid.

39 [...] in an obsessive way in literature, in iconography and in the sermons of preachers, which entails an increasingly common attitude of fear of death, and more specifically, of the ideas of sin, judgment and hell. Mira Miralles, 2009: 301.

40 Fernando Martínez Gil, *La muerte vivida: Muerte y sociedad en Castilla durante la Baja Edad Media*, Toledo, Diputación Provincial de Toledo, 1996: 22-23.

41 [...] class interested in the preservation of the feudal system, did not feel the need to impose, as it would later do, its idea of death in a combative and intimidating way.

macabro con el inconfesado objetivo de apuntalar el orden social y preservar la inmovilidad estamental,⁴² through a direct interference.

3.1 The dying and their experiences in the works of Berceo, the *Libro de buen amor*, the *Coplas a la muerte de su padre* by Manrique and the *artes moriendi*

According to Jeremy Lawrance, the ancient ritual of *mort gisant* suffers an unhealthy development that explains the feverish ideology of 15th century funerary art. It is important to remember that this ancient ritual was intended to:

[...] demostrar la conformidad con la voluntad divina: recostándose con los ojos vueltos al cielo, la cabeza hacia el oriente y las manos cruzadas en el pecho, tras breves palabras de consuelo y de perdón a los parientes y amigos reunidos alrededor del lecho mortuorio, el agonizante aseguraba la salud de su alma rezando contritamente la *Mea culpa* o *Confitero*.⁴³

After granting absolution, the prayer of *Commendatio animae* used to be recited and extreme unction received. This prayer appears both at the beginning of the *Libro de buen amor* and in the prayer made by Doña Jimena in the *Poema de Mío Cid* (vv. 330–365) when she commends the person of Cid to God before the impending separation that will occur not due to a physical death but to a civil death.⁴⁴

If anyone reflects well on the trance of death in peace — death still public and organised — it is Berceo in his hagiographic works. The first of these was the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, dated circa 1230, if we

42 [...] full of tension, of an insecurity that leads to the exploitation of the macabre with the unconfessed objective of underpinning the social order and preserving the immobility of a stratified society. Martínez Gil, 1996: 22.

43 to demonstrate the conformity with the divine will: lying with the eyes turned to the sky, the head towards the east and the hands crossed in the chest, after brief words of comfort and forgiveness to the relatives and friends gathered around the mortuary bed, the agonizing one assured the health of his soul by praying contritely the *Mea culpa* or *Confitero*. Jeremy Lawrance, «La muerte y el morir en las letras ibéricas al fin de la Edad Media». En *Actas del XII Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas*, Birmingham, University of Birmingham, 1998: 7.

44 Eukene Lacarra Lanz, «La muerte irredenta de Melibea». En Juan Carlos Conde, ed., *Actas del Simposio Internacional 1502-2002: Five Hundred Years of Fernando de Rojas's Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea (18-19 de octubre de 2002, Departamento de Español y Portugués, Indiana University, Bloomington)*. New York, Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 2007: 189.

follow the chronology proposed by Frida Weber and Brian Dutton collected by Fernando Baños Vallejo.⁴⁵ It is followed chronologically by the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos* due to its more perfected technique and, closing the hagiographic works (about ten years later), the *Poema de Santa Oria* and the *Martirio de San Lorenzo*. Brian Dutton believes the *Martirio de San Lorenzo* to be Berceo's last work, since its abrupt end seems to be related to the author's death in 1264.⁴⁶

Hagiographic works in general are the narrative of a process of improvement and their structure — following Bremond's sequential model — would consist of three moments: 'virtuality, actualization, and realization that can also be characterized as possibility of action, transition to action and result of action, respectively'.⁴⁷ In the case of hagiographies, the three moments would be: the desire for sanctity, the process of perfecting and the success of the process through proven sanctity owing to *in vita* prodigies, the very moment of death and *post-mortem* prodigies. Baños Vallejo⁴⁸ considers the texts that relate the life of Saint Millán and Saint Domingo de Silos by Gonzalo de Berceo as paradigms of saints' lives. Fernando Martínez Gil considers the prior knowledge of the time of death by these saints as proof of sanctity at the moment of death. The saints show themselves to be active protagonists and die naturally after completing all the relevant steps,⁴⁹ which not only remind the ancient ritual of *mort gisant* but keep it alive.

Berceo's first chosen text describes Saint Millán's death between stanzas 299-302:

299	Díssolis a la ora «Amigos, bien veedes la ora es llegada, con gracia de vos todos	de la alma essir: qe me quiero morir, quiérome despedir, quiero d'est' sieglo ir.»
300	Desend' alzó asuso bendísolos a todos	la sue mano donosa, la sue boca preciosa,

45 Fernando Baños Vallejo, *Las vidas de santos en la literatura medieval española*, Madrid, Laberinto, 2003: 81.

46 Brian Dutton, «A Chronology of the Works of Gonzalo de Berceo». En *Medieval Spanish Studies presented to Rita Hamilton*, Londres, Tamesis, 1975: 67-76.

47 Mohammad B. Aghaei, «A Semiotic Approach to Narratology». En *International Journal of English Language, Literature in Humanities*, 2, n. 6, (2014): 200-201.

48 Baños Vallejo, 2003: 109.

49 Martínez Gil, 1996: 28.

- | | |
|---|--|
| comendólos a Dios,
qe ellos los guardasen | a la Virgo gloriosa,
de tacha periglosa. |
| 301 Santigó a sí mismo
tendió ambas sues palmas,
cerró ambos sos ojos
rendió a Dios la alma, | por fer buen cumplimento,
juntólas muy a tiento;
sin nul conturbamiento,
fiso so passamiento. |
| 302 Cerca sedién los ángeles,
cantando grandes laudes
con grandes processiones
con él todos los santos | luego la recibieron,
al cielo la subieron;
a Dios la ofrecieron,
festa doble fisieron (BERCEO 201 - 203). |

Surrounded by those he calls friends — which gives it his public character — he prepares to die after bidding goodbye to them. As can be seen, the text shows four moments in which the saint is the protagonist and organiser: the conscious moment of his death and the serenity before it, the moment of commending oneself to God and to the Virgin, the moment of placing oneself adequately to die, and the moment of the reception of the soul by the Heavenly Court. The reception takes place while he is surrounded by a great multitude of earthly and heavenly beings, among whom are his brethren, the confessors (st. 303), the Holy Fathers and prophets (st. 304), the apostles (st. 305), the martyrs (st. 306) and the virgins (st. 307), to end up in the dome of the Heavenly Court (st. 308).⁵⁰

In *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, the saint's death is narrated in Stanzas 521 and 522. Stanza 521 focuses on the physical posture adopted by the saint before he died — a ritualistic posture and, consequently, conscious — and Stanza 522 narrates the reception of the soul by the angels and the prize received:

- | | |
|--|---|
| 521 Fo cerrando los ojos
apretó bien sus labros,
alçó ambas las manos
rendió a Él la alma | el sancto confessor,
non vidiestes mejor,
a Dios nuestro Señor,
a muy grand su sabor. |
| 522 Prisiéronla los ángeles
leváronla a cielos
diéronli tres coronas
desuso vos fablamos | que estaban redor,
e a muy grand onor,
de muy gran resplendor,
de la su gran lavor (BERCEO 389). |

50 Baños Vallejo, 2003: 114

The death described in the *Poema de Santa Oria* — stanzas 179-180 — has similar characteristics, including the ritualistic physical gestures of the saint and the peace that awaits her. ‘*No hay en ella asomo de crispación, sino paz y descanso, como si se tratara de un dulce sueño: cerró ojos e boca, nunca más sintió mal*’.⁵¹ In Stanza 181, the people who accompany her in that trance are also listed:

179	Fue viniendo a Oria fuesse más aquexando, alço la mano diestra fizo cruz en su fuente,	la hora postremera, boca de noche era, de fermosa manera, santiguó su mollera.
180	Alço ambas las manos, como qui riende gracias cerró ojos e boca rendió a Dios la alma,	juntólas en igual, al Rei Spirtual; la reclusa leal, nunca más sintió mal.
181	Avié buenas compañías el buen abat don Pedro monges e hermitaños, éstos fazién obsequio	en essi passamiento, persona de buen tiento, un general convento, e todo complimiento.

The ‘good deaths’ described by Berceo are not the exclusive heritage of the saints, since we find examples of simple sinners as protagonists within the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*:

[...] cuyo arrepentimiento les procura un buen fin. En «Los dos hermanos», una persona muere en pecado pero, por intercesión de la Gloriosa, Dios permite a su alma que vuelva al cuerpo durante treinta días, dándole así una oportunidad para evitar la condenación. Es el tiempo preciso para preparar una buena muerte con todos sus requisitos: limosnas, satisfacción de deudas, despedida de sus allegados, sacramentos de confesión y comunión, oración y aceptación serena de la muerte.⁵²

51 There is no hint of tension in her, but peace and rest, as if it were a sweet dream: *she closed eyes and mouth, she never felt bad again*. Gonzalo de Berceo, [1992] *Obra completa*. Coord. Isabel Uría Maqua; eds. B. Dutton; A. Ruffinatto; P. Tesauro; I. Uría; C. García Turza; G. Orduna; N. Salvador; P. M. Cátedra y M. García. Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1992: 544.

52 [...] whose repentance brings them a good death. In “The Two Brothers”, a person dies in sin but, through the intercession of the Glorious One, God allows his soul to return to the body for thirty days, thus giving it an opportunity to avoid condemnation. It is the right time to prepare a good death with all its requirements: almsgivings, debt satisfaction, farewell of loved ones, sacraments of confession and communion, prayer and serene acceptance of death. Martínez Gil, 1996: 29.

The requirements of this good death appear between Stanzas 267-269:

- | | | |
|-----|--|--|
| 267 | Entregó ricamiente
a los que tuerto tovo
confessósse al preste
de cuantos avié fechos | a los deseredados,
fízosos bien pagados,
de todos sos pecados,
e dichos e asmadós. |
| 268 | Ya andava en cabo
hasta los treinta días
despídiósse Estevan
sabíe que las palabras | de las quatro semanas,
avié pocas mañanas;
de las yentes romanas,
de Dios non seríen vanas. |
| 269 | En el día trenteno
recibió Corpus Domini
echóse en su lecho,
rendió a Dios la alma, | fizo su confesión,
con grand devoción;
fizo su oración,
finó con bendición. |

In contrast to good death, Berceo also describes bad death, as crude and violent due to the torments of the demons. We still need to know what it consists of, however, and who suffers from it. In principle, Berceo's logic leads to this first conclusion: the bad, the sinners, are punished with a bad death, an end of unquestionable moralising value.⁵³ An example of a bad death can be found in Miracle VII which, in its Stanza 163, describes the final result of a 'badly ordained' monk. At the time of death, the monk receives neither communion nor confesses, thus causing imprisonment by devils:⁵⁴

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 163 | Vivié en esta vida
Murió por sus pecados
Nin prisso Corpus Domini
Levaron los diablos | en grand tribulación
por fiera ocasión,
ni fizó confesión,
la alma en presón (BERCEO 603). |
|-----|--|---|

Although the public and organised character of these descriptions of dying has not been lost, the influence of religion through alms, sacraments, absolutions and confessions, shows the growing leadership of the church, which initiates the evolutionary process that will lead to the wild death, as has already been pointed out.

A century later — in the 14th century — we find the work of Juan Ruiz, *Libro de buen amor*, where we are reminded that the necessary repentance

53 Martínez Gil, 1996: 42.

54 Martínez Gil, 1996: 43.

at the time of death must be accompanied by physical and verbal attitudes consistent with it, showing an evolution towards a more theatrical character and not explicitly sincere in the moment:

1138 Quito quanto a Dios, que es sabidor conplido,
mas quanto a la Iglesia, que non judga de ascondido,
es menester que faga por gestos o gemido
sinos de penitencia, que es arrepentido:

1139 En sus pecchos feriendo, a Dios manos alçando,
sosiros dolorosos muy triste sospirando,
signos de penitencia de los ojos llorando,
do más fazer non pueda, la cabeça enclinando (RUIZ 283).

Similarly, we find the recommendation of the confession before dying in Stanza 1158, maintaining, as in the two stanzas already mentioned, the ability of the protagonist to speak and make decisions:

1158 Pero que aquéstos tales devédesles mandar
que sí, antes que mueran, si podieren hablar
e puedan aver su cura para se confesar,
que lo fagan e cunplan para mejor estar (288).

In Stanzas 1138 and 1139 we are told that we must not only repent, but we must also appear to be repenting in the eyes of the clerics of the Church, whose leadership has been gaining ground at the moment of death, while in Stanza 1158 the importance of the mediator, of the priest, is indicated. This leadership of the clergy will continue to evolve until the monopolisation of the moment of death in the 15th century, a monopolisation that also extends to burials and funerals. Clerics '*controlan las ceremonias que necesariamente han de preceder a toda buena muerte y, en consecuencia, poseen la llave de la salvación*'.⁵⁵

As Martínez Gil tells us,⁵⁶ the population feared a bad death, and the mere possibility of it was also used to frighten them. The term 'bad death' appears in the 13th century and two centuries later we find it frequently quoted in literature, as for example in the *Corbacho* of Alfonso Martínez de Toledo.

55 [Clerics] control the ceremonies which must necessarily precede every good death and, consequently, hold the key to salvation. Martínez Gil, 1996: p. 26.

56 Martínez Gil, 1996: 45.

The third author belongs to the second half of the 15th century. According to Jeremy Lawrance, the *Coplas a la muerte de su padre* by Jorge Manrique are the most important text reflecting a ‘good death’.⁵⁷ Its originality is found in the fact that it orients: ‘*el Ubi sunt?, hacia personajes de su entorno, cercanos en tiempo y lugar [Estrofas XVI-XXIII]*’.⁵⁸ The entire literary work is conceived as a framework for the description of a mortuary bed. It is a scene represented with unparalleled drama in the last seven stanzas through a dialogue between the master and the personified figure of Death.⁵⁹

On the one hand, we have the copla XXXIII (vv. 385-396) which reads as follows:

Después que puso la vida
tantas vezes por su ley
al tablero,
después de tan bien servida
la corona de su rey
verdadero,
después de tanta hazaña
a que no puede bastar
cuenta cierta,
en la su villa de Ocaña,
vino la muerte a llamar
a su puerta.

According to Pedro Salinas, the use of the adverb ‘*después*’ points to both a notion of time and a notion of state. Things happen as they should, because they happen when they should. Death thus comes without surprise in the full ripeness of the master’s life providing him with a superb opportunity to live in his death, to behave in death as he did in life. The last feat of the knight is his death. This is how life and death are interpreted, and the way of dying is the ultimate expression of the way of living.⁶⁰

On the other hand, coetaneous to the *Coplas*, we have the encounter with the death that the *Danzas macabras* present. It should be remembered that, although the original wording of the *Danzas* is dated between 1360

57 Lawrance, 1998: 15.

58 [It orients] the “*Ubi sunt?*” towards characters of his environment, close in time and place [Stanzas XVI-XXIII]. Mira Miralles, 2009: 310.

59 Lawrance, 1998: 15.

60 Pedro Salinas, *Jorge Manrique o tradición y originalidad*, Barcelona, Seix Barral, 1974: 131.

and 1390, the manuscript is situated in the middle of the 15th century, between 1440 and 1450.⁶¹ There is a remarkable difference between the character of Death in the *Danzas* and the character of Death we found in Manrique's lines 395-444. In the second case, Death is presented to us knocking on the door — without reproaching his victim as it does in the *Danzas* — and speaking to him in a polite way and '*tratándolo de vos a la usanza hidalga*: «*Buen caballero, dexad el mundo engañoso...*» (vv. 397-399).⁶² The master answers it in the stanza XXXVIII (vv. 445-456):

[...] mi voluntad está
conforme con la divina
para todo.
Y consiento en mi morir
con voluntad plazentera,
clara y pura
que querer ombre bivir
cuando Dios quiere que muera
es locura.

Salinas suggests that death exhorts the knight '*a verla como es, [...] a acogerla dignamente, según corresponde a la dignidad de los demás actos de su vida. [...] Quiere luchar con ese pavor que casi todos le tenían, limpiar su mala fama, de modo que el Maestre la arrostre en su verdadera realidad*'.⁶³ Manrique invites us to serenity, not to shrink from fear and to look death in the face,⁶⁴ thus retaking the '*antiquísima tradición cristiana*'.⁶⁵

The fourth example is in the same century as the *Coplas*. It is about the *artes moriendi* or arts of the good death. Emilio Blanco explains how these treaties were intended to help the dying in their death, but in such a trance it would be difficult for the dying to have the spirit and physical conditions necessary for such a reading. It therefore seems that these works must be framed in the process of the evangelisation of poorly instructed lay people, and of the education of clerics present at the deathbed. Both the engravings accompanying the short version as a heading in some of these books

61 Víctor Infantes, *Las Danzas de la Muerte. Génesis y desarrollo de un género medieval (siglos XIII-XVII)*, Salamanca, Universidad de Salamanca, 1997: 230.

62 [...] addressing him as thee in a noble way: Good gentleman, leave the deceitful world. Lawrance, 1998: 16.

63 [...] to see it as it is, to welcome it with dignity, according to the dignity of the other acts of his life. Salinas, 1974: 188-189.

64 Salinas, 1974: 189-190.

65 Salinas, 1974: 191.

confirm this hypothesis. On the one hand, the priest attending the dying person probably used the engravings to instruct them about temptations, if the level of consciousness permitted it. On the other hand, the heading of some of these books recommended that the dying person not read them all in one go, but to select the most necessary passages according to the seriousness of the sick person.⁶⁶

The wide diffusion of these *arts moriendi*, of which we have anonymous translations into Spanish and Catalan,⁶⁷ seems to indicate an inability to know how to die⁶⁸ and, in turn, reflect a generalised situation in which it was enough to resort to a series of formulas and last-minute prayers to automatically reserve an entry into the kingdom of heaven.⁶⁹

Lawrance makes the following description regarding the formulas and prayers described in the *artes moriendi*, of what constitutes the new moment of death, the struggle that takes place in the room of the dying invaded by supernatural beings:

Contra tales peligros el agonizante debía precaverse clavando los ojos en el Crucifijo, rezando sin cesar las debidas oraciones, apretando los dientes para no dejar escapar ningún suspiro o murmullo de dolor, y agarrando cuanto podía el cirio encendido que le ponían entre manos. Por su parte, los parientes no debían dejarlo en paz ni un solo instante; cantando **salmos en alta voz para silenciar cualquier palabra involuntaria de insumisión y sujetándolo crudamente para que no diera coces**, acosaban al infeliz con un chorro ininterrumpido de preguntas e interrogaciones devotas. Finalmente, cuando comenzaba “de star en passamiento” y ya no podía responder ni asentir con la cabeza, convenía recitarle la pasión de Cristo.⁷⁰

66 Emilio Blanco, «Artes de bien morir: para vivir mejor». En *Actas del VI Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval (Tomo I)*, Alcalá, Servicio de Publicaciones Universidad de Alcalá, 1997: 301-302.

67 González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 48.

68 Johan Huizinga, *El otoño de la Edad Media*, Madrid, Alianza, 2001: 211.

69 Blanco, 1997: 304.

70 The dying man had to guard himself against such dangers by staring at the crucifix, praying without ceasing and using the proper prayers, clenching his teeth so as not to let out any sigh or murmur of pain, and grasping the lit candle as much as he could between his hands. For their part, the relatives were not to leave him alone for a single moment; singing **psalms aloud in order to silence any involuntary word of insubordination and holding him crudely so that he would not kick**. They harassed the wretch with an uninterrupted stream of devout questions and interrogations. Finally, when he began “*de star en passamiento*” and could no longer answer or nod, it was convenient to recite Christ’s passion to him. Lawrance, 1998: 12.

Nothing could be further from a peaceful death, in which the dying person — surrounded by their loved ones — is accompanied, listened to, and authorised to express their innermost fears and worries. Here the relatives have other tasks to fulfil, while they turn a deaf ear to the suffering of the dying person, singing psalms aloud to silence them; as long as their presence is allowed, which González Rolán, Saquero Suárez-Somonte and Caerols Pérez deny. We can include the comparison that the three authors make between Jorge Manrique's *Coplas* and the *artes moriendi*. Don Rodrigo Manrique dies fully conscious, without the extrasensory visions that occurred in the *artes moriendi*. He dies surrounded by all his family, including wife, children, brothers and even servants,⁷¹ who tuck him in with their presence rather than with loud psalms intended to silence any involuntary word of insubordination and holding him crudely so that he would not kick.⁷² The text where this moment appears is found in Stanza XL, between lines 469-480:

Así, con tal entender,
 todos sentidos humanos
 olvidados,
 cercado de su muger
 y de hijos y de hermanos
 y criados,
 dio el alma a quien ge la dio,
 el cual la ponga en el cielo
 y en su gloria;
 y aunque la vida murió,
 nos dexó harto consuelo
 su memoria.

In contrast to what is to be expected in the 15th century, there is no prayer addressed to the angels, nor to the Virgin Mary, but rather to Christ, to whom he implores forgiveness in Stanza XXIX (vv. 457-468), which is thus another noteworthy difference with regard to the *artes moriendi*. Furthermore, relying on the oldest Christian tradition on death, Jorge Manrique provides a much more modern, more humane, more Renaissance or, if you like, more rooted in Christian Humanism kind of death.⁷³ Although — in my opinion — the death of Jorge Manrique's father shows rather how the 'tamed death' described in the ancient ritual of *mort*

71 González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 60.

72 González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 12.

73 González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 60.

gisant had not disappeared and its persistence continued in time. Perhaps the timeless needs that human beings have at the moment of death remain in the substratum of our existence despite fashions, ecclesial changes and beliefs. The need for prominence in death remains unalterable, even if environmental constraints increase, diminish or evolve.

3.3. The changes in the Hereafter in Berceo's works, *Libro de buen amor*, the *Coplas* by Manrique and the *artes moriendi*

According to Mira Miralles,⁷⁴ death is neither presented to us in the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla* as a definitive frontier in spite of the fear of judgment and the sorrows of hell, nor do sins produce irreversible effects no matter how serious they may be. This is because bodily death, although the irrefutable decision took place at the Last Judgment, could be abrogated by the Virgin or by the saints to give a second chance. These miraculous opportunities — including resurrection — did not seem to resolve the question of post-mortem salvation, '*de ahí que el purgatorio solucionara el problema de la segunda oportunidad*'.⁷⁵ Purgatory opened its way as the Judgment approaches the time of death and abandons the end times, even in Berceo's works.

In the 14th century the *Libro de buen amor* delimits — in the first place — two well-defined spaces in the stanzas 1564 and 1565. One is the righteous whom Christ brought to Paradise, and the other is that of the lost wicked who left the power of death. In addition, although indirectly, purgatory is recorded as a place where the prayer and actions of the living benefit their residents by shortening their stay:

1572 Daré por ti limosna e faré oración,
faré cantar las misas e daré oblaçión;
la mi Trotaconventos, ¡Dios te dé redenpeçión!,
¡el que salvó el mundo, Él te dé salvación! (406)

All this creates a cosmovision typical of this era in which the world of the living and the world of the dead are intertwined in solidarity.

Manrique presents life in the second half of the 15th century as a river that flows into the sea of death, and death as a deserved and serene rest for

74 Mira Miralles, 2009: 300.

75 [...] hence purgatory solved the problem of the second chance. Mira Miralles, 2009: 300.

those who have travelled the course of life (Stanzas III and V). Salinas underlines the idea of the fluvial course in this metaphor moving towards a common end, towards a same conclusion, towards: ‘el espacio sin límites del mar verdadero o de ese inmenso mar de los muertos, de todos los muertos que nos han precedido’.⁷⁶ The resemblance to the vision of the lost Final Judgment without fear at the end of times, where death leads us to a quiet waiting, to a trusting waiting, to a sea of rest waiting for that distant Judgment at the end, is remarkable. This image of the *post-mortem* moment clashes with the cosmic struggle between the powers of good and evil or with the last test or temptation of the dying, arbitrated by God and his court, typical of this 15th century and collected in the *artes moriendi*. The *Coplas* seem instead the expression of a persistence of that death in peace, which is more reminiscent of previous centuries.

According to González Rolán and his colleagues, the *artes moriendi* sought to provoke not the fear of physical death but the death of the soul in an individual judgment⁷⁷ far removed from the Judgment at the end of times. It would be difficult to explain the emergence of these instruments without the belief of the particular Judgment — after which the fate of the soul is decided at the very moment of physical death — was ingrained.⁷⁸

Es posible que su atractivo, además de en los grabados, residiese en que [...] dos antagonistas disputan dialécticamente sobre un asunto crucial para el hombre, la salvación o condenación de su alma, tratando de persuadirlo a favor de su causa, la del bien en el caso del ángel y la del mal en el del diablo.⁷⁹

According to Fernando Martínez Gil, the transition from a definitive Final Judgment at the end of times to a provisional purgatory, which extends between individual death and the Parousia, gave greater prominence to physical death. The author goes a little further by suggesting that this transition, whose strength increased with the crisis of the 14th century, strips death of its beatific disguise and even of its religious

76 [...] the space without limits of the true sea or of that immense sea of the dead, of all the dead that have preceded us. Salinas, 1974: 130.

77 González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 21.

78 González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 42.

79 It is possible that, in addition to being in the engravings, its attraction resides in the fact that [...] two antagonists dispute dialectically on a crucial matter for human beings, the salvation or damnation of their soul, trying to persuade them in favor of his cause, that of good in the case of the angel and that of evil in the case of the devil. González Rolán *et al.*, 2008: 46.

content,⁸⁰ which marked a path emptying and dehumanising the moment of death that had already been exposed earlier.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the quoted literary passages allows several conclusions to be drawn. The first — of a general nature — is the remarkable evolution of an experience of public and organised death by the dying in the presence of their relatives in the High Middle Ages, towards a more private experience organised by the Church on the threshold of the Renaissance, with the consequent loss of control on the part of the protagonist.

Secondly, the irruption of purgatory in the world of the living propitiated a direct interrelation with the world of the dead. Purgatory consolidated a whole theology and practices in suffrages that favoured the direct intervention of clerics at the moment of death to the detriment of relatives and friends. These changes made death a moment less organised by the dying and more organised by the ecclesiastics.

Finally, it is necessary to highlight how society was abandoning the peace of a universal judgment at the end of times in favour of an individual judgment at the very instant of death. Despite these Church interferences at the end of life, the timeless need to die in peace, to resolve unrest and to seek forgiveness and reconciliation with the survivors persisted and remained throughout the centuries, as shown by some of the quoted passages.

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80 Martínez Gil, 1996: 59.

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