

**An Unconventional Spectacle at Plaça del Rei (Barcelona, ca. 1490): Moner's
"Momería," Conceived in Catalan and "Textualized" in the Language of Castile**

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A descendant of a centuries-old Catalan lineage, Moner, the author known by his monastic name (Fra Francesc), was born in late December, 1462, or early January, 1463, in the city of Perpignan, the capital of the Pyrenean region of Roussillon, which, at that time, remained an integral political component of Catalonia proper.¹ The essential biographical data pertaining to Moner are provided by a certain Miguel Berenguer de Barutell, who identifies himself as the author's cousin ("primo hermano que fue mío."² At the age of ten, Moner took up residence at the court of John II of Aragon, where he served as a page until the king's death in 1479. He spent the next two years in France as a guest of a nobleman of that country. Barutell informs us that, in that relatively short period, Moner learned French but does not provide any specifics as to the identity or domicile of his cousin's magnanimous host.

Around 1481, Moner, then in his latest teens, enlisted in the military, joining the troops of Joan Ramon Folch de Cardona, better known as the *conde de Prades*, a warrior and diplomat of the highest rank and renown. Under the *conde's* leadership, Moner participated for five long years in various campaigns conducted, both at sea and on land, against the forces of Islam—namely, the Turks and the rulers of Granada.

As he put an end to his military career, Moner became a de facto member of the Cardona family, presided by the *conde*, a formidable patriarchal figure if there ever was one. In the household of the Cardonas in Barcelona, the author found the protection and leisure that allowed him to devote himself body and soul to a most intense literary activity. This productive Barcelonese period coincides with the relationship with his ladylove, whose name is shrouded in absolute secrecy. This relationship, which proved to be the obsession of Moner's life, is reflected throughout his writings in the lover's constant distressful complaints about the lady's unequivocal rejection of his devotion and sincere affection. It is fair to say that the grief caused by the harsh behavior of this *belle dame sans merci*, even when exacerbated by the slanderous rumors that evil tongues kept propagating against the defenseless young writer, did not restrain the abundant flow of his creativity. On the contrary, grief and concomitant emotions, such as resentment and overall bitterness, turn out to be all grist for his artistic mill.

The emotional turmoil reached, not surprisingly, a tipping point. From the depths of his depression, Moner underscores the gravity of the crisis in a written statement he himself delivered to the *amada*. In his assertive leave-taking, he dispenses with the formalities to be expected in a courteous preamble and comes straight to the point:

¹ Roussillon was part of Catalonia from 1172 until the 1640s, when, in the course of the Thirty Years' War, France took over that region.

² Barutell prepared and commissioned the printing of the *editio princeps*, published in Barcelona in 1528, which includes practically Moner's entire extant production. Barutell's foreword provides a clear, though sketchy, account of Moner's career. For the description of the *editio princeps*, see the entry designated as *A* in the bibliography below. The text of the foreword is reproduced in my edition of *Obres catalanes* (*Oc* in the bibliography below), pp. 229-32.

Cynch anys vos he servida, amada y temuda, absent y present. He colt vostre nom ab enamorada fe y fermetad, sens sperança, sinó fengida, tal que no us podria offendre... Y si la voluntad que us he tinguda no us sembla que tinga mèrits, no la vull metre en compte, que prou cosas me resten para ésser-me deutora. (*Oc* 121)

(‘For five years I served, loved, and feared you, whether you were in my presence or far away from me. I have revered your name with faithfulness and constancy born of love bereft of hope, except the make-believe hope of the kind that could not offend you.... And if the fondness I have felt for you seems worthless to you, I will not take that into account because I am left with enough other things for which you owe me a debt of gratitude.’)

The tenor of reproachful lamentations, sustained through various paragraphs, concludes as follows:

Ab aquesta, de vostre servey me despedesch per a mentra visqua, com me despedesch per guanyar-me, pus vós res no perdeu y pensau menys perdre. Com yo guanyaré molt més del que pensa fent-me libert, si puch; y si no, la congoixa que m resta darà prest camí per a més apartar-me de Vostra Merçè sens merçè. (*Oc* 125)

(‘With the present note I take leave from your service for as long as I live, and I do this to regain control of my life; besides, you will lose nothing and do not have the least concern about losing anything. Accordingly, if I can manage to allow myself to be free, I will gain much more than I could imagine; otherwise, the anguish that I am left with, will put me on the path of departing from Your Mercy without mercy.’)

Out of utter frustration was born the urgent necessity of an escape; and escape Moner did to the Franciscan monastery of Santa María de Jesús at Lleida in the Catalan hinterlands. Santa María provided the refuge and *consolatio* he desperately needed. Notably, he took the name by which he is known to posterity.

We do not know the exact duration of Moner’s stay at Santa María. Barutell, who is precise in the fundamental chronological details, is disappointedly vague about this period. What we do know is that, as Barutell clearly states, his cousin sought and obtained admission to the convent at the age of twenty-eight and as a novice dedicated himself with great fervor to the rigors of the Franciscan rule. As reflected in his major works, a sound foundational knowledge in philosophy, theology, and ancillary disciplines is a sure sign that the budding friar benefited a great deal from attending the lectures and seminars held at various venues in Lleida.³ With due consideration of the demands of a strict routine of studies and writings, we may reasonably deduce that Moner’s stint at Santa María de Jesús lasted from three to five years.

Barutell concludes his bare-bones account with some rather laconic remarks, from which we gather that his cousin, after his novitiate, moved to the Franciscan monastery in Barcelona, where he felt more at home (“por serle más natural,” as the biographer puts it). Then Barutell ends with an enigmatic confession: Moner died “no sin mistero” (‘not without mystery’) about a year later, on the very day that he professed his solemn vows.

³ For some specific information concerning Moner’s monastic life at Lleida, see Cocozzella, *Fra Francesc Moner’s Bilingual Poetics of Love and Reason* 142-4.

Two major circumstantial factors come into play in Moner's life as they accentuate the distinctive characteristics of his writings. The first factor consists of the phenomenon of bilingualism that occurred as a consequence of the wedding of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile (Valladolid, October 1469). After a troublesome decade, the marriage of the young monarchs awakened the spirit of euphoria that accompanied the birth of Spain as a unified nation. The buoyant *Zeitgeist*, which some critics describe as *mesianismo*, harbingered the expansion of the language of Castile all over the domain of Catalan, which consisted (as it still does) mainly of the *Principat* (Catalonia proper), the region of Valencia, and the Balearic Isles.⁴ Indeed, Castilian gained great prestige but did not come close to supplanting Catalan. Gradually, what developed as an expedient, common practice among the intellectual and literate circles in the society of native speakers of Catalan may be described as a well-balanced bilingualism, of which Moner and a number of other writers became outstanding exponents.⁵ From 1485 to the early 1490s (the heyday of the reign of Ferdinand and Isabella), Moner, at the peak of his artistic creativity, wholeheartedly espoused the cultural trends that came into fashion in the aristocratic milieu, to which he clearly belonged. As a master of bilingualism, Moner wrote an abundant variety of poems and prose works, some in Castilian, some in his native language.

To be precise, in Moner's case the notion of a well-balanced bilingualism needs to be qualified. All of his major works, whether written in Castilian or in Catalan, exhibit a Catalan *Urtext*.⁶ The same may be said of some of his minor works written in Castilian. I

⁴ I borrow the term "*mesianismo*" from Juan Bautista Avalué-Arce's description of the pervasive mood of exaltation, which marks the high point of Fernando's and Isabel's reign. (See Avalué-Arce, "Cartagena, poeta del *Cancionero general*" 307; and Cocozzella, *I Introducció* 12.) Of great interest is J. H. Elliott's concise account of the turbulent decade that followed the wedding (Elliott, 17-24). This scholar underscores the consequences of that crucial event:

Early the same year [1479] John II of Aragon died. With Castile pacified, and with Ferdinand now succeeding to his father's kingdom, Ferdinand and Isabella had at last become joint sovereigns of Aragon and Castile. *Spain...* was now an established fact. (Elliott, 23-4).

⁵ For the identification of the outstanding writers, who, in terms of their bilingual production, may be considered, in a broad sense, Moner's colleagues, see the following studies in the bibliography below: Deyermond, "Bilingualism in the *Cancioneros* and Its Implications;" Ganges Garriga, "Poetes bilingües català castellà del segle XV;" Pérez Bosch, "Algunas muestras del bilingüismo castellano-catalán en el *Cancionero general* de 1511." For a comparative analysis focused on some salient aspects of the bilingualism that Moner shares with other writers, see Cabré, "From Ausiàs March to Petrarch: Torroella, Urrea, and Other Ausimarchides;" and Cocozzella, "Pere Torroella i Francesc Moner: aspectes del bilingüisme literari (catalano-castellà) a la segona meitat del segle XV."

⁶ My commentary calls to mind two analogous concepts, each labeled with a distinct term: Gérard Genette's "hypotexte" and Dámaso Alonso's "forma interior." Genette addresses a fundamental contrast connatural to his theory of "hypertextualité." Particularly relevant is the following explanation:

J'entends par là toute relation unissant un texte **B** (que j'appellerai *hypertexte*) à un texte antérieur **A** (que j'appellerai, bien sûre, *hypotexte*) sur lequel il se greffe d'une manière que n'est pas celle du commentaire. (Genette, 11-2)

('By hypertextuality I mean any correlation that binds a text **B** (which I call "hypertext") to a preceding text **A** (which I call, of course, "hypotext"). Text **B** is grafted onto text **A** in a manner that is not the one appropriate to the exposition of a commentary.')

Dámaso Alonso, also, defines his term by means of a radical contrast:

borrow the German term in order to highlight Moner's strategy: the author manages to provide a wide Castilian currency to a text conceived and fashioned during a phase of prenatal gestation as a Catalan embryonic form. In the final analysis, Moner's bilingualism is an eminent example of a cross-fertilization of two mutually complementary conditions: at the social level, the influx of Castilian as a consequence of realpolitik; at a personal level, the reaction of an individual writer, challenged by the use of an extraneous means of expression, while nurturing a surge of inventiveness emanating strictly from the fountainhead of the indigenous cultural heritage. Though born of momentous historical circumstances and inspired by the élan of *mesianismo*, the *castellanismo* championed by Moner does not deviate from the mainstream of the Catalan tradition.

One major literary figure that exercised a profound influence on Moner is Ausiàs March (1400-1459), the incomparable poet from Valencia, center of its own cultural sector of the Catalan-speaking domain. Ausiàs may be considered the channeling agent that keeps Moner vitally connected to the autochthonous tradition. From March Moner inherits a lifelong absorption on the epiphany of truth and authenticity. Truth and authenticity Moner seeks and attains by means of two esthetic and epistemic principles, which in themselves constitute conspicuous and pervasive traits of March's influence. These are: (1) the rough-and-ready diction, and (2) the impassioned expression. In *Sepultura d'amor* ('Burial of Love')—Moner's longest poem, which, as the title indicates, he writes in Castilian—these traits are labeled, respectively, "forma cetrina" ('sour style') and "letras matizadas del sentido" ('verses nuanced with sense and sentiment').

The second circumstantial factor to be reckoned with pertains to Moner's decision to become a Franciscan friar. In his bird's-eye view of his cousin's life, Barutell himself underscores the paramount significance of the year 1491. Looking beyond all psychological concerns born of a morbid confrontation of the ills of passionate love, Moner at the age of twenty-eight dedicates himself wholeheartedly to spiritual pursuits. The ultimate goal of this radical process of reorientation is the Beatific Vision: the contemplation of the destiny, eternally blissful, of human existence. Doubtless, that momentous decision establishes 1491 as a turning point in Moner's career. As a *terminus a quo* that pivotal point heralds the gestation of most, if not all, of Moner's major works, whether written in Catalan or Castilian, in prose or verse. These works document the multifarious readings in philosophy,

Entendemos por "forma exterior" la relación entre significante y significado, en la perspectiva desde el primero hacia el segundo. Esa misa relación, pero en la perspectiva desde el significado hacia el significante, es lo que llamamos "forma interior." (29)

('What I mean by *outer form* is the relationship between the signifier and the signified—relationship perceived in a perspective directed from the former to the latter. By contrast, that same relationship determined by the perspective directed from the signified to the signifier is what I call *inner form*.)

Worthy of note is the following clarification:

El instante central de la creación literaria, el punto central de mira de toda investigación que quiera ser peculiarmente estilística... es ese momento de plasmación interna del "significado" y el inmediato de ajuste a un "significante." (29)

('The central moment of the literary creation, the focal point of any analysis intended to be specifically about stylistics... is that moment at which the *signified* undergoes an inner process of being molded into shape while becoming assimilated instantly into a *signifier*.)

theology, and devotional literature—readings that, as I have indicated, complement the program of studies diligently pursued by Moner and the other Franciscan novices in Lleida.

The sheer complexity and ingeniousness of Moner's compositions demarcated by the aforementioned *terminus a quo* warrant an extensive study for each of them. Here I propose, for the time being, a convenient, manageable introduction to that study by focusing precisely on Moner's "Momería," a short piece, the chronology of which is determined, also, by 1491. In the case of "Momería," however, that all-important year serves as a *terminus* not *a quo* but *ad quem*.

Emblematic of the type of literature Moner produced before 1491, "Momería" poses a natural contrast to the much longer texts indicative of the monastic experience he lived through with remarkable religious fervor. That contrast notwithstanding, "Momería," as I hope to demonstrate, embodies seminal qualities and genetic traits that Moner develops into determinants of the extensive plot and ambitious design of such full-fledged masterpieces as *La noche* and *Sepultura d'amor*, both written in Castilian, the former in prose, the latter in verse. Among those seminal qualities and genetic traits are the primary aspects of theatricality that come into play, also, in *Bendir de dones*, *L'ànima d'Oliver*, and *Obra en metro*, among other splendid specimens of the creativity that Moner displayed during the monastic period. I submit that the same *vis dramatica* that informs "Momería" affects with commensurate force the works I have just listed. A comparative analysis promises to shed considerable light on the evolution of a distinctive theatricality well beyond the bounds of "Momería." Probing into the data we are able to assemble or reasonably call to mind regarding the actual performance of Moner's mini-play may well yield invaluable insights into the author's quintessential idea of a theater. The pertinent data indicate that at least once and probably on various occasions "Momería" was presented on its own stage and in front of an actual audience. It is not hard to describe the circumstances under which the spectacle took place.

At this point I will allow the imagination to take flight and carry me aloft to the Barcelona of the late 1480s. I fancy myself as an honored guest of the Cardonas. During my brief lodging at their mansion, I meet Moner himself, who graciously invites me to the premiere of his latest work, a theatrical piece entitled "Momería" Where? At *Plaça del Rei*, of course.⁷

It is a Sunday in mid-August. Late in the afternoon I join a group of twelve gathered in the courtyard. They are the flower of the local aristocracy: six ladies attired in their splendid festive best, each escorted by a cavalier dressed, in a mournful demeanor, entirely in black. The twelve, and I close behind them, exit the palace and start a leisurely walk northward from the harbor area to the precincts of the Cathedral. At dusk we reach our destination. We take the short alley that leads directly to the intimate *Plaça*, easily recognizable as a jewel of Catalan urban architecture of the late Middle Ages. The enchanted space, illumined by a profusion of torches, is already crowded. It resounds with the hubbub of spirited conversations. We make our way through a narrow path tunneled beneath the bleachers, which extend to the middle of the rectangular enclosure surrounded

⁷ *Plaça del Rei* was not an unusual venue for the type of representation eminently exemplified by "Momería". In *Bendir de dones* Moner portrays himself as a bystander, who eventually joins a group of players engaged in a theatrical performance that takes place precisely in the *Plaça*. For a discussion on the theatricality of *Bendir* see Cocozzella, "Fra Francesc Moner y el auto de amores en el dominio del catalán y del castellano a finales del siglo XV."

by buildings of varied façades. I take my seat as I watch the twelve advance across the open space (about twenty feet), a proscenium that separates the spectators from the stage proper. The stage is hidden by a huge white curtain, which will be drawn open in due time when the spectacle begins.

A man steps forward from behind the curtain at stage-right and stands in front of the curtain at center-stage. It is none other than Moner, who starts gesticulating, smiling cheerfully all the while as he waves in all directions at the persons he instantly recognizes. We begin to hear the strains of a doleful, slow-cadenced melody. I now notice the musical ensemble (ten instrumentalists) lined up along the semi-circular stairway visible at stage-left. Topping the spacious steps is the wide landing that fronts two impressive portals. As is well known, the one to the left opens to the monumental hall called *Saló del Tinell*; the one to the right serves as the main entrance to the Chapel of St. Agatha, a splendid exemplar of a small Gothic church of one nave.

When the sound of music abates and the distracting background chatter dissipates to a silenced hush, Moner, now turned actor, articulates in a slow, hearty voice the following lines:

Momería concertada de seys: yvan dentro de un sisne, vestidos con iubones de razo negro y mantos de lluto, forrados de terciopelo negro, cortos y hendidos al lado drexo; y todo lo al, negro: sombreretes franceses⁸ y penas negras; y el cabello hexo negro; los gestos cubiertos de velos negros. Traýa el sisne en el pico las siguientes coblas, dressadas a las damas y leýdas. Abierto el sisne por el medio, sallien los momos con un contrapás nuevo, cada qual con su letra, y todos sobre las penas, con sus achas también negras. (*I OC* 154-5)

(‘A *momo* choreographed for a cast of six men. They were riding inside a structure shaped like a swan. The swan carried in its beak the stanzas shown below, addressed to the ladies and read to them. Through an opening in the middle of the swan the men filed out to the rhythm of a new dance. Each displayed his own verses dealing with the pains of love. They were all wearing loose-fitting shirts made of black satin and, as a sign of mourning, matching capes lined with black velvet. Their capes were short with a slit on the left side. They were dressed entirely in black: black were their French hats with black feathers on top, black the dye of their hair, black the veils that covered their faces. The torches in their hands were also black.’) [For the sake of clarity, this translation includes some changes in the order of the sentences in the original description.]⁹

⁸ Rico quotes Bernís, who indicates that the adjective “franceses” does not denote our present notion of France but, rather, “las tierras que formaban los dominios de los Duques de Borgoña” (‘the lands that constituted the domain of the Dukes of Burgundy’ (Rico, 227). In deference to the information provided by that scholar, Rico adds that the adjective in question does not signify nationality; instead, it conveys a designation of clothes of the latest fashion. (See Rico, 226-7, n. 66.) For an illustration of the type of “sombrerete,” worn by the six courtiers, see Bernís 2: 38, and the corresponding fig. 109.

⁹ The text of “Momería,” appeared in my critical edition of 1991 (see *I OC* 153-63). At Ronald E. Surtz’s request, I was honored to contribute that text to the timely anthology that Surtz published in 1992 (see *Teatro castellano de la edad media* 145-9). In the variant of the *editio princeps*, “Momería” is included in the selection of representative examples of medieval Castilian theater, edited by Alvarez Pellitero and published in 1990 (see *Teatro medieval* 245-50). “Momería” in the same variant is reproduced in Cátedra’s enlightening essay, “Teatro fuera del teatro,” pp. 40-1.

As Moner proceeds in oratorical recitation, the gigantic curtain, pulled smoothly, reveals the stage: a low platform of ample boundaries. Nothing short of startling is the overwhelming structure of the swan, presumably consisting of a wooden frame large enough to hold six men in its hollow belly. Attached to the swan's beak hangs a pennant of white cloth, which bears inscribed the text of a three-stanza poem. We see the men, as announced in the recitation, descend, one by one, on the ladder or ramp appropriately situated. Swaying in a sedate rhythm, they advance to the proscenium. From there they summon their lady companions, who have been standing hidden behind the curtain. The musicians resume the haunting melody, and the *damas* together with their escorts—needless to say, the same group of twelve we have met already—engage in an attractive and expressive movement of gallant gestures and fancy footwork.

In its widest context, the short passage Moner delivers as an introduction may well be interpreted as a manifesto of sorts. It raises some issues of paramount significance that warrant close scrutiny. What we have just witnessed is the first of three units integrated organically into a brief but full-fledged composition of an unquestionable stage-worthy nature. The twenty-first-century spectator would have no difficulty in considering the units as scenes 1, 2, and 3 of that composition. In scene 1, then, we catch a glimpse of the auctorial persona invested with the commanding perspective of an expert stage director. We watch him embody and solemnly share with his audience a personified and personalized narrative, which encapsulates the simplest of plots: six gallants proceed from the dark enclosure inside a gigantic bird to a weel-lit open space, where they initiate an unhurried dance with the ladies of their dreams. The plot is typical of the courtly entertainment known as *momo*.¹⁰

It is well to quote here Surtz's commentary on what may well be Moner's earliest attempt at a theatrical composition:

La "Momería" de Moner se representaría en un salón de la corte de algún noble y serviría de marco para un baile con las damas a quienes iban dirigidas las coplas. Es buen ejemplo del modo en que los entretenimientos áulicos servían para dramatizar los ideales cortesanos de la época. Desde luego, todos los participantes son nobles disfrazados, pues la aristocracia era la única clase considerada capaz de experimentar sentimientos sublimes. (Estudio preliminar 47)

(‘Presumably Moner’s “Momería” would be presented in a hall of a palace of some member of the nobility and might serve as a background for a dance with the ladies to whom the stanzas were addressed. It is a good example of the way upper-class entertainment was used to dramatize the courtly ideals of that epoch. Needless to say, all the participants are noblemen in disguise because the aristocracy was the only social class considered capable of experiencing sublime sentiments.’)¹¹

¹⁰ The word *momo* is derived from the Latin *mimus* (Alvarez Pellitero [editorial annotations], *Teatro medieval* 50, n. 86.)

¹¹ Francisco Rico makes reference to the notion of the *momo* as, to borrow Surtz's phrase, one of the “entretenimientos áulicos” that reflect, in Rico's words, “el designio de dar goce a todos los sentidos de una refinada aristocracia” (“the purpose of giving pleasure to all the five senses of a refined aristocracy”) (“Un penacho de penas” 190). Worthy of special notice is Eugenio Asensio's comprehensive explication of the aristocratic genetics of the *entretenimiento* in question:

The *momo* was very much in vogue throughout Moner's lifetime in the realms of Portugal, Castile, Aragon, and Catalonia. In each linguistic domain, frequent references in the historical accounts of the period as well as in the contemporary novelistic narratives inform us that the *momos* highlighted the festivities that took place in palatial halls usually within the dwellings of the uppermost echelons of society: the royalty, the aristocracy, and, especially in Valencia and Barcelona, the class of the *nouveaux riches* (the members of the burgeoning bourgeoisie).¹²

In unit or scene 1, the resources of the narrative constitute the primary sign of innovation and ingenious inventiveness. In this instance, those resources unleash and bring to fruition the potential and dynamics of dramatics and theatricality. The narrative integrated into the exordium of *Momería* exhibits two dimensions relative to the ambivalent semantics of the Castilian/Catalan term *historia/història*. The dimensions correspond to a pair of interrelated signifiers expressed in English, respectively, by the distinction between *story* and *history*. The *story* denotes the actions that make up the abovementioned plot. The *history* connotes the performance of that plot on a stage. The matter-of-fact use of the past tense (*yvan, tra'ya, sallien*) leaves no doubt as to the actual occurrence of the performance. This validates the hypothesis that Moner did, indeed, witness the quintessential *momo*,

[El momo] era a un tiempo una enmascarada y el enmascarado que en ella iba. Los enmascarados eran la flor de la corte, desde el rey hasta el paje, y desplegaban un lujo asiático en vestidos y joyas. La tramoya y montaje requería artistas inventivos, casi ingenieros teatrales... Los momos tomaban sus argumentos ordinariamente del mundo caballeresco... De la maravillosa abertura imaginativa del comienzo saltaban con desenfado a la crónica mundana, a los galanteos de damas y galanes allí presentes. Parecía que la raza de los caballeros andantes y de los grandes enamorados encarnaba en los asistentes al serão. (qtd. in Rico, *Textos y contextos* 227, n. 66.)

(‘The *momo* is a masquerade and the masked person that took part in it. The masked persons were the cream of the courtly society from the king to the page. They showed off extreme luxury in clothes and jewelry. The machinery and stagecraft required artists of great skill, who had to be practically theatrical engineers ... The *momos* took their plots from the world of chivalry... From the spellbinding overture at the opening of the spectacle, they would switch, nonchalantly, right into the chronicle of current events or into the flowery flattery of the ladies and gallants gathered for the occasion. It would appear that the entire breed of knights-errant and great lovers was embodied in the participants at the soiree.’)

In addition, in his well-documented overview of Spanish secular drama of the fourteenth and fifteenth century Shergold goes into a specific classification:

‘Momos were of four kinds: those that play dice; those that dance; those that bring gifts, perhaps with some association with the Christmas play; and those that introduce a tournament. (141)

¹² Among the historical accounts, often mentioned are the *Crónica del halconero de Juan II*, and the *Crónica de Lucas de Iranzo* (Alvarez Pellitero 49-50, Scholberg, 116, Shergold). As for the novelistic narratives, see Cátedra, “Teatro fuera del teatro” 42; Cocozzella, *1 Introducción* 102, n. 12; and M. García. Shergold presents an abundantly documented overview of specific festive events. These feature the *momos* and connatural spectacles that bear such names as *entremés, misterio, invención, “Momería”, empresa, representação* (113-42). Milà y Fontanals traces the evolution of the *entremés* during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Catalan domain (232-56). Useful data may be found, also, in Olivar Bertrand (29-64). Scholberg points to chs. 3 and 5 of the *Crónica del halconero de Juan II* (by Pedro Carrillo de Huete) for some interesting details concerning the pastime in the Castilian court during the first half of the fifteenth century (Scholberg, 116). For further discussion of the aristocratic ambience, in which both the *entremés* and the *momo* thrived, see Alvarez Pellitero 44-51; Cocozzella, *1 Introducción* 93-9; Surtz, *Estudio preliminar* 46-7); Ferrer Valls.

which consists of the dance so vividly depicted by his artistic alter ego (the auctorial persona). We may argue that Moner retrieves from memory a spectacle, the precise chronology of which cannot be ascertained due to lack of documentation.

Did the spectacle so effectively evoked include the structure of the swan? We lack the specific data that would allow us to answer the query directly and conclusively. We may observe, nevertheless, that, in all likelihood, Moner borrowed from an impresario or another author the essential plot of a music-and-dance *momo* and even the staged image of the swan. The merit of “Momería” resides, of course, in the imprint of Moner’s creative genius upon the molding of borrowed components into the organism of a brand-new kind of spectacle. In short, scene 1 reveals the refurbishment of the *momo* as a result of implementing the operation of the personalized and personified narrative I have already referred to.

In the final analysis, Moner’s refurbished *momo* foreshadows the main dimensions clearly evident in the role of the protagonist of Moner’s major compositions. In these, the protagonist transformed into auctorial persona and first-person narrator subordinates the dynamics of the narrative to an overarching effect of a stage-worthy representation. The narrative is personalized as it provides a straightforward account of the events that the protagonist experiences; it is, also, personified as it becomes an existential correlative of a stage direction embodied in the protagonist. The dimensions that come to light in the narrative of “Momería” provide a prima-facie evidence of the traits commonly attributed to a literary figure known as “narrator-expositor” or “expository narrator.” Crucial for the pinpointing and diagnosis of these traits are two studies authored by, respectively, James T. Monroe and Max Harris. These scholars review various exemplars of the narrator-expositor along the mainstream of a tradition that harks back to the times of Ibn Quzmān of Córdoba (twelfth century) and persists within the Castilian realm well into the 1600s. Moner may well be regarded one of the representatives of that tradition within the Castilian and Catalan domain in the course of the fifteenth century.¹³ An appropriate comparison may be drawn with respect to some of the key narrator-expositors to whom Harris devotes an enlightening commentary. We may take into consideration, for instance, the Shepherd, Shepherdess, and the Sibyl, who appear in Diego Sánchez de Badajoz’s *Farsa del juego de cañas espiritual*.¹⁴ Worthy of special attention is, also, the unnamed boy that carries out the tasks of announcer and interpreter in a famous episode of Cervantes’s *Don Quijote*: namely, the puppet show put on by a shady individual, known as Maese Pedro (*Don Quijote*, part 2, ch. 26).¹⁵

¹³ Quzmān’s extraordinary poem entitled “El zéjel de los juglares” attests to the creativity of a multi-talented artist, whom Monroe describes as follows: “a very busy *impresario* who directs his musicians, singers, dancers, actors, and trained animals, while seeing to the comfort of his audience to whom he interprets the action being performed onstage by commenting on it” (94). Both Monroe and Harris call attention to some significant manifestations of Quzmān’s *impresario* in Spanish literature of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

¹⁴ Harris states that Diego Sánchez “was the parish priest of Talavera la Real, a village about ten miles east of Badajoz, from at least 1533 until his death in December 1549” (149). It is reasonable to deduce that the *Farsa* was written during the period demarcated by those two dates. For an enlightening commentary on Diego Sánchez’s masterpiece, see Harris, 153-9.

¹⁵ Pedro’s assistant carries out his task as narrator-expositor with aplomb nothing short of captivating. While addressing the audience, the precocious lad provides a stirring commentary for the histrionics of the figures that his master deftly manipulates behind the scene.

What emerges from the present discussion is a profile of the manifesto I have alluded to. A focus on scene 1 of “Momería” brings to light the prominent function of the narrative as an integral part of a performance. In addition, such a manifesto harbingers a playwright’s *métier* that integrates a series of projections, transformations, and shifts: the projection of a flesh-and-blood author (Moner’s “history” in particular) onto an auctorial persona, transformed, in turn, into a narrator-expositor, who eventually evolves or shifts into a stage direction personified. At the heart of this intricate operation of Moner’s *ars dramatica* we detect a deft implementation of the literary trope called “ekphrasis,” which in the words of a prominent medievalist may be concisely defined as “the description of a visual art work” (Nichols, 134). In “Momería” the massive swan itself may be considered an equivalent of a visual art work; but the impressive effect of the ekphrasis depends mainly on the enhanced visualization brought about by the verbal picture of the apparel, deportment, and action of the six courtiers.

The foregoing commentaries should not distract us from the spectacle that is still unfolding at Plaça del Rei. The dancers have been fully engaged in their routine. After about fifteen minutes, the music stops, and immediately they take their cue. It is time to separate: three couples promenade to the front of stage-left, where they come to a standstill; the other three follow suit and move to the opposite side of the proscenium. Now the oversize swan, lonely and majestic, is the focus of everybody’s attention. Unexpectedly, emanating from the inside of the birdlike structure is heard a stout baritone voice recite, to startling and eerie effect, the three-stanza poem hanging from the enormous beak. In a somber mood of reproach and lamentation, the Swan’s voice, resounding, we realize, from the cavernous space of a dark chamber, initiates scene 2 of “Momería.” Following is the first stanza that reflects the tenor of the entire poem:¹⁶

Señoras, por cuyos nombres
 cada qual d’estos, por fe,
 perdería cyent mil vidas,
 embiáys plañyr los hombres
 sin causa, quitto porque
 soys todas desgradescidas.
 En la soledad demoro
 con vida triste que sigo,
 enmudescido, cetrino.
 Sentí’l dolor de su lloro
 y quise serles abrigo,
 endressa de su camino.

(‘My Ladies, in your name, each of these men, out of his faithful love, would sacrifice his life a thousand times. You oblige these men to mourn for no reason other than that all of you are so ungrateful. I dwell in solitude in the sad life I lead, silenced and embittered. I feel the sorrow of these men in their crying and wish to be their protector and beacon along their journey.’)

¹⁶ Each stanza consists of twelve octosyllables rhymed as follows: *a b c a b c / e f g e f g*. The stage direction states that the entire poem is carried, without indicating exactly how, in the beak of the swan.

In scene 2 the auctorial persona delegates to the Swan his post and privileged point of view. In yet another significant shift, the narrator-expositor makes way for the explicator. This means that, in response to the challenge posed by the auctorial persona, the Swan explicates his allegorized function. In the process, the Swan interjects an artistic text—the poem itself—into the regular, nondescript *momo* enacted in scene 1 and, in so doing, changes the nature of the genre: the *momo* mutates into “Momería.” Shergold points out that the *momos* consists of “visual spectacle rather than spoken drama” (130). By heeding Shergold’s observation we come to realize that there are momentous implications in the mutation effected by Moner—a phenomenon I propose to call “textualization.”

Created as a “textualized” *momo*, “Momería,” then, documents the gestational phase of a new theatrical form. This novelty may well be considered a milestone in the history of post-medieval Spanish theater. In the final analysis, Moner’s commendable contribution may be assessed in terms of three literary trends foreshadowed in his “Momería”: (1) the modular composition, (2) the allegorical slant, and (3) the performable monologue. On this occasion, I cannot go into a full-fledged argumentation that each of these trends would command. For the time being suffice it to provide, in the course of the present discussion, a general definition and a preliminary explication.

Scene 3 begins at the completion of the Swan’s recitation. The musicians resume their doleful melody. The six male actors, accompanied by their respective ladies, line up along the stage’s apron, each couple at some distance from the other. We see the auctorial persona step forward from the nebulous backstage area. The couples pull aside, three to the right and three to the left, in order to allow Moner-turned-actor prominent visibility at center-stage. At this point, the fully-theatricalized Moner reclaims his function as narrator-expositor.

Once reestablished in his position, the narrator-in-chief engages in an operation by which we may draw a distinction between his function in scene 3 and that of the Swan in scene 2. The Swan works out an allegorical poem that deals with the wretched condition of men—to be specific, the six courtiers in black—afflicted with the malady of unrequited love. The allegory, which adumbrates a fatalistic journey of those men toward doomsday, evokes the motif of a Wagnerian *Liebestod avant la lettre*—that is, the sinister interdependence between love and death. By contrast, Moner’s persona—the narrator-in-chief in question—visualizes the Swan as an abstract figure and capitalizes on the symbolism of that figure. Consequently, he dramatizes the process of “textualization” by delving into a binomial unit known by the technical terminology of *divisa* (or *devisa*) and *letra*. Whereas the *divisa* pertains to the pictorial qualities of an image that depicts, for example, the figure of a swan or a man’s headdress, the *letra* enhances the suitability of the image for a stage-worthy representation. “Momería” effectively illustrates the symbiotic bond between the image and two kinds of versified compositions: the Swan’s speech (recorded in -the script attached to the beak of the allegorical bird) and the variable, enigmatic aphorism secured to the black feather that each of the mournful *personaggi* sports on his cap. In short, “Momería” may serve as documentation of how the compound of image and spoken word becomes theatricalized by an ingenious process of integration into a genuine spectacle.

In scene 3, the fictionalized Moner acts, also, in the capacity of presenter. The auctorial persona carries out his task with utmost aplomb by means of a simple deictic declaration: “Los motes ho letras fueron éstas que se siguen sobre las penas” (‘Following are the inscriptions or verses that deal with the suffering of these lovers’). As in the case of the past

tense already discussed, here the use of the preterit (“fueron”) suggests that Moner borrowed these *motes* or *letras* from some spectacle he happens to remember. One may ask: How can they be delivered in an actual performance of “Momería”? One possibility or even probability is that each male lover would recite them directly to his *dama*. Bearing in mind that the couples stand in line as described above, we may easily visualize each of the six mournful courtiers in the act of confronting his ladylove with a passionate rendition of the two or three verses expressive of his “pena.”¹⁷ Arguably, the spectator witnesses a moment of the greatest tension at the very end of “Momería”. The impassioned rhetoric compressed into the ultra-compactness of the *mote* or *letra* clashes against the eloquent silence of a would-be interlocutor: the ladylove that remains impassive all along. The clash foreshadows a vignette of aborted dialogue or interaction in the affairs of sensual and sensitive love between man and woman. In “Momería” Moner sketches out the consequences of a short-circuited communication that falls back into the gravitational field of the monologue.

The spectacle has come full circle: the monologue, which extends from the beginning to the end of “Momería”, is the bailiwick of the narrator, who, in his multiple voices and functions, charts the entire plot and rhetorical cycle of “Momería”.

Conclusion

Moner’s “Momería” may be considered a manifesto of sorts because it establishes the pattern and announces the sustaining qualities of a type of theater that during Moner’s lifetime assumes the characteristics of remarkable novelty. In its embryonic phase documented precisely in “Momería”, that theater shows up informed by a process of “textualization”—that is to say, the integration of a literary text (especially a poem or a *letra*) into the performance of a common aristocratic or courtly entertainment known as *momo*. The manifesto in question harbingers the full development of the pivotal functions that have come to light in the course of the present discussion. What looms up to our attention is the imposing presence of Moner’s artistic alter ego—the auctorial persona that

¹⁷ The “pena” takes, to be sure, pride of place in the *mote* of each of Moner’s *dramatis personae*. Rico acknowledges that Catedra first brought Moner’s “Momería” to his attention. (See “Un penacho de plumas” 226-7, n. 66.) Indeed, even before discovering Moner’s “Momería,” Rico devoted an extensive study (“Un penacho de penas”) to the captivating imagery that an appreciable number of Castilian, Portuguese, French, and Italian poets of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance spin around the word “pena,” luminous in all its multiple meanings. The polysemy sparkles in the fertile symbolism that fans out into the threefold semantics of “pena” as ‘feather,’ ‘pen’ (writing instrument), and ‘pain.’ Rico shows how the symbolism in question thrives in the creative channeling of that shifting semantics into the trope conventionally called “conceit.” (For a definition and description of this figure of speech, see the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* 148-9.) Moner’s conceit pivots on the ambivalence between two of the aforementioned three possible acceptations of the Castilian word “pena.” In Moner’s rendition the term carries the usual meaning of ‘pain’ and the unusual one of ‘feather.’ At the conclusion of an extensive discussion, Rico asserts that the polysemy of “pena” must have originated from France:

En un área próxima a la heráldica y a la indumentaria, como ellas a imagen y semejanza de los usos de Francia y asimismo elemento primario de la vida caballeresca, tuvieron que brotar las *penas* de nuestro penacho. (“Un penacho de penas” 216-7)

(‘Abiding by the imagery of French customs and by their affinity with those customs, the *penas* [feathers / pens / pains] of our assorted image, which were in themselves a primary factor in the chivalric way of life, must have sprouted in an area very close to the fields of heraldry and costume-making’).

takes up the paramount roles of a protagonist worthy to be called narrator par excellence.¹⁸ He is the expositor, explicator, and presenter all in one. These quintessential functions correlate with three respective tasks, which are: (1) the ekphrastic description of the actions, demeanor, and somber mood of the six men that come out of the monumental swan and soon later are joined by their ladies in a dance routine (the *momo* proper); (2) the highly-pitched dramatization delegated to the allegorized Swan, who, by the recitation of his custom-made poem, underscores the symbolism of his self-portrait (a testimonial of the fateful, eerie bond between love and death); and (3) the terse identification or straightforward designation of the special traits of certain members of the *dramatis personae*.

The display of the narrator's multiple roles proves to be a viable path toward the discovery of a field of innovative theatricality in large measure still to be explored. Particularly enticing is the contemplation of the panorama of what I propose to call "performable monologue." By and large critics have turned a blind eye to the centralizing issue I am delving into here: the parental bond between the multifunctional narrator and the fully theatricalized monologue engendered by that auctorial persona.¹⁹ There are, nevertheless, a few noteworthy exceptions. Commanding our special attention are Ronald E. Surtz and Pedro Manuel Cátedra for their insightful groundwork on a historiographic analysis of fifteenth-century theater spoken in Castilian. Although from a personal perspective, each differing from that of the other, they both face up to a puzzling, not to say disconcerting gap they perceive at the very origins of that theater. While paying due

¹⁸ See a preliminary portrait of the narrator-expositor n. 13 above. Of special interest are the examples that Harris points out in order to illustrate his review. He concentrates on the leading characters in Diego Sánchez de Badajoz's *Farsa del juego de cañas espiritual*, besides the following personages conceived by Cervantes: the boy presented as announcer and interpreter in Maese Pedro's puppet show (*Don Quijote* pt. 2, chs. 25-26), and the three rogues (two men and a woman), who perform a daring feat of make-believe in *El retablo de las maravillas*. Erich Auerbach, to name another prominent scholar, shines the spotlight on none other than Sancho Panza, who, in *Don Quijote* pt. 2, ch. 10, challenges his bewildered master to believe in a miraculous, though far from obvious transformation of an ordinary peasant woman into the sublime Dulcinea. Auerbach observes that Sancho "adapts himself to the position of puppet-master with as much gusto and elasticity as he later will to the position of governor of an island" (308). Harris provides an excellent description of the Maese Pedro episode and of the *Retablo de las maravillas* (129-32). For these two pieces see, also, Monroe, 97-8. For a critique of the impressive dramaturgy of Badajoz's *Farsa*, see Harris 153-9.

¹⁹ For a survey of the salient examples of the monologue in question, see Cocozzella, "Unconventional Theatrics: The Dramatic Monologue in Hispanic Love-Centered Literature of the Fifteenth Century." *eHumanista* 38 (2018): 704-722. For a detailed analysis of the strict kinship between the narrator and the monologue, see: Cocozzella, "Joan Rois de Corella's Tragic Monologue" 12-7; and "The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa* by the Valencian Humanist, Joan Roís de Corella (1435-1497)." Following is a select list of representative monologues with samples of pertinent studies included within parentheses: Comendador Escrivá, *Querella ante el dios de Amor* (Cocozzella, "Unconventional Theatrics" 708-10; Ravasini, "La «Quexa ante el Dios de Amor» del «comendador» Escrivá: un tribunale d'amore nella lirica spagnola di fine Quattrocento;" Sirera, "Una quexa ante el Dios de Amor... del Comendador Escrivá como ejemplo posible de los autos de amores"); Ausiàs March, Poem 105 (Cocozzella, "Unconventional Theatrics" 710-14; Salvador Espriu ["Shalom of Sinera"] "Unconventional Theatrics 712-3; Salvador Espriu, and Ricard Salvat, *Ronda de Mort a Sinera* (Cocozzella, "Performable Monologue;" "Ronda de Mort a Sinera: An Approach to Salvador Espriu's Aesthetics;" Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, *Juego de cañas espiritual* (Harris 153-39); Garcí Sánchez de Badajoz, "Sueño" (Cocozzella, "Performable Monologue;" "Unconventional Theatrics" 708-9; Gallagher, 274-6); Roís de Corella, *Tragèdia de Caldesa* (Cocozzella, "Joan Roís de Corella's Tragic Monologue;" "The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*;" "Performable Monologue;" *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella's Tragèdia de Caldesa*).

homage to Juan del Encina (1468-ca. 1530), the illustrious dramatist from Salamanca, widely acclaimed as the “father” of Castilian drama, Surtz detects the vestiges of what he labels as “a rival fifteenth-century dramatic tradition” (*The Birth of a Theater* 20). Surtz is confident that “we can find in the fifteenth century evidence for other theaters that might have given rise to a dramatic tradition independent of that initiated by Encina or that might have influenced Encina and his school” (*The Birth of a Theater* 19).²⁰

Cátedra, on his part, concentrates on the socio-political causes that brought about the glaring disparity between the two coetaneous theatric modes I have just outlined: one prestigious and highly visible, the other neglected and hardly noticeable. Adapting to his own analysis the theory and concomitant terminology borrowed from the Italian scholar, Franco Ruffini, Cátedra addresses the same contrast we may infer from Surtz’s statement and underscores the deleterious consequences of the uneven competition between, on the one hand, “el teatro (con mayúscula)” (“the Theater [in capital letters]”) (Cátedra 31)—an allusion, no doubt, to the spectacles made fashionable by Encina and cohorts—and, on the other hand, “los diferentes teatros (con minúscula)” (“the different theaters [in small letters]”)—those, for instance, emanating from the monologue—which may be considered exponents of “the other theaters” mentioned by Surtz. Cátedra does not mince words in pointing out the negative impact of that competition. He shows how the “Theater in capital letters” becomes institutionalized and, as the pride and joy of the cultural Establishment, attains the prestigious reputation as synonym for all “lo teatable.” Cátedra argues that this all-inclusive attribution—“lo teatable” denotes any dramatic performance worthy of the name—eclipses and, in some cases, virtually obliterates any alternative form of what otherwise would be considered a stage-worthy representation (31-2).²¹

As a manifesto “Momería” provides, also, a sneak preview of the dysfunctional relationship that receives ample and indelible dramatization in the Castilian work entitled *La noche*, Moner’s longest composition. The last-minute presentation that brings “Momería” to abrupt end illustrates, at least from the point of view of the auctorial persona, the utter collapse of the dialogue in view of the irreconcilable inequity between the adulation and abnegated servitude avowed by the male lover and the brusque rejection perpetrated by the female counterpart. It is, we may add, in *La noche* where this morbid male-female antagonism is fully developed as it becomes symptomatic of the turmoil of the mind, the troubles of the heart, the disorientation of the soul.

²⁰ We may read these observations as a basis for a response to critics like Humberto López Morales and Luis García Montero, who see no evidence of genuine theatrical performances in the Castilian domain throughout the entire span of the Middle Ages up to the middle of the fifteenth century. Countering this extreme and, not surprisingly, controversial position, Hispanists like Surtz, Cátedra, Miguel Angel Pérez Priego, Charlotte Stern harbor no doubts as the existence of Medieval Castilian theater. In their own research, these scholars are able to marshal compelling evidence in support of their position.

²¹ Cátedra’s comments signal an efficient approach to the field of research I intend to explore. For a general description of this field Cátedra employs a terminology similar to the one I have just advanced in my preliminary remarks. He refers to “el teatro de corte”—the dramaturgy that thrived in the aristocratic circles—considering it as “uno de los teatros marginados” (“one of those marginalized theaters”) (“Teatro fuera del teatro” 32). Here I cannot go into all the three varieties (“las tres posibles variantes”) he enumerates as manifestations of the theater in question. I will focus on one of the possibilities he describes precisely as “la del teatro sin voz, los momos cortesanos, hilvanando con la referencia de la “Momería” de Francesc Moner” (“the courtly *momos*—a theater without a voice to be discussed in view of its connection with the “Momería” of Francesc Moner”) (“Teatro fuera del teatro” 32).

Doubtless, it is instructive to reflect on the process of projection of a microcosm (“Momería”) onto a macrocosm (*La noche*). In that process we may well recognize the gestation of what Jody Enders describes as “psychodrama.” Based on medieval models, Enders’s diagnosis of the phenomenon kindred to the progression from microcosm to macrocosm is only distantly related to the Freudian cathartic therapy that goes by the same term she proposes.²²

Concomitant with the symbiosis between “Momería” and *La noche* there are the principles of a modular composition. Let us take, for a primary example, the prototypical *momo* that becomes “textualized” and, by virtue of that operation, is integrated into the larger, complex structure of “Momería”. In a secondary phase of this evolutionary transition from simple to complex configuration, the discourse of the auctorial persona, in unison with that of the swan, is fitted within the multidimensional agency of the narrator-expositor’s monologue, which, in turn, is fully developed in the super-*momo* entitled *La noche*. To put it in a nutshell: Moner’s persistent quest for an unconventional theatricality comes to bear full force in his sui-generis creativity. His genius comes forth loud and clear in the elaboration of a spectacle that stems from a wide perspective of the Catalan literary tradition, especially characterized by the lyricism of the Valencian luminary called Ausiàs March. What Moner produces is a type of composition steeped in Catalan culture and “textualized” in the language of Castile.

The manner of staging constitutes a major issue in any critical judgment on “Momería”. Here I cannot go into a minute analysis of the *mise en scène*, which, for that matter, I have discussed at some length on other occasions. To summarize my previous studies, I need only point out that the actual performance of “Momería” responds to the influential principles spelled out in the *Etimologies* of Isidore of Seville, the famous scholar of the seventh century.²³ “Momería” sets in relief the overall contrast between a dark, confined space, difficult to make out, and a quite visible locus of action. This fundamental structure is mirrored in the interplay between the tenebrous interior of the swan and the stage proper adequately illuminated.

Broadly speaking, Moner conceives a *vis dramatica* that transforms a variety of *mos* into a testimonial of the decline of courtly love, while laying bare the sordid affairs that lie behind the vapid allurements of any kind of exorbitant idealism. In the final analysis, what we find in Moner’s idea of a theater is the distinctive voice and gesture—*Fabel* and *Gestus* as Brecht would have it—that inform psychodrama in the original, pre-Freudian sense of the term.

²² For a commentary on how Enders’s theory of “psychodrama” may be applied to a literary masterpiece, such as *Tragèdia de Caldesa* by Joan Roís de Corella (1435-1497), see Coccozella, “The Role of the Narrator-Expositor in *Tragèdia de Caldesa*” 800-804. From Enders’s analysis of Isidore of Seville’s description of Roman theater, I deduce substantial evidence for the “Isidorian” staging of Moner dramatic compositions (Coccozella, *From Misa to Mise en Scène* 165-6).

²³ See, especially: Coccozella, *Text, Translation, and Critical Interpretation of Joan Roís de Corella’s Tragèdia de Caldesa* 160-72; and “Dramatic Monologue and Isidorian Paradigm.”

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