

A black and white photograph of a man and a woman in period-style clothing. The woman, on the left, has blonde hair and is wearing a dark, ruffled collar. She is holding a small, ornate fan. The man, on the right, has dark, curly hair and a beard. He is wearing a light-colored shirt with a ruffled collar. They are both looking towards the camera with expressions of surprise or amusement.

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5. Avoid structures such as “This reviewer thinks...” Reviews are by definition subjective.
6. One reviewer may not publish more than two reviews in a single issue.

CONTENTS

Performance Studies

The Text and Performance of <i>El caballero de Olmedo</i>	
<i>Jane W. Albrecht</i>	11
Erotismo y fantasía: la mujer y la imaginación en <i>La viuda valenciana</i> y <i>La dama duende</i>	
<i>Reyes Caballo-Márquez</i>	29
Drag's Double-Edged Sword: <i>El galán fantasma</i> , 1985	
<i>Mindy Badía</i>	43
Insidious Echoes: Ballad Resonance and Bodily Threats in <i>Peribáñez</i>	
<i>Bruce R. Birmingham</i>	60
Antón, el servidor de dos amos en <i>El valiente negro en Flandes</i> , de Andrés de Claramonte y Corroy	
<i>Nelson López</i>	91
Ancients, Moderns and the Authenticity Issue in <i>Comedia</i> Performance Scholarship	
<i>Robert Bayliss</i>	121

Portland's Miracle Theatre Group
and *Fuente Ovejuna*.

DeLys Ostlund

146

Interviews

Sin Telón: Montando *El gran teatro del mundo*. Entrevista con Alejandro González Puche

Susan Paun de García

165

Sex, Treachery, and Really Big Moustaches: Cervantes's *Entremeses* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival

Jonathan Thacker

185

“What the Hell Are the Mormons Doing at the Cutting Edge of Foreign Language Theater?”: An Interview with Jason Yancey

Laura Vidler

200

Theatre Reviews

Don Quijote Rides Again. Repertory Theater, UK

Duncan Wheeler

217

<i>Los empeños de una casa.</i> Bilingual Foundation of the Arts, Los Angeles	
<i>Bonnie L. Gasior</i>	223
<i>El caballero de Olmedo.</i> Brigham Young University	
<i>Laura L. Vidler</i>	228
<i>La hija del aire, segunda parte.</i> Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires	
<i>Ellen Frye</i>	241
<i>El castigo sin venganza.</i> Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico, Spain	
<i>Ellen C. Frye</i>	246
 <i>Book Reviews</i>	
<i>Bentivegna, Patricia. Parody in the Género Chico</i>	
<i>Donald R. Larson</i>	254
<i>Escalonilla, Rosa Ana. Le dramaturgia del disfraz en Calderón</i>	
<i>A. Robert Lauer</i>	257
<i>McKendrick, Melveena. Identities in Crisis: Essays on Honour, Gender and Women in the Comedia</i>	
<i>Anita Stoll</i>	261

Performance Studies

THE TEXT AND PERFORMANCE OF *EL CABALLERO DE OLMEDO*¹

JANE W. ALBRECHT
Wake Forest University

The production of *El caballero de Olmedo* at the 2002 Chamizal festival by the Escuela Nacional de Arte Teatral of Mexico City, directed by Miguel Flores, raises the question of the play's genre. Again. The performance creates a coherent mood and tragic trajectory that many literary critics have thought the play lacks. What we see in the videotape of the 2002 production are certain directorial choices: to underscore a tragic quality in the music, with discordant tones, bass notes, the clash of cymbals, deep chants, drum beats, rattles and *cante jondo*, and to mold the actors' ideology, including an Andalusian-style of dress and movement, to lend severity and somberness. The use of masks recalls their Greek origin and lends itself to self-conscious theater. The choice of music, the style of acting and use of masks all point to destiny, death and sacrifice.² Flores's fine interpretation provides the stimulus to return to the text and criticism of the text. A reading of *El caballero de Olmedo* that uncovers Stoic, Senecan

tragic elements in the play finds the same unity of tone that the director develops in his production.

The question of genre was not in the director's mind. It was not his stated intention to explore tragic elements, of Senecan or any other kind, although his vision is quite compatible with the one I am offering. In personal communication Mr. Flores made clear that:

En nuestro análisis, de los actores y mío, no tra bajamos nunca a través del género; realizamos un extenso análisis tonal [E]l personaje sella su destino en el instante en que mira a los ojos a Inés en la feria de Medina. A partir del análisis descubrimos el mundo en que toda la historia sucede, y las implicaciones que tienen las acciones de los personajes en este mundo. La presencia del estado (como monarquía, es decir la composición del mundo con estos valores) en contra del orden natural (las fuerzas de la naturaleza en las que se envuelven los personajes) esto tiene como resultado el sacrificio del personaje principal, quien tiene parte en ambas esferas.³

The use of "Andalusian" actors lends itself to self-referential and self-conscious theater that sets off and underscores the tragedy. Mr. Flores states that, "[n]uestra intención era después de todo hacer teatro dentro del teatro, actores andaluces que representan la tragedia." His actors' costumes, the men's high-waisted, tight-fitting dark pants and ruffled shirt fronts and the women's long, red dresses with

flounced sleeves and hems, evoke a traditional Andalusian style of dress. The guitar, whether struck, as it often is, to produce a one-chord percussive sound or, less frequently, finger-picked to provide a bit of melody in a love scene, the castanets, florid singing, foot stomping, hand clapping and graceful arm movements likewise recall the flamenco style of music and dance of Andalusia. Tello, imbued with *duende*, sings the refrain “En el valle a Inés/ la dejé riendo” in *cante jondo* style. His deeply emotional, anguished singing is quite fitting since the text calls it “un estribo / que compuso don Alonso, / a manera de responso / si los hay en muerto vivo” (lines 1098-1101).⁴ According to Mr. Flores, his actors identified more with the Andalusian culture of Spain than with “official” Castilian society. As he stated above, in *El caballero* the values of the state and its base of power, the monarchy, clashed with the values of the natural order and resulted in the sacrifice of Alonso. I take this to mean that the actors identified emotionally with the natural order, the vital life force, that García Lorca also found in Andalusia. It also explains their decision to satirize the Condestable, don Alvaro de Luna, portraying as a bumbling idiot the man who was for nearly thirty years one of the most powerful men in medieval Spain.

One of the striking things about Mr. Flores’s production is the audience’s reaction. The audience hardly laughs. When Inés tells her father she wants

to become a nun, the scene is very somber. He is saddened by the news, and she is upset to be deceiving him. The serious mood is heightened through voices that intone a low litanic chant that starts and stops throughout the scene, and resumes when Fabia and Tello arrive in their disguises. Tello provides a bit of comic relief in the play, but if we take the performance as a whole, it is not a comedy, either fully or in part. For Director Flores, “La comicidad que hay en la obra es quizá sólo parte del estilo de Lope, pero de ninguna manera podría ser considerada una comedia.” As Albert Gérard, Frank Casa and Thomas O’Connor have argued, this is a tragedy, not a tragicomedy, or comitragedy.⁵ Adding to the body of evidence regarding the kind of tragic vision Lope had, and how and why *El caballero de Olmedo* is a tragedy, is the play’s affinity to Senecan drama. Senecan dramatic Stoicism forms part of its ideological base.

Lope’s interest in Stoicism and Seneca extended from the initial moments of his playwrighting career to the end of his life. An early play, *Roma abrasada* (c. 1600), tells the story of Nero’s life in which Seneca figures prominently.⁶ Lope famously mentioned Seneca in the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*. Near the end of his life, he sought solace in the writings of the Stoics. Lope’s model for *El caballero*, *La Celestina*, provided more than literary themes and artifice. Louise Fothergill-Payne’s meticulous presentation of evidence of the Senecan influence

on rage, vengeance and the passions in the twenty-one act version of *Celestina* should have helped us see that the same influences, indirect though they may have been, were at work in Lope's play. Seneca is a subtext in *El caballero de Olmedo*.

Critics, especially those of the *comedia*, have still not embraced Seneca's plays with enthusiasm. Nor has anyone made a strong connection between his Stoic philosophy and his tragic art. What is Stoic about Senecan dramaturgy? We cannot separate Senecan plays from their Stoic world view. Beyond what we think of as Senecan "devices," there are philosophical implications to pursue in Seneca's plays that Lope and others found in them.

Platonism and Aristotelianism have been the twin philosophical peaks from which we have studied Golden Age drama, not Stoicism. The Stoic, Senecan elements in *El caballero de Olmedo* are difficult to ignore: the revenge theme, the prevalence of prophecies and dreams, the shade, the use of violent spectacle, horror, the classic Stoic symbol of the phoenix, the problems of free will vs. fate and the instability of fortune, blindness and insight and, most important, the character of the hero who suffers from Stoic passions.⁷

El caballero is a revenge tragedy. Rodrigo is a melancholy villain who suffers from pathological jealousy (Soufas 87); Alonso acknowledges that he was killed by "envidias y celos" (2465-2466). Rodrigo's inability to face Alonso in duel in several en-

counters no doubt fuels his rage and jealousy (Vidler 115, 120). These emotions dishonor and disfigure Rodrigo, who becomes a cold-blooded killer: “Yo vengo a matar, no vengo / a desafíos; que entonces / te matara cuerpo a cuerpo” (2456-2458). Director Flores amplifies Rodrigo’s anger and envy with discordant music and percussion. When Rodrigo reacts to Inés’s obvious dislike of him, “Para sufrir el desdén / que me trata desta suerte, / pido al amor y a la muerte / que algún remedio me den” (461-464), and afterward, when he has identified his rival as Alonso and declares “Yo he de matar a quien vivir me cuesta” (1375), the loud cymbals and drum beats that punctuate his performance are intensely felt rhythms that emphasize the conflict mounting within Rodrigo and contribute to increasing tension in the audience.

In the 2002 production, the masks that Rodrigo and his men wear when they follow Alonso to murder him can be thought of in several ways. They dehumanize the killers. They are an outward sign of their inner criminality. The masks, like the Andalusian elements the director incorporates, are also a technique for creating a stylized play-within-a-play that frames and highlights the tragic action. For Director Flores, the masks implicate the entire social order in Alonso’s death: “La escena del bosque donde Alonso va a ser sacrificado, no tiene un carácter estético solamente, quisimos presentar a todos los personajes enmascarados porque creemos

que todos son responsables de esa muerte, incluida Inés.” Rodrigo, an individual bent on revenge, *enmascarado* becomes a universal agent of death who instigates Alonso’s murder.

The use of masks allows the director to exploit visually the fusion of the theme of fate with Rodrigo’s revenge plot. Just before Alonso is murdered, Fernando exclaims: “¡Qué inconstante es el bien, qué loco y vario! / Hoy a vista de un rey salió lucido, / admirado de todos a la plaza, / y ¡ya tan fiera muerte le amenaza!” (2338-2341). Alonso is trapped between the prophecy about him, which Rodrigo is the instrument in fulfilling, and Alonso’s own, human, desires and passions. For the Ancient Stoics, for Seneca in his tragedies, as for Lope in this play, there is a necessary interaction between fate and free will. Phaedra’s Nurse tells her: “Fate / is not the grand *auteur* of these affairs: / they are merely errors of judgment, lapses of taste, / and failures of character...” (*Phaedra* 148-151). For the Stoics, who influenced Augustine and Aquinas, fate operates with and through human agency and choice. Divine providence means foreknowledge, which does not limit human free will. In *El caballero*, the audience sees the working out of Alonso’s death, which has been foretold, but also understands that of his own free will Alonso chooses certain paths that lead to his death. The suffering of the protagonist is not necessarily decreed, a point Antonio Buero Vallejo made years ago when he wrote:

“se nos ha enseñado desde Esquilo que el destino no es ciego ni arbitrario y que no sólo es en gran parte creación del hombre mismo, sino que, a veces, éste lo domeña” (69).

Alonso’s celebrated sense of honor, virtue and duty is connected to the theme of friendship among equals. These concerns, all of which are so important to the Stoics, are seen in his exclamation:

Pero ya no puede ser
que don Rodrigo me envidie
pues hoy la vida me debe
que esta deuda no permite
que un caballero tan noble
en ningún tiempo la olvide.
Antes pienso que ha de ser
para que amistad confirme
desde hoy commigo en Medina. (2286-2294)

We are used to these themes— honor, fate vs. free will, the instability of fortune-- from many other plays, and unaccustomed to classifying them as “Stoic.” Their roots were deep in the Stoic tradition passed from Latin authors to St. Augustine and on down to Lope, Quevedo and others.

All of Seneca’s plays have a shade, the mention of a shade or of a person who crossed over to hell and returned, and all are full of portents and dreams. However, no Stoic advocated trusting in witches. Lope’s *Fabia* communicates an infernal atmosphere: Rodrigo calls her “aquella sombra” (404); Tello

compares her to Circe, Medea and Hecate (1920-21). True to form, the actress in the 2002 production plays Fabia as frightening and repulsive. The sounds of cymbals and gongs that are associated with her presence seem intended to startle and unsettle the spectator. For Stoics, witches offer knowledge, but of the wrong kind. This ambiguity between true and false prophecy is captured in Lope's creation, Fabia. She claims she is a witch, so she should not be trusted but, at the end, appears as a messenger from God. Only now does Alonso, rationally he thinks, decide not to trust in the prophecy: "Invención de Fabia es" (2381). In trying to follow the wise course, he ironically ignores the *avisos del cielo* and brings on his own death by continuing his journey.

The phoenix is the classic Stoic symbol since the Stoa believed in the cyclical destruction and regeneration of the universe. Periodically all elements were absorbed by the Divine Fire, God or Nature or Destiny. Several of Seneca's play endings reference fire and imply cleansing and restoration. In *Phaedra*, Theseus laments over his son's body:

Open the palace doors. Air the place out,
foul with scheming and blood. / Let Athens resound
with loud lamentation.

Someone, go back to the field
and look for the tiniest specks that remain. Bring them
back here, to the flames. (1274-1277)

In Lope's play, the phoenix is a controlling metaphor: Inés's mother is "la fénix de Medina" (271); Inés, attracted to Alonso's flame "no [como] mariposa, / fénix ya, pues de una suerte / me da vida y me da muerte / llama tan dulce y hermosa" (1060-1063); Alonso's burial will be "el del fénix...después de muerto viviendo / en las lenguas de la fama" (2701-2703). The mention of the phoenix and phrases like "die and live on in fame" may seem to derail the tragic ending, but promise and hope are not necessarily anti-tragic. Who has actually witnessed the phoenix rising, the soul ascending, or the end of suffering on earth? In tragedy, we confront the worst, and hope for the best, although the worst is all we see and all we have (Eagleton 39-40). In the final analysis in tragedy, life goes on, now infused and informed with death (Williams 55).

It is possible to conceive of all of the above not as Stoic, Senecan tragic elements, but something else—Christian, or Baroque. But the decisive factor is the portayal of the hero's character and his relation to the Stoic passions. In *Saturn and Melancholy*, Raymond Klibansky and his coauthors Erwin Saxl and Fritz Panofsky assert that all the great tragic heroes are melancholics: for the Stoics, the wise man, who was not susceptible to madness, could succumb to melancholy, a physical disease, not a disposition. (The Stoics reverted to the pre-Aristotelian attitude toward melancholy). He could

even lose his virtue, his excellence, through melancholy (43). The four classic Stoic errors or vices are the Stoic passions: pleasure (*laetitia*), pain (*tristitia*), desire (*cupiditas, amor*), fear (*metus, timor*). Diego Bastianutti rightly points to melancholy as the key to Alonso's conduct in *El caballero*, while for Teresa Soufas, what was Alonso's melancholic pose in the first two acts becomes true melancholy at the end (81).

By his own admission, Alonso misjudges and ignores the *avisos del cielo* because of his *valor propio*. The text underscores also his fear and his melancholy. Inés: “Pena me has dado y temor / con tus miedos y recelos” (2226-2227); Alonso: “han sido estas imaginaciones / sólo un ejercicio triste/ del alma, que me atormenta” (2232-2234); “Todas son cosas que finge / la fuerza de la tristeza, / la imaginación de un triste” (2271-2273); “Lo que jamás he tenido, / que es algún recelo o miedo, / llevo caminando a Olmedo. / Pero tristezas han sido. / Del agua el manso ruido / y el ligero movimiento / destas ramas, con el viento, / mi tristeza aumentan más” (2342-2349); “¡Qué mal la música sabe, / si está triste el pensamiento!” (2370-2371); “Todo me espanta” (2394); “En mi nobleza, / fuera ese temor bajeza” (2408-2409); “¡Qué de sombras finge el miedo!” (2413). From the initial grasping at hope in his words, “Gente viene. No me pesa; / Si allá van, iré con ellos” (2425-2426), to the final acknowledgement that his life is over, “¿Qué haré en un

campo / tan solo?” (2467-2468), Alonso succumbs to fear and melancholy, and misjudges his situation. “Fear makes the world seem darker than it is,” Amphitryon counsels his daughter-in-law Megara who despairs over Hercules’s ever returning from Hades (*Hercules Furens* 413).

Alonso’s judgment is clouded, much as all of Seneca’s protagonists are blind to danger and evil. As Oedipus enters, sightless, the chorus proclaims:

No god can cause events to swerve
which, meshed in motives, roll along;
each life proceeds untouched by prayer.
To some men, fear’s the greatest bane:
afraid of what is fated, blind,
they blunder right into their fate.
(*Oedipus* 1031-1039)

Alonso, too, is blinded, first by pleasure and desire, then by fear and sadness, and brings on the evil that is lying in wait for him.⁸

Director Flores accentuates the protagonist’s emotional state and tragic fate with music. When Alonso addresses Fabia for the first time, his intense manner and tone of voice are matched by the low, percussive sounds of gongs, cymbals and bass notes. After he utters the words “Mañana mueres, pues hoy / te meten en la capilla” (157-58), a discordant chant begins that continues to the end of his speech. The low vibration that begins when the *Sombra* appears and speaks Alonso’s name, and re-

sumes during Tello's account of Alonso's death, lends a solemn, haunting effect similar to that of a Tibetan long horn or an Australian didgeridoo. When Rodrigo overtakes Alonso and is about to murder him, the sound of the rattle being slowly turned is an ominous constant that reflects Alonso's doom.

Lope's later years were characterized by Stoic melancholy and *desengaño* in the face of the inconstancy of human life: "Lope, en el último período de su vida, acógese ... al amparo de aquella doctrina estoica que ... daba puerto seguro a todas las borrascas del siglo: 'Enseña a sufrir y a abstenerse'" (Amezúa 2: 273).⁹ Lope's self-description reminds us of Alonso himself: "No sé qué anda tras mí estos días como sombra, si este nombre se puede dar a mis disgustos, que dellos naze hacer sentimiento el cuerpo.... Tristezas son estas mías, que otras veces me han tenido al cabo de la vida y de la paçiençia, pero no con la fuerza de ahora" (Amezúa 2: 271).

For David Darst, Golden Age tragedy "accomplished no less than a strengthening of the valor and fortitude of the audience against the upsurge of the base passions of pity and fear. In every case it is a process of forming a habit in the will by offering verisimilar examples worthy of imitation. It is this philosophy, much more Stoic than Aristotelian, which gives Spanish Golden Age tragedy the so highly esteemed transcendental vision of humanity"

(“Tragedy” 7). Raising pity and fear was not the point of Senecan drama; pity and fear were Stoic vices. The spectator’s experience of tragedy should be an intellectual one: reason should control the passions (Darst “Lope’s” 15).

Lope understood the power of tragic form and content. Modern directors can embrace that sensibility and interpret a text such as *El caballero de Olmedo* brilliantly. Mr. Flores has done a remarkable job of forming the psychic environment in his version of the play. And while modern performance can and should inform our criticism,¹⁰ a return to the perspective of the Ancient Stoics and Seneca dramaturgy may help us crystallize an idea that has eluded us to a degree: that there is such a thing as Spanish Baroque tragedy, not homogenous, but with shared origins and themes, and sensibilities and motives, a communal character and essence.

NOTES

¹ Many thanks to Donald Larson and Constance Rose for their comments on an earlier version of this paper, which I presented at the International Golden Age Drama Symposium, Association for Hispanic Classical Theater, El Paso, Texas, March 2005. Maestro Miguel Flores’s *El caballero de Olmedo* was, and still is, on video, terrifically exciting; I am very grateful to him for taking the time to answer a number of questions about the production.

² Catalogue number VC 02 of the AHCT collection.

³ These comments are contained in an email communication dated 25 August, 2005; I have added accent marks and corrected a few typographical errors without altering the content.

⁴ All citations are from Lope de Vega, *The Knight of Olmedo* (*El caballero de Olmedo*), edited and translated by King.

⁵ Several factors have worked to keep us from judging Golden Age plays as tragedies. In the seventeenth-century most dramatists did not term many plays tragedies, and many scholars would still agree. Sometimes Lope did not title his plays “tragedies,” although he included the word in the last lines of the plays themselves, as in *El caballero de Olmedo* which ends “Fin de la trágica historia.” See Newels and Morby.

⁶ For Dixon and Torres, when Lope wrote two early plays, *Roma abrasada* and *Los embustes de Fabia*, he likely had in mind a work, *Octavia*, that at that time was attributed to Seneca (42). Dixon and Torres explore the ways in which Lope used Seneca’s *Phaedra* in *El castigo sin venganza*.

⁷ On the influence of Stoicism in European thought, theology and letters, see Colish, both volumes.

⁸ Darst explains how basic the blindness/insight theme is to tragedy and to Lope’s play: “[s]uccinctly, the spectators see how an innocent and good person is brought down by envy and hate because he failed to see the danger that his actions created” (“Lope’s” 14).

⁹ This reference is found in Larson, 163-64, notes 8 and 9.

⁹ On this point, see, for example, Friedman.

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EROTISMO Y FANTASÍA: LA MUJER Y LA IMAGINACIÓN EN LA *VIUDA VALENCIANA* Y LA *DAMA DUENDE*

“En todo encuentro erótico hay un personaje invisible y siempre activo: la imaginación.” Octavio Paz

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Dentro del panorama teatral de la temprana modernidad, es la comedia, principalmente por los temas que en ella se tratan, el género que más cabida da al discurso erótico. Como bien apunta Juan Oleza, “[l]a comedia es el reino de la máscara, de las identidades ocultas, de los amores secretos, de los travestismos, de los embozos, de las inconfesables nocturnidades.” (206) Es por esto que la comedia ha sido uno de los géneros más criticados y perseguidos en su larga trayectoria representacional, la España más conservadora siempre aprovechando la oportunidad para tratar de vedar o al menos denunciar las posibilidades escénicas de gran contenido erótico que este género permite en su puesta en escena, pues como afirma Martin Esslin, “[t]o deny a powerful erotic component in any dramatic experience would be foolish hypocrisy. Indeed, one of the theatre's –and all other drama's—greatest

claims is that it operates at the same time on all levels, from the most basic to the most sublime, and that in the best drama the two achieve perfect fusion.” (34) Mi estudio se va a concentrar en el análisis de la proyección de lo erótico en *La dama duende* y *La viuda valenciana*, dos obras que comparten una misma base temática: la ingeniosa forma en la que la mujer viuda, a través de un sin fin de juegos y maquinaciones traviesas, consigue transgredir las rígidas leyes de la sociedad patriarcal. En concreto, son esos diferentes “niveles” eróticos de los que habla Martin Esslin los que voy a explorar en este ensayo, así como el papel que la imaginación juega en su formación.

La imagen de la mujer que nos ofrecen ambos dramaturgos es una imagen ambivalente: como expone Catherine Larson en su análisis de *La dama duende*, en Ángela se unen por un lado la imagen de tan negativa connotación de la mujer como aliada al diablo, el estereotipo de la mujer-hechicera capaz de subvertir los roles patriarcales sin que se de cuenta el varón, y por el otro lado también se le otorga una imagen de mujer angelical, de mujer precavida de buena familia que vive decorosamente con sus hermanos. En el caso de *La viuda valenciana*, en Leonarda encontramos de forma paralela la imagen de esta mujer ambivalente, una (casi) pura y angelical Leonarda que prefiere la educación y el recato al matrimonio, pero que por las noches, cuando nadie la ve, se convierte en mujer hechicera que solicita el

servicio de un joven galán que le aplaque su sed lujuriosa de deseo.

A nivel erótico, la mujer también conserva esa ambigüedad. Esta dualidad encarnada en los personajes femeninos de ambas obras va a verse proyectada en la forma en la que estas mujeres viven el antes, el durante y el después de sus peligrosos encuentros amorosos. De hecho, por el carácter dual que Calderón le otorga a doña Ángela en su caracterización, muchos críticos han descrito a Calderón como escritor feminista, ya que su visión de la mujer es mucho más elástica, humana y controversial que la de muchos otros dramaturgos contemporáneos. Por otro lado, Melveena McKendrick afirma que Lope es el primer dramaturgo capaz de hacer un boceto perfecto de la mujer esquiva en sus obras, de cuya imagen Leonarda es un excelente ejemplo.

A ambos dramaturgos, el tema de la mujer viuda les viene muy bien en sus paralelos proyectos subversivos, ya que este ser es para ambos la encarnación de un ser abyecto, rechazado, que vive a los márgenes de la sociedad por su hiperbólica vulnerabilidad, pero que al mismo tiempo, su condición de viuda es huella de su falta de virginidad, del desvanecimiento de su pureza. La mujer viuda, aunque débil y aprisionada en el patriarcado, es también una mujer que lucha por sus propios intereses, aún si al hacerlo tiene que desobedecer las estrictas leyes del sistema social en el que vive y del cual es víctima.

Fantasía y erotismo vienen mano a mano en la representación de lo femenino en ambas obras. Pero cuando hablo de fantasía no me refiero a lo sobrenatural propiamente dicho. La “magia” erótica que producen las damas, la fantasía que éstas consiguen engendrar en las mentes de los hombres para los que se convierten en objeto deseado, prescinde de artilugios, efectos visuales, apariencias o tramoyas. La fantasía con la que se alude al deseo en ambas obras, es un espacio fluido, propicio para insertar ambigüedades, desde el cual se puede proyectar una imagen de la mujer más elástica de la permitida en la época, cargada de un erotismo exacerbado, intangible y casi invisible. Pero la camouflada presencia de lo erótico en la comedia encuentra la forma de hacerse perceptible en la mente de aquellos a quienes les interese sumergirse en el espacio fluido hacia el que puede ser transportado a través de la lectura o de la experiencia teatral.

Cabe observar que este uso de la fantasía no es únicamente propio del terreno teatral: es de hecho una gran herramienta en la construcción de lo erótico en las artes visuales. John Berger, en su obra *Ways of Seeing* nos explica cómo el erotismo y la sexualidad femenina se proyectan en el arte como algo que funciona en la imaginación del espectador. En una discusión en torno al desnudo, Berger arguye que la proyección del erotismo y de la sexualidad femenina en la pintura se presenta como una experiencia imaginativa, como la captación de un mo-

mento probablemente vivido por el pintor y no como un instante congelado en el tiempo. Esta idea nos la ilustra Berger a través del cuadro “Hélène Fourment in a Fur Coat” de Peter Paul Rubens, cuadro en el que el pintor flamenco retrata a su mujer medio desnuda, con sólo un abrigo de pieles casi a punto de caerse, en una pose en la cual la mujer nos lanza un mensaje erótico, al sugerirnos un antes y un después temporal y espacial. Los cabellos desordenados de Hélène insinúan el encuentro amoroso que hubieran podido tener el pintor y ella en un momento anterior al del término del cuadro. La poca firmeza con la que Hélène sujetá el abrigo nos revela una pasada o futura desnudez. La falta de simetría corporal que dan la impresión de que el cuerpo de la mujer es bipartito, o el grotesco realismo con el que Rubens pinta el cuerpo de su mujer, son huellas visuales, dejadas voluntaria o involuntariamente por el pintor, que nos sugieren que este cuadro es más bien el producto de la imaginación y del deseo del pintor, y no tanto de la realidad material y física. Este tipo de representación rechaza el desnudo integral, dado que la totalidad del desnudo le restaría la cualidad erótica imaginativa que el pintor le brinda al espectador en su obra. Esta forma de proyectar una imagen erótica de la mujer es muy común dentro de la tradición artística europea, pues como afirma John Berger en su ensayo “Sight and Sex”: “There are surprisingly few paintings in European Art of entirely disclosed nude women. The

foci of sexual interest- the sexual parts themselves and the breasts- are usually disguised or under-emphasized. Inconsequential draperies fall between women's legs; or their hands, while drawing attention to their sex, hide it.” (52)

Como vemos, el retrato de Rubens tiene como objetivo el de mostrar una imagen erótica de la mujer, de presentarla como objeto de la mirada masculina. En nuestras obras, esta experimentación de lo erótico está representada a través de la imagen femenina constituida en la imaginación del espectador o supuestamente, del personaje masculino dentro de la obra. Al igual que en el cuadro de Rubens, en ambas obras el erotismo está presente como un concepto imaginativo y dinámico, que exige que el espectador sea activo en su desciframiento del mensaje erótico que le lanza el director o pintor. La obra de teatro, por sus propias cualidades espaciales, difiere de las dimensiones de la fantasía erótica presentes en la obra de arte. En el teatro, el erotismo existe dentro de planos imaginarios intradiegéticos y extradiégeticos, al haber en él dos tipos de audiencia que sobrevienen la experiencia erótica: el público que va a ver la obra y el galán, el cual es la audiencia ante la cual las damas representan sus pañuelos en la obra dentro de la obra.

Un leve vistazo al lenguaje verbal empleado por ambos dramaturgos, nos revela la multiplicidad significativa incluida en ambas comedias. En el léxico utilizado por Lope y Calderón para describir a los

personajes femeninos hay toda una maquinaria conceptual insertada con la intención de enfatizar y cargar de erotismo el campo semántico. Podemos ver múltiples ejemplos del uso de términos relacionados con lo bélico, con la caza y con la alimentación, que como afirma Jose Luis Alonso, son registros semánticos cargados de un pesado bagaje conceptual erótico, material que es muy prolífero y útil en la temprana modernidad por sus cualidades camufladoras. Además, estas dos comedias comprenden un rico léxico asociado a lo propiamente amoroso, a lo mítico y a lo sobrenatural, que insertan el discurso erótico de una manera más explícita.

Junto al lenguaje verbal, el lenguaje escénico será imprescindible en la divulgación del discurso erótico. Algunos de los infinitos elementos externos que pueden intensificar o disminuir la carga erótica de la puesta en escena pueden ser, por ejemplo, el tipo de escenario y ambientación utilizada, el uso de los espacios escénicos, la actriz reclutada en el casting como protagonista de la comedia y su potencial erótico tanto físico como gestual, el vestuario, las luces, el maquillaje, etc... Si bien es verdad que es la mezcla aleatoria de todos estos elementos lo que más influirá en la propagación del mensaje erótico en la puesta en escena, un elemento primordial que convertirá la experiencia teatral en erótica, será, sin lugar a dudas, el público, pues es el público el que tendrá que descifrar el mensaje erótico lanzado a su imaginario colectivo; para que la fantasía erótica

trascienda, este tipo de obra va a necesitar de un público activo que descifre el mensaje subliminal que las imágenes muestran.

La reacción que el público tenga ante el mensaje erótico lingüístico o performativo, va a ser muy distinta dependiendo del contexto histórico y de la sensibilidad de cada época. El uso del velo o pañuelo que cubra a Angela en *La dama duende*, o el uso de la máscara en *La viuda valenciana*, son también herramientas que están ampliamente relacionadas a esta idea de la creación de un imaginario erótico colectivo, creado por y para el público y para aque-lllos personajes para los que la mujer es un sujeto erótico. Hugues Didier afirma que en las obras de Calderón lo femenino “suele andar velado, tapado, disfrazado, aludido.” (43) Pero el disfraz, el ocultamiento, el uso de la tapada y de espacios reducidos son también armas de doble filo: si bien mediante el ocultamiento el autor ofrece una imagen realista de la rigidez del estado patriarcal en el siglo dieciséis y diecisiete, al mismo tiempo ésta resulta ser un arma erótica invaluable, que enalza el valor sexual de la obra al esconderlo, y crea un nuevo código erótico en el imaginario colectivo de la audiencia. El espectador, al ver esta imagen de una mujer que se deja entrever solamente, que está tapada, ocultada, encerrada en un espacio claustrofóbico compuesto por las cuatro paredes de su habitación, se deja llevar por el mundo de lo fantasioso y de su imaginación y como el galán, termina idealizando a la dama: en lo

prohibido se abre una peligrosa brecha que deja entrar lo erótico y lo sensual.

Hasta el momento, además de haber estado tomando un punto de vista ampliamente heterosexual, me he concentrado en mi análisis en el estudio de cómo sólo una mitad del público percibe la experiencia erótica, ¿pero cómo tomaría esta imagen erotizada de la mujer-objeto una espectadora de la temprana modernidad? Sin duda alguna, la mayoría de estas representaciones eróticas estaban dirigidas primordialmente hacia la mirada lasciva del espectador-hombre, quienes constituían la mayor parte del público que iba a ver las representaciones de estas obras. Tampoco debemos olvidar que, ambas obras son escritas por hombres, ambos heterosexuales, y que su visión de lo femenino y del sujeto erótico está claramente focalizada a través de su propia sexualidad. Pero aún sabiendo esto, y también teniendo en cuenta que todas estas mujeres son productos de la imaginación masculina, es importante extraer de estas imágenes femeninas lo que una mujer sentiría al verse reflejada en su percepción de imágenes deformadas y fragmentadas de sí mismas. Está claro que la espectadora que viera a doña Ángela o a Leonarda no podría identificarse del todo con estos personajes: estas imágenes femeninas encarnadas en el papel de la dama no podían dejar de ser más que una caricatura del estereotipo de mujer afincado en su sociedad contemporánea. Como bien ha apuntado Catherine Connor, de hecho la especta-

dora común se sentía más cerca de la actriz que hacía de criada que de la dama protagonista. Las dos criadas Julia e Isabel, además de constituir el alter ego de sus respectivas damas, se presentan como instigadoras del encuentro erótico, manipuladoras de la creación del aura fantástica que se le otorga a la dama, tramoyeras o hacedoras de efectos mágicos. Teniendo en cuenta el papel tan fundamental que la criada tiene en la construcción del discurso erótico en ambas obras, cabría decir que la espectadora, al identificarse con la criada, es de alguna manera partícipe también de este proceso de construcción de la fantasía erótica que se ha descrito hasta el momento.

Ese espacio virtual, creado en el imaginario colectivo que representa el público que va al teatro y que es testigo de las alusiones eróticas introducidas en primera instancia por Calderón y Lope, y más adelante por el director que lleve la obra en escena, se convierte en un potencial campo de batalla, que toma gran fuerza en un contexto contemporáneo, tal cual nos demostró el director Hugo Medrano en su producción de *La dama duende* la temporada pasada en DC: en su adaptación musical de la obra de Calderón, Medrano explota la sexualidad y el erotismo de la mujer utilizando signos bien diferenciables para un público actual, que muy bien supo insertar el director dentro de su contexto adaptado de la España de los años 20: el cigarro, el charlestón, el tango fueron algunas de sus armas erotizantes, ade-

más del uso de las luces, de varias técnicas metateatrales, de diversos símbolos asociados con la liberación femenina, y de un sin fin más de herramientas con que resaltar el erotismo femenino.

La fluidez del material erótico del que está confeccionada la obra le otorga al director total libertad para jugar con unas armas que, si bien empleadas, pueden hacer del teatro una esfera incluso de lucha de sexos y de reafirmación femenina y feminista, y las herramientas con las que experimenta Medrano en su adaptación constituyen sólo un ejemplo de lo que se puede llegar a hacer con una obra en la que se ha dejado un espacio especial para el erotismo, fluido, deslizante. Su puesta en escena nos advierte de todas las variantes que la proyección femenina puede tener en su representación, y también de lo socio-políticamente cargada que está *La dama duende*, de forma implícita, y lo fácil que es cargarla de significado a través de la correcta utilización de signos y símbolos en la representación.

Por lo tanto, aunque nos sea imposible reconstruir el pasado performativo de estas obras, al observar la proyección del erotismo en la obra contemporánea, su valor subversivo salta a la vista. La experimentación social que Calderón lleva a cabo en su comedia se hace latente en el escenario actual, y trasluce cómo una vez al montar la obra, se utilizó la esfera teatral como laboratorio a estilo brechtiano, en el cual poder ver reflejada su sociedad contemporánea, analizándola una y otra vez en su espe-

ranza de alcanzar una voluptuosa multiplicidad de soluciones sociales.

Pero no debemos olvidar que el final arquetípico de la comedia de capa y espada es siempre anti-climático, y que el encuentro entre galán y dama culmina siempre en la ruptura de la “magia” erótica creada en la obra. Como bien notó Frederick de Armas en su obra *The Invisible Mistress*: “...as soon as we abandon the realm of romance, of the wish-fulfillment dream, as soon as this enchantress is situated in a world where her powers no longer are effective, she seems to lose her suddenly attained superiority over men” (29).

De forma muy similar en ambas obras, una vez que se descubre la identidad de la dama, el final llega inmediatamente después, de forma abrupta. Este implacable final se desata porque la magia que rodea a la dama, su aura sobrenatural, se ha desvanecido. Una vez que la dama recupera una identidad tangible, le sobreviene la identidad social, y se pretende eliminar la carga erótica con un fin justo socialmente: el modelo erótico que en sí encierra la imagen virtual de la dama en el espectador, se habrá esfumado, o al menos con esta excusa se cubrirían las espaldas los dramaturgos del siglo de oro, ante los recalcitrantes retractores moralistas.

Por lo tanto, a priori podría parecer que el erotismo virtual está presente en el imaginario colectivo del público únicamente mientras la identidad de la dama sea una incógnita, ya que una vez llegado el

final se esfuma el erotismo al ser expulsado por el advenimiento del juicioso sello del final social. Sin embargo no hay que olvidar que, durante la hora y media o dos horas que ha durado la producción, la fantasía erótica ha poblado la mente del espectador casi la mayor parte del tiempo; durante la representación, lo invisible se ha logrado hacer visible sobre las tablas, lo erótico e intangible se ha vuelto furtivamente tangible, y el público vuelve a casa en una nebulosa estremecedora, después de la sublime experiencia erótica a la cual acaba de ser expuesto. El abrupto final tradicional de la comedia no es capaz de eliminar la gran carga erótica que ha tenido la obra en su contenido global; tampoco cubre la porosidad del material erótico imaginario, que al ser fluido se escapa, transgrede y transciende.

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DRAG'S DOUBLE-EDGE SWORD: *EL GALÁN FANTASMA*, 1985

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The theoretical notion of gender as discursively constructed has often been equated with liberation from the constraints of conventional sex roles. Viewing gender as a performance, rather than an essential characteristic, can lead to a more fluid conception of sexuality according to which biological sex need not define individuals nor determine their place in society. In the context of such discussions, drag performance occupies a contested space. On the one hand, cross-dressing would seem to affirm the liberating nature of gender performativity because it underscores the artificiality of sex roles and implicitly posits that the ways we categorize sexual difference are neither natural nor necessary. On the other, drag frequently represents gender in such a hyperbolic fashion that it has been viewed as a practice that perpetuates sexist stereotypes, a potentially subversive performance medium that cannot fully escape the heterosexist binaries that structure it. Similarly, by perpetuating the dichotomy of authenticity in opposition to artifice, the critical dilemma of drag mirrors what happens when a con-

temporary director adapts a classical play for production. The modern performance may stand on its own as a text, but it cannot exist independently from the seventeenth-century script. Like the cross-dressed actor's relationship to the body he or she attempts to represent, the classical script and contemporary staging are at odds with and, paradoxically, bound by one another.

This essay examines the feminized characterization of the *duque* Federico in a 1985 staging of *El galán fantasma*, along with reception of the adaptation by *Siglo de Oro* scholars, in light of recent theoretical discussions of gender and subjectivity. My goal in studying this production, as well as the critical reaction it elicited, is to explore both the liberating and limiting effects of drag performance and to relate this exploration to the broader issue of the adaptation of classical dramatic texts for contemporary performance. I posit my analysis as one way to move beyond *Comedia* performance studies that simply evaluate the quality of a staging (typically in relation to the original script). Instead, I propose a kind of scholarly reception that acknowledges the textuality of performance and, consequently, views theatrical productions from the same theoretical perspectives used to illuminate text-based criticism.

Originally performed in Madrid and staged at the Chamizal National Memorial by the theater group Compañía Pequeño Teatro de Madrid, José Luis Alonso's adaptation modified considerably the text

of *El galán*, cutting certain passages, rearranging events, and even borrowing text from other plays by Calderón. The change that drew the most critical attention, however, was director Antonio Guirau's characterization of Federico, the Duke of Saxony, and the Duke's *privado* Leonelo. Although Federico ever actually presents himself as a woman, the actor's voice and movement, as well as the production's use of stage properties and costumes, create a feminized *duque* that deconstructs conventional *Comedia* portrayals of masculine behavior and, at the same time, seems to affirm sexist ideas about men and women. This gender paradox illustrates an important effect of adapting classical texts for production, particularly when significant changes are introduced in the modern staging. The contemporary adaptation becomes, for some, an imitation of the real thing, a text in disguise (drag, if you will) that both validates and vitiates the original.¹

In a sense, cross-dressing in the *Comedia*, and the ambivalent critical reactions it provokes, is nothing new. Although Spain did not have a tradition of cross-dressed actors (as did England), numerous instances of Golden Age dramatic characters who appropriate the clothing of the opposite sex do exist. For some scholars, Golden Age gender play ultimately results in the affirmation of seventeenth-century Spain's rigidly defined sex roles.² More recent criticism centers on the ability of these cross-dressed characters to invert cultural norms, such as

Chris Weimer's study of Castanet in *Los empeños de una casa* or Catherine Connor's treatment of the *mujer varonil*.³,⁴ The relatively recent opportunity to see Golden Age plays staged regularly at the Almagro and Chamizal festivals has given modern audiences a chance to explore the concept of gender as performance in texts that do not contain cross-dressed characters. Some productions brought to Chamizal, such as the Mexican staging of *El examen de maridos*,⁵ performed in 1987 by an all-female cast, or the 1990 adaptation of *El acero de Madrid*,⁶ in which an important female character was played by a male actor, form part of a tradition of ambiguously gendered characters in *Comedia* texts. These adaptations also illustrate the relationship between fidelity to the *text* and fidelity to one's *sex*, because they dramatize the artifice behind notions of authenticity and question the concept of unmediated agency.

The photographs accompanying this essay illustrate the drag--or almost drag--elements of Federico's characterization in the contemporary staging of *El galán*. In the first, the *duque*, played by Enrique Ciurana, has asserted his *hombría*, delivering a blow to Astolfo, the Duke's rival for Julia's affections, that causes Federico to believe that he has killed his competitor. In the second photograph, Leonelo grooms the *duque* as they discuss Federico's jealousy of Julia's feelings for the presumed-dead Astolfo.

Ciurana's performance generated quite a bit of commentary, most of which was negative, at both the 1981 Jornada de Almagro Colloquium and the post-performance round-table discussion at the 1985 Chamizal staging. Charles Ganelin criticizes the inconsistency of the *duque*'s characterization, troubled by the fact that the contemporary Federico is "at one moment a brave, though underhanded *galán*, at another a simpering, effeminate fop who would seemingly have no interest in Julia (or in any other woman, for that matter)" (Ganelin, videolecture). In the round-table discussion held directly after the performance, César Oliva observed a related inconsistency, emphasizing the efforts of the group to stage the play in period costume and noting that in this context, Leonelo and Federico were "fuera de la época y fuera del lugar" (Oliva, round-table discussion, *El galán* video).⁷

Assuredly, "placing" this characterization of Federico challenges audiences to reexamine conventional *Comedia* definitions of "masculine" and "feminine," defying even the denomination "drag." In fact, the *duque* in this staging of *El galán* exhibits characteristics more akin to foppery than to drag, for he appears on stage dressed like "[a] dandy from a Molière play" in the words of one critic (Ganelin videolecture). Ciurana's Federico possesses many of the traits of the fop who is, as Matthew Stroud describes, "overly concerned with his appearance, notably his clothing and accessories... condescend-

ing, and, even worse, Frenchified" ("Comedy" 181). In other ways, though, the modern *duque* does not correspond to this theatrical type, because the fop "is not considered dangerous or evil, nor does he carry out actions familiar to male protagonists: rape, murder, abduction or theft" (Stroud, "Comedy," 181). Federico, of course, attempts to engage in three of these activities in both text and spectacle.

To illustrate the difference between foppery and drag, Stroud contrasts Francisco Portés's 1995 portrayal of Diego in *El lindo don Diego*, in which the actor embraces the feminization of his character, with the characterization of Castanet in a 1986 production of *Los enredos de una casa*. Portes's foppish portrayal of Diego, which never aligns itself with social expectations for males, differs significantly from the famous drag scene in the contemporary staging of Sor Juana's play because, in Stroud's words, the actor portraying Castanet in this particular performance tries "very hard to maintain his masculinity" ("Comedy" 193). In the case of the modern *galán* and its subsequent critical reception, spectators (especially academics who have read the play) cannot help but compare the contemporary portrayal of the *duque* with the character as he appears in the text and, paraphrasing Stroud, try very hard to "maintain Federico's masculinity." Indeed, the consensus, at least among *Siglo de Oro scholars*, was that there was no way this portrayal could be anything other than a ruffle-wearing, hair-curling

profanation of Calderón's Federico, a parody of a "real" *galán* whose manliness is disguised in order, one assumes, to appeal to modern spectators. The result is a characterization that approaches foppery, but is *dragged into drag* by implicit and explicit comparison with the textual *duque* and, to a lesser extent, by the ambivalent characterization in the production itself.

Guirau's choices as director, and the negative critical reactions these choices generated, illustrate the subjective nature of reception and the fundamentally divided nature of subjectivity. The performance *is* reception that can only be communicated within the context of what it claims to represent (the text). Likewise, the written text, during performance, is understood within the context of its material presence on stage. Because text stands for performance and performance stands for text, each always leading back to the other, they vie for the same signifier. Understood in this fashion, a theatrical production is more than just the interaction of two (or more) autonomous subjects (for example, author and director), because each pole of the binary text/spectacle is only comprehensible through a negative relationship to its opposite, to the thing which it is not. Moreover, in a modern adaptation of a classical play, script and staging engage in an implicit competition to see who is at the service of whom. Integrity of identity is continually thwarted because the two texts (the written and the per-

formed) rival for dominance in a contest that, paradoxically, embodies and erases them both. In a similar fashion, drag is bound by the binaries it claims to undo. Spectators can only perceive the critique of an essentialist notion of gender through lack, through their own awareness of the gap the separates the man who *presents* himself as a woman from the authentic woman he purports to represent. Paradoxically, then, in order for this critique to occur, audiences must engage in the very same polarizing categorization of “masculine” and “feminine” that is the object of subversion.

I would submit that the contemporary portrayal of the *duque*, far from detracting from the Calderonian text, actually mirrors the aesthetic of absence that is fundamental to the written text of *El galán*. Both script and spectacle are represented symbolically in language as *El galán fantasma*, but neither can ever constitute fully what the title signifies because “*galán fantasma*” points to an absence, both in terms of the abstract concept of representation (the staging never fully embodies the script and the script never fully contains the staging) and in the specifics of the plot. For this reason, although Federico’s characterization in the contemporary production was criticized for departing too radically from Calderón’s “original,” the dramatization of absence inherent in drag, a performance medium that chips away at both the masculinity and femininity of the performer, actually unites text and spectacle. The

modern *duque* lacks the *hombría* of a *gálan*, the affability of a fop, and the self-consciousness of a drag performer. Such absences reiterate the fundamental "lack" in the plot of *El galán fantasma*, which is, essentially, a play about a *galán* who does not exist.⁸

Indeed, Compañía Pequeño Teatro's production raises and complicates the question posed implicitly in the text, "to which character, precisely, does the *galán fantasma* of the title refer?" Does it refer to Astolfo, the "official" *galán* of the play, who feigns the ultimate absence in death? To the *duque*, another ghost-like character whose masculinity fades in and out of the modern staging and who, in forgoing marriage, performs a sort of self-erasure at the close of both text and spectacle? To the *galán* (if ungallant) Federico some scholars *expected* to see in Pequeño Teatro's performance, yet another conspicuous absence? The Duke's words to Julia, "¿Dónde está esa sombra si no es en tu deseo?" (1652-3) remind us that, like the personages in the play, our encounter with *El galán fantasma*, as text and character, in script and staging, is continually deferred. We seek him as we read and study the text, as we watch and analyze the performance, but we can never get a handle on him because he exists only in the symbolic expression of our desire to find him.

Guirau furthers the erasure of the *galán* suggested by the title and plot, ironizing masculine discourse

through a parody of the feminine. In the first photograph, Federico has expertly wielded a sword, a phallic stage property that affirms his role as a representative of power, social order and the law (even if he is a bit too well-dressed). However, it is precisely this instrument, with which the *duque* attempts to murder Astolfo, that brings to light the fact that Federico does not uphold the law that he represents. The second photograph illustrates how this production contests the duke's image as a figure of power through the use of stage properties and costume. The stereotypical depiction of femininity, expressed by means of the conspicuous display of the superficial trappings of the *toilette* and, in the video-taped performance, the *duque*'s hysterical whining, actually acquires a certain power here. As Federico trades his rapier for rollers, his penis for a *peinado*, the signifiers of feminine subjectivity render ridiculous the verbal expression of masculine subjectivity whose unmediated desire produces absence/death, in Federico's words, "pena, furia, veneno, rabia y muerte" (1174).⁹ Although this staging does affirm the notion that systems of signification are fundamentally phallocentric, it also shows how the very structures that promote sexist binaries, with their implicit hierarchies, can be problematized from within.¹⁰

At the close of both text and performance, the *duque* has developed an awareness of his own fragmented identity (and of the need for symbolic me-

diation of his desire) when he exclaims, upon deciding to wed Julia to Astolfo, "yo valgo más que yo mismo." (3125) With these words, he both asserts and denies his subjective integrity, demonstrating that he is in full control of his desire by expressing it via the discourse of socially-defined notions of honor and nobility and, ultimately, by *becoming* the institution of marriage. Federico's concept of himself as, literally, a man of his word is constituted in language. When he renounces his claim to Julia and pronounces her and Astolfo man and wife—"con Julia casado quiero que de mi corte te vayas—(3131-2), he creates the symbolic bond between the lovers that enables them to articulate their desire in a socially acceptable way, and he defines himself as upholder of the law. He is now a *galán fantasma*, dead as an ardent lover, but resurrected as a magnanimous authority figure. This dramatic affirmation of matrimony is rendered problematic by the fact that Federico must remain absent from the very institution that allows for his social (and dramatic) redemption. Guirau's sexually ambiguous portrayal of the *duque* emphasizes this half-hearted nod to social norms, presenting audiences with a Federico who, in spite of his leering, aggressive stance in some scenes, may well be believed that he will *not* be marrying Julia. This *quasi* drag performance, which affirms and denies conventional gender roles, parallels textual adaptation. Each is a double-edged sword that, as it cuts ties with old models, carves

out a space for new possibilities.

My reading of Compañía Pequeño Teatro's production of *El galán* attempts to mediate drag's two polarities, one liberating and the other limiting, and, at the same time, to find a critical middle ground to the issue of adapting classical plays for performance that privileges neither text nor spectacle. I will not share with you whether I liked this staging or not. In my analysis, in fact, I avoid discussing the quality of this staging and, instead, try to emphasize what it *does* and how it fits within current scholarly debates about gender, subjectivity, and the relationship between art and life. This constitutes a departure from performance-centered criticism that simply reviews a staging and moves in the direction of a critical approach that validates fully the textuality of performance. Ironically, my attempt at academic neutrality makes me realize just how much this adaptation engages my own desire. I am reminded to tread carefully the shaky ground that separates the self from the scholar because in the end, the two cannot be isolated. This idiosyncratic concept of reception is both good and bad news for those of us who love and study the theater of the Golden Age. It suggests that, although we find no definitive answers to the questions we ask of texts, our desire to connect with these plays (and with each other), a desire that can be mediated by theoretical positions open to a multiplicity of readings, compels us to keep searching.

NOTES

¹ The notion of an “original” text is problematic in a very real sense. We know that even during the Golden Age scripts were altered to appease censors and to suit the perceived tastes of theatergoers. For a discussion of the fate of manuscripts after they were purchased by *autores*, see Wilson 190-191.

² Melveena McKendrick concludes her 1975 study as follows, "... [F]or the purposes of propaganda, didacticism, moral teaching, righteous indignation and occasionally whole-hearted approval, woman's potentialities and possibilities were explored. But explored within the limits of what was socially conceivable... the *mujer varonil* in the Golden Age was still a woman being explored at the very early stages of emancipation and was therefore habitually compelled to conform to the social norm, however exciting her temporary departures from it had been" (334).

³ Weimer views Castaño’s cross-dressing, in its inversion of the misogynistic paradigm of "woman" espoused in the *Comedia*, as one element that "gives Los empeños de una casa a distinctly modern quality, separates it from most other Golden Age dramas and makes it worthy of even further examination" (97). Along these same lines, Connor argues in favor of the *mujer vestida de hombre*'s power to subvert cultural norms:

La mujer vestida de hombre que se
porta varonilmente o aun de una
manera superior a lo que puede
hacer el hombre corriente
representa un desafío a la
masculinidad esencial y
supuestamente natural . . . Su
desafío es subversivo porque la
metafísica de su época trata de
garantizar la jerarquía social y la
identidad sexual aunque los dos

conceptos son construcciones
socio-culturales. (144)

⁴ In examining performance traditions that employ drag, scholars have observed that male-to-female theatrical cross-dressing (as opposed to female-to-male) may not undermine conventional gender roles and, in fact, could actually serve the interests of patriarchy. For example, Sue-Ellen Case notes that because women were not allowed to perform in ancient Greek drama, male to female transvestism in plays of classical antiquity "can be regarded as allies in the project of suppressing actual women and replacing them with the masks of patriarchal production" (318). According to some performance theorists, women fare no better in contemporary drag. Leslie Ferris's introduction to *Crossing the Stage*, summarizes the controversy as follows, "Cross-dressing . . . is riddled with dissension and ambiguity. Contemporary drag, for example, answers to a viable gay aesthetic while simultaneously promulgating misogynistic images of women" (51). Though important differences exist between male-to-female and female-to-male theatrical cross-dressing in the *Comedia*, I am more interested in the ways that the quasi-drag performance in the modern staging of *El galán fantasma* illustrates the construction (and deconstruction) of both genders.

⁵ Performed by the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and directed by Germán del Castillo.

⁶ Directed by Hugo Márquez.

⁷ Donald T. Deitz's videolecture also emphasizes the inconsistency of the duque's characterization in this production. In fact, Deitz demonstrates that the Federico of the text is no less ambiguous than that of the contemporary staging.

⁸ In his study of Lacan and the *Comedia*, Stroud characterizes desire similarly, “Neither the Other nor any other can fully satisfy the subject’s demands . . . This insistent lack gives rise to desire, which arises from the gap or lack at the core of the subject” (*The Play* 65).

⁹ Stroud notes the potential for violence in masculine sexuality as postulated by Lacan, “phallic sexuality is characterized by a display of power through domination and control” (*The Play*, 145). Federico is an excellent (though ironic) example of this dynamic, especially in this contemporary incarnation.

¹⁰ This seems to be Judith Butler’s take on the concept of a discursively-constructed reality, of which Lacan represents one school of thought, in light of feminist strategies of resistance. Butler observes, “To claim that the subject is constituted is not to claim that it is determined; on the contrary, the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency” (“Contingent . . . ” 46). Though much of Butler’s language sounds Lacanian, she also states that “To the extent that the symbolic encodes a set of idealizations, it is constituted by the imaginary that it claims to govern. In this sense, the symbolic is nothing other than the reification of a given imaginary, and, in the case of Lacan, that is the heterosexual imaginary.” (142). Rather than rejecting Lacan’s model of subjectivity, Butler proposes a critique of its heterosexist underpinnings, “What does it mean to be “outside” or “beyond” the “masculine” or the “feminine” in this sense? That region is yet to be mapped, but its mapping will demand a rethinking of the governing power of the symbolic as the heterosexualizing prerequisite by which the viability of the subject, masculine or feminine, is linguistically instituted” (“For a Careful . . . ” 142).

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INSIDIOUS ECHOES: BALLAD RESONANCE AND BODILY THREATS IN *PERIBÁÑEZ*

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A single word or phrase, then, amplified or not by a phonetic scheme, may easily carry rumors of its resounding cave. So, too, can those schemes and patterns themselves if given originally a charge of significance. —John Hollander, *The Figure of Echo* 95.

The ties between the oral tradition and the theater of Lope de Vega have been well documented. Literature scholars, cross-checking various *comedia* texts against any number of *cancioneros* and *romanceros*, have devoted considerable attention to locating the precise literary origins of what have come to be called Lope's "Romancero plays." Despite the clear value of tracing these literary pedigrees, however, this traditional source study approach to Lope's theater presents two distinct problems for *comedia* scholars interested in performance, particularly if this research predates the early 1970s. First, apart from a ubiquitous side-by-side comparison of textual fragments, these studies rarely provide the kind of engaging critical analysis

we have come to expect in the last thirty to forty years. Instead, they exist to a large extent as encyclopedic works of literary trivia, useful to the contemporary researcher mostly as a point of departure for a more detailed and thorough exegesis. Because the authors of these source studies tend to view the *romances* solely as part of the low cultural world of “folklore,” while seeing the *comedias* as clearly belonging to the high cultural world of “literature,” their interest in the ballads themselves usually endures no farther than the point at which the songs are said to give rise to the plays. By privileging the *comedias* over the *romances*, these scholars create a false hierarchy between the “cultivated work of art” and its “popular source,” rather than exploring the ways in which the *comedias* and *romances* form a complex intertext; rather than analyzing the ways in which Lope, the literary playwright, becomes both scribe and jongleur, glossing the *Romancero* at the same time he re-articulates its performance texts.

The second problem with traditional source study criticism is that it often betrays a post-Gutenberg bias in favor of the graphical representation of language; which is to say, the well-intentioned search for the oral—and hence, performative—origins of Lope’s *comedias* is accomplished precisely through an effacement of the very notion of performance itself. A scholar like Jerome Aaron Moore, for instance, makes this clear in his own early twentieth-century source study of Lope’s

Romancero plays when he says that one of his primary goals is to trace those instances of verbatim textual co-incidence between the printed *romance* collections and Lope's published *comedias* (1-2). Hence, by intimating that there is (only) a one-to-one relationship between the printed "source" and the dramatic "text," he effectively —though not necessarily deliberately— excludes from consideration any ballads that Lope could not have accessed via the printed word. Yet, since the published *cancioneros* of the sixteenth century largely consisted of transcriptions of performance texts that had circulated orally for generations, Lope did not need visual contact with these collections in order to access the *Romancero*. Like nearly everyone else in his culture, he had rattling around inside his head numerous ballads from which he could easily—and often, uncannily— draw inspiration. As Marsha Swislocki has rightly pointed out, even in those instances when Lope did, in fact, consult the printed texts, he did not necessarily have to limit himself to only those tangible sources ("El romance de *La adultera*" 214). Because his mental archive likely included several variants of each subsequently published *romance*, his "cerebral *cancionero*" undoubtedly provided a much more fertile ground for his ideas than any single printed text we may point to as a "source" —or worse yet, *the source*— for a particular play.

The "artifactual" prejudice inherent in traditional

source study criticism stems, I think, from a far too literary classification of the *mester de juglaria*. For many scholars, the *mester de juglaria* is first and foremost a poetic tradition, one that functions as the low-cultural counterpart to the refined poetry of the high-cultural *mester de clerecia*. In this regard, the most important aspects that define these two traditions against each other are those that relate to the differences between consonant and assonant rhyme, between flawless *alejandrinos* and those poetic lines that demonstrate less metrical perfection, between the delimited quatrains of *cuaderna vía* and the indefinite strophic configuration of the epic (and later, ballad) forms. And while most scholars routinely acknowledge the orality inherent in the *mester de juglaria*, this acknowledgement usually serves more as a practical tool for explaining the lack of metrical precision within the *mester's* residual poetic texts than it does as a fundamental recognition of one of the constitutive components of the tradition itself; which is to say, for many scholars—including those engaged in tracing the connections between the oral tradition and Lope's theater—the poems of the *mester de juglaria* represent little more than unsophisticated folkloric texts that achieve real literary value only after having been printed within the pages of the published *cancioneros*.

As I have argued elsewhere, however, the jongleurequesque tradition —a term I prefer over “*mester*

de juglaria” precisely because the Spanish phrase carries with it so much literary baggage—fundamentally constitutes the popular theater of medieval Europe (Burningham 169-78). In other words, the “*mester de juglaria*” does not represent a “poetic” category that just happened to involve performance; rather, it is a performance tradition in and of itself—a genuine form of theater, in fact—whose performances may or may not have included poetic texts like epics, lays, and/or ballads. (Indeed, for many professional jongleurs, the literary text was nothing more than a fortuitous afterthought, or just one among many bits of material used to recapture the attention of an audience that had grown tired of watching somersaults.) This rich performance tradition—which spanned the centuries between the fall of Rome and the so-called rebirth of Western drama in the *Quem queritis* trope, and which involved countless professional and amateur performers like those described by Albert Lord in *The Singer of Tales*—had a profound performative impact on the development of the early Spanish stage. And this impact went well beyond the lending of stories, themes, motifs, and metrical forms to literary playwrights like Lope (although this literary impact should by no means be undervalued). In many ways, Lope’s Romancero plays are not simply literary texts that incorporate a few ballads here and there for dramatic effect. Rather, these *comedias* exist as elaborate performative variants of texts that

have circulated —in variant form— for perhaps hundreds of years. In short, these plays do not so much “borrow” material from the jongleuresque tradition as become an integral and enduring part of its fabric and history; which brings us to the issue of ballad resonance.

As a performative extension of the jongleuresque tradition, Lope’s Romancero plays are subject to the same rules of orality that govern the rest of the *Romancero*; which is to say, because the *Romancero* consists of hundreds of interrelated, complementary, and often conflicting textual variants, the interpretive web connecting Lope’s *comedias* to the rest of the jongleuresque corpus is almost as open-ended as our own modern Internet. Due to linguistic echoes that link several interrelated ballads, the underlying performative structure of the oral tradition creates a complex intertextuality through which entire discursive worlds are passed back and forth from one text to another. When Lope re-articulates the songs of the *Romancero* within his various *comedias*, his theater necessarily situates itself within the same web of linguistic and semantic associations that constitute the oral tradition. Thus, the same discursive transference that we find within the *Romancero* itself —where one ballad frequently echoes a second one, which in turn might echo a third, and then a forth, and then a fifth— becomes an integral component of Lope’s *comedias*. And this reverberating sequence of interrelated echoes draws

into his *comedia* performances a myriad of ballads we might not immediately recognize as “sources” if what we are looking for are verbatim linguistic correlations that are easily recognizable on the printed pages of *cancioneros* and play scripts.

A close reading of *Peribáñez o el comendador de Ocaña* —a reading I conceive of both *in* performance and *through* performance— demonstrates that these kind of performative intertextualities tend to insert themselves into Lope’s *comedia* texts, and that these jongleuresque echoes can very often amplify the figurative mechanics at work within the play. In this way, ballads that apparently have very little to do with either the verbatim text of Lope’s *comedia* —or even its principle thematic development— can have an insidious influence on the hermeneutics of the total work. (And I use the term “insidious” deliberately here because—as will become apparent— this word will convey its own echoes within my analysis.)

As is the case with *El caballero de Olmedo*, traditional source study criticism tells us that Lope found his themes for *Peribáñez* in the oral tradition, specifically in four verses from a popular octosyllabic song. Juan María Marín, in his introduction to the Cátedra edition of the play, explains the relationship between the *comedia* text and its popular source in the following terms: “La génesis de la obra, pues, fue esa: del conocimiento de una canción popular, el autor pasó a escribir una historia

que justificara aquellos versos” (40). Thus it would seem, as we have already noted, that the relevance of the song ends precisely where the play begins, since Marín’s description of the relationship between *romance* and *comedia* implies —for better or worse— that the ballad cannot stand on its own; that as little more than a piece of popular folklore it requires some kind of “justification” before it can become a true work of art. Yet, if we look much more closely at the relationship between the “source” and the play —and more importantly, at the performative relationship between the *comedia* and the jongleuresque tradition— we can begin to see that Lope has not merely amplified four short popular verses into a full-length play; rather, he has relied on the fact that people attending his *corral* performances have themselves been amateur performers of this and other songs. He thus depends on his audience’s intimate knowledge of these interrelated texts in order to fill in important semiotic gaps crucial to a full appreciation of his *comedia*. In other words, far from being an “autonomous” work of high art, merely “inspired” by one or more folkloric “sources” gleaned from the published *cancioneros*, *Peribáñez* is really an incomplete text without the echoes of the *Romancero* that reverberate inside the heads of its spectators as they sit listening to the actors.

In her own analysis of this play, Marsha Swislocki indicates that, in addition to the *romance* cited

by Marín above, at least two other popular songs inform this text. Breaking with the traditional source study model, however, she not only highlights these newfound “sources,” she also engages her readers in a discussion of their semiotic function within the context of the play. She persuasively argues that what we see in act two, scene twelve —a scene in which Casilda attempts to deflect the sexual advances of the Comendador, who has come to her home disguised as a field hand while her husband away—is an interplay between two distinct *Romancero* texts: in the discourse of the Comendador we can detect the presence of “El adulterio castigado” (Durán 161), while Casilda’s response clearly re-articulates the ballad Swislocki calls “La esposa fiel” (Durán 175).¹ “El adulterio castigado” narrates the story of a woman seduced by a strange man while her husband is away hunting in the mountains. When the husband returns and demands to know whose horse, whose arms and whose lance he unexpectedly finds outside the door, the woman more or less confesses and asks for a swift death. The *romance* ends enigmatically, although the clear implication is that the husband will kill the lovers. “La esposa fiel” deals with a man who returns home after many years of war. When his wife (strangely) does not recognize him and asks if he has any news of her husband, the man requests a description and then informs her that her husband is dead, upon which he immediately seeks her hand. When she

responds that she would prefer to enter a convent rather than to marry again, the man declares his true identity and the *romance* ends happily.

Swislocki indicates that we can find a number of important lexical connections between these *romances* and the dialogue of the play. A *comedia* verse like “No os quiere bien vuestro esposo/ pues a Toledo se fue/ y os deja una noche” (2.12.493-96; I: 770) clearly carries over from the thematic context of “El adulterio castigado.” And Lope repeats the image of the first *romance* verse (“Blanca sois, señora mia — más que el rayo del sol”) when his Comendador states: “Demás que, saliendo vos,/ sale el sol” (2.12.489-90; I: 770). As for the “La esposa fiel,” the most salient connection can be found in Casilda’s first line, which as Marín also pointed out (note, 128) is nothing less than a reconfiguration of the first ballad verse: “Caballero de lejas tierras” becomes “Labrador de lejas tierras” (2.12.505; I: 771). Swislocki argues that Lope is playing here with a concept of intertextual resonance; that if we superimpose the *romance* verse on top of the dramatic verse we have a very good idea of the function of the Comendador in the play, since at this moment he is a “caballero” disguised as a “labrador.” And, as with the *romance*, Casilda rejects the advances of the seducer, preferring her husband.

Again, we might be tempted to see these two *romances* as nothing more than other “sources” that Lope has borrowed and then amplified to his own

literary advantage. But as Swislocki argues, the interesting thing about the connection between the ballads and the play is that Lope not only creates an intertextuality here between the *comedia* and the jongleuresque tradition, he also uses the drama to highlight an intertextuality already existing inside the *Romancero* itself. The whole scene, she says, is a dialogue between the two *romances* in which the Comendador initiates the conversation with “El adulterio castigado” and Casilda responds with “La esposa fiel” (“*La adúltera*” 220). In other words, like the “pointing hands” John Dagenais has studied in the margins of the medieval manuscript tradition (xvi)—diacritical markings that function as signposts, illuminating for successive readers a point that a previous reader has found to be particularly interesting—this dialogic exchange is Lope’s way of drawing our attention to an important relationship he has discovered through a lifetime of performative contact with the *Romancero*.

Nevertheless, if we compare the rhetorical style of these two dialogic voices we can begin to see important differences between them. Listening carefully to the words of the Comendador in performance we might note that his style does not *sound* like that of the *romance*. Perhaps seeking to demonstrate that the Comendador’s social station cannot be hidden behind such a pitiful disguise, Lope deliberately abandons the *romance* form and opts instead for the more poetically elegant *redondillas*. In

this way, the Comendador's discourse no longer maintains the cadences of the *Romancero* so prevalent throughout the rest of the play. Casilda's discourse, on the other hand, does indeed belong to the world of the *Romancero* not only in its metrical form, but also in its use of oral formulas as well. For example, the oral formulaic structure of a *comedia* verse like “requebros a maravilla” (2.12.534; I: 771) appears in no less than three other disparate ballads: in the “Sueño del rey Rodrigo” we find “vestidas a maravilla” (Menéndez Pidal 48); in the “Romance del moro Calaínos” we find “hermosa a maravilla” (Díaz Roig 187); and in the “Romance del conde Alarcos y de la infanta Solisa” we find “no es mucha maravilla” (Díaz Roig 242).

More importantly, however, this oral formula recurs shortly thereafter in *Peribáñez* itself when the play again self-consciously evokes the living jongleuresque tradition from which it has sprung. Having discovered the unauthorized portrait of his wife commissioned by the Comendador, Peribáñez has his fears of dishonor confirmed —though somewhat refuted— when he overhears the latest musical gossip sung by a “Segador:”

La mujer de Peribáñez
hermosa es a maravilla;
el Comendador de Ocaña
de amores la requería.
La mujer es virtuosa
cuanto hermosa y cuanto linda;

mientras Pedro está en Toledo
desta suerte respondía:
«Más quiero yo a Peribáñez
con su capa la pardilla
que no a vos, Comendador,
con la vuesa guarneada.» (2.21.869-79; I: 775)

By staging the quintessential dissemination of the very “source text” that lies at the heart of this particular *comedia*, this performative moment becomes notable for its meta-theatrical complexity, a complexity closely resembling a Russian matrushka doll in which nearly identical “texts” are nested inside each other. The performance of this song reconfigures a text which —in this present reconfiguration— has now folded back on itself three times, becoming much more than simply a dramatic “source.” Lope has “borrowed” this song from his own spectators and has now “sung” it back to them twice: first, through the mouth of Casilda, newly contextualized for her dramatic dialogue with the Comendador; and then a second time, through the mouth of this jongleuresque narrator whose performance is a re-contextualization of the (newly elaborated) original song. The Segador, then, is more than just an amateur jongleur who unwittingly informs Peribáñez of his dishonor. At this moment in the play he is nothing less than a performative representation of the very spectators who sit watching a spectacle they are largely responsible for generating.

Thus, when Lope expands the four verses of the original song into the twelve verses sung here by the Segador, his textual additions include not one, but two oral formulaic expressions drawn from the jongleuresque tradition: “hermosa a maravilla,” and “desta suerte respondía.” This tie to the performative rhetoric of the oral tradition is crucial for a comprehensive appreciation of *Peribáñez*, and I would like to re-examine Casilda’s dialogue with the Comendador a little more closely in order to explore another balladic intertextuality that plays itself in this scene. What I will argue here is that there exists another pertinent connection between the jongleuresque tradition and *Peribáñez* that has not yet been examined by other critics (at least not in this specific context). Of course, I do not wish to imply that this particular ballad —in some printed version— represents a literary “source” for the play; for, I simply do not believe Lope needed to consult a tangible *cancionero* in order to access this material. On the contrary, what I would like to suggest is that Lope, inscribing himself *performatively* within the jongleuresque tradition, has adopted the formulaic language of this *romance* in order to create a powerful allusion to it. The ballad in question (“En Santa Gadea de Burgos”) is perhaps the best-known *romance* from the Cid cycle, and can be found in any number of transcribed variants within several *cancioneros* and modern anthologies. For my purposes here I cite Agustín Durán’s *Romancero gen-*

eral of 1859, but my argument remains valid for any one of the differing performative variants, including the alternative version Durán himself provides.² What I would like to highlight in my comparison of Casilda's response to the Comendador and the Cid ballad is the rhetorical oscillation between positive and negative images present in both the play and the oral tradition. First the *romance*:

— Villanos matente, Alfonso,
Villanos, que no fidalgos;
De las Asturias de Oviedo,
Que no sean castillanos.
Mátente con aguijadas,
No con lanzas ni con dardos;
Con cuchillos cachicuernos,
No con puñales dorados;
Abarcas traigan calzadas,
Que no zapatos con lazos;
Capas traigan aguaderas,
No de contray ni frisado;
Con camisones de estopa,
No de holanda ni labrados;
Vayan cabalgando en burras,
Non en mulas ni caballos;
Frenos traigan de cordel,
Non de cueros fogueados;
Mátente por las aradas,
Non por villas ni poblados,
Y sáquente el corazón
Por el siniestro costado,
Si non dijeres la verdad
De lo que te es preguntado,

Si fuiste, ni consentiste
en la muerte de tu hermano.— (Durán 524)

Then the play:

El comendador de Ocaña
servirá dama de estima,
no con sayuelo de grana
ni con saya de palmilla.
Copete traerá rizado,
gorguera de holanda fina,
no cofia de pinos tosca
y toca de argentería.
En coche o silla de seda,
los disantos irá a misa;
hno vendrá en carro de estacas
de los campos a las viñas.
Dirále en cartas discretas
requiebros a maravilla,
no labradores desdenes,
envueltos en señorías.
Olerále a guantes de ámbar,
a perfumes y pastillas;
no a tomillo ni cantueso,
poleo y zarzas floridas. (2.12.521-40; I: 771)

Numerous critics have debated the possible function of this particular Cid ballad as a “source” for an earlier (and somewhat marginal) exchange between Bartolo and Peribáñez himself (see Silverman 195-98).³ But no one, at least to my knowledge, has noted the crucial resonance of this ballad within

Casilda's jongleuresque response to the Comendador's sexual advances. If we accept that Lope produced even a portion of the several hundred *comedias* he is purported to have written over the course of his career as a dramatist, then we must assume that his creative method resembled, at least in some way, that of the oral performers Albert Lord describes in *The Singer of Tales*, performers who draw on a remembered archive of formulaic phrases in order to recreate a text each time they sing it. Clearly Lope has absorbed the descriptive formula of the *Romancero* here and has re-articulated it in his theatrical work. Superficially, this provides audiences with the stylistic "flavor" of the popular source. Nevertheless, this performative re-articulation functions in a much more profound way within the context of the play than merely adding what we might call "local color." If John Hollander is right when he says that even a single word or phrase —especially if delivered orally— "may easily carry rumors of its resounding cave" and that these semantic rumors can endow other texts with "a charge of significance" (95), then Lope's re-articulation of the Cid formula here becomes essential in the performative structure of his *comedia*, prefiguring as it does the final action.

Marín correctly points out that the content of Casilda's response to the Comendador is precisely the central theme of the drama: "el rechazo del poderoso y la preferencia del humilde" (128). Lope's

great dilemma, however, is that, in the overt ballads he has supposedly used as “sources” for this exchange of dialogue, all the characters come from the same social class: in “El castigo del adulterio,” the husband, wife, and lover all presumably belong to the aristocracy; and although we cannot be sure of the exact social status of the husband and wife of “La esposa fiel,” they clearly belong to the same level. There is simply no motive in either of these *romances* to suggest the conflict between an upper class character and a lower class character, between “el poderoso” and “el humilde,” so central to *Peribáñez*. But the oral formulaic allusion to the Cid ballad here suggests the necessary synthesis for this ultimate outcome. The Comendador is no mere seducer of women, no petty Don Juan; he is the governing authority in the region, and, like the Comendador from *Fuenteovejuna*, he far oversteps the bounds of honor by forcing himself on this woman after having sent her husband away. Likewise, Casilda is not just a virtuous woman who proves true to her husband in his absence; at the moment of the attempted seduction, she is the voice of honor and justice in a society badly out of balance. Casilda subtly threatens the Comendador when she employs the formulaic rhetoric that the Cid used when facing a King Alfonso, whose own government and honor was then seriously in question. And, cognizant to whom she actually speaks, Casilda explicitly finishes this threat with “Vete,

pues... que si Peribáñez viene no verás la luz del día” (2.12.565-68; I: 771), which, in effect, is exactly what occurs. In the end, the Comendador dies at the hands of Peribáñez, at the hands of a “villano,” “un villano, que no hidalgo,” “[un villano] con camisones de estopa,/ no de holanda ni labrados,” “[un villano] con su capa la pardilla” rather than “la guarnevida.” In sum, what Lope introduces here is a third echoing voice. And instead of speaking, as Swislocki has indicated, of a *romancero* “dialogue” between “El adulterio castigado” and “La esposa fiel,” we should perhaps speak of a “trialogue,” because we cannot fully appreciate the inherent conflict of *Peribáñez* if we do not take into account “Las amenazas del Cid.”

And yet, a “trialogue” is essentially unstable, representing as it does something of an unbalanced conversation. Thus, while the oral formulaic echoes of the Cid ballad greatly enhance the semantic value of the play’s class conflict, they also tend to complicate the resolution of that conflict. If, up to this point, I have been suggesting that Lope’s reiteration of these ballads constitutes a kind of subtle aside to his audience through which he knowingly winks at them and acknowledges their own performative contribution to his work, I would like to move beyond this notion here in order to suggest that it is the characters themselves who play this intertextual game, that both Casilda and the Comendador self-consciously engage in this *ro-*

mancero dialogue and are no more oblivious to the rhetorical implications of their own echoing speeches than we are. The Comendador, for instance, immediately comprehends the menacing significance of Casilda's rhetorical allusion to the Cid ballad, and thus conspires to outmaneuver her by actually converting Peribáñez into a Cid figure. In a move reminiscent both of Alfonso's banishment of Rodrigo de Vivar (along with his three hundred men), and of David's dispatching of Uriah into battle in order to cover up his adultery with Bathsheba (an episode which also inspired several interrelated ballads), the Comendador decides at the beginning of act three to knight Peribáñez, putting him in charge of a contingency of a hundred men before sending him off into battle in order to facilitate his own desired adultery with Casilda. Scene two consists almost entirely of an enactment of this knighting ritual.

What is particularly important about this ritual ceremony is the way in which its formulaic rhetoric once again functions to tie Peribáñez to Rodrigo de Vivar. As anyone familiar with the *Poema de mio Cid* will immediately recognize, perhaps the most important traditional epithet by which the epic's jongleuresque narrator refers to the Spanish hero is “el que en buen hora çinxó espada” (68). Indeed, and the entire text—which is to say, the single transcription we have available for consultation—is rife with epithetical allusions to the Cid, most of

which employ variants of the verb “ciñir.” Lope’s *comedia* usage of the term emphasizes the importance of this oral formulaic echo by causing it to reverberate several times in some fifty *comedia* verses. Thus when Peribáñez arrives at the ceremony, he has but one request to make of the Comendador: that his lord personally bestow the knighthood upon him.

Que la espada
me ciña su señoría,
para que ansí vaya honrado.
.....

¡Pardiez, señor, hela aquí!
Cíñamela su mercé.” (3.2.151-58; I: 778)

As Laura Vidler astutely points out in her own study of *El caballero de Olmedo*, “The sword is the classic symbol of the *caballero*. It is a visual sign of class status, separating the nobility from the church and peasantry” (110). Thus, the rhetorical introduction of this third thematic axis into *Peribáñez*—especially an axis so closely associated with notions of chivalric honor—nullifies the very class differences introduced into the play by the ballad that engendered its introduction. The Comendador’s elevation of Peribáñez’s social station makes it nearly impossible for Casilda’s threat of a “villainous” revenge killing of the “aristocratic” Comendador to be carried out, as Peribáñez himself notes at the end of the ceremony:

Vos me ceñistes espada,
con que ya entiendo de honor;
que antes yo pienso, señor,
que entendiera poco o nada.
Y pues iguales los dos
con este honor me dexáis,
mirad cómo le guardáis,
o quexaréme de vos. (3.2.197-204; I: 779)

Thus, in the end, when the Comendador lies dying from the wounds inflicted by Peribáñez, when Leonardo points out that Casilda's threatening prophecy seems to have been fulfilled ("¿Qué un villano te mató" (3.18.792; I: 785)), the Comendador rightly refuses to accept this interpretation and echoes Peribáñez's own statement of chivalric equality bestowed through the ritual ceremony:

Yo le abono.
No es villano, es caballero;
que pues le ceñí la espada
con la guarnición dorada,
no ha empleado mal su azero.
(3.18.794-98; I: 785)

It bears emphasizing, of course, that Lope could not have borrowed this rhetorical formula directly from the *Poema de mio Cid* itself, since this tangible, literary document was not discovered until the eighteenth century. We should also point out, moreover, that with one notable exception, the verb "ci-

ñir” is conspicuously absent from the ballad cycle itself; it simply does not play the same important formulaic role it does in the epic. Ramón Menéndez Pidal, however, has spoken of what he calls the “estado latente” of the oral tradition, by which he means that any song or portion thereof remains a “potential” text lying just under the surface of the actual text performed by a singer. His terminology is particularly appropriate here in its suggestion of genetic dormancy, because this is precisely what seems to have occurred with the Cid ballads. Like a recessive gene that skips a generation, the notion of “ciñir espada” (as a latent performative trait of the Cid story) has apparently jumped obliquely from the medieval jongleuresque tradition directly onto Lope’s stage without surfacing in the intermediate ballads themselves. And this strongly suggests that there exists one other performative intertextuality still reverberating inside Lope’s “comedia cave” (to borrow Hollander’s metaphor).

The only traditional Cid ballad to include the verb “ciñir” is one that narrates the ceremonial knighting of Rodrigo de Vivar (not coincidentally) by the king himself. This particular *romance* is said to have provided one of the many ballad “sources” for Guillén de Castro’s *Las mocedades del Cid*; a work which, like *Peribáñez*, makes us explicitly privy to the ceremonial knighting of the hero by his lord. Although the exact dates for the composition of both *Peribáñez* and *Las mocedades del Cid* are

still somewhat disputed, Lope's text was probably written sometime between 1608 and 1613 (Marín 40-45), while Castro's play probably came into being sometime between 1612 and 1615 (García Lorenzo 53). And given that Castro was self-consciously a disciple of Lope, the nearly concurrent composition of the two texts suggests that the two playwrights either directly or indirectly influenced each other's work. Indeed, that one *comedia* may very well be reading of the other goes a long way toward explaining an otherwise extraordinary set of textual coincidences. We recall that at the end of Castro's text, Rodrigo, who has a price on his head for the revenge killing Count Lozano, cunningly presents his head at court and demands the reward —namely, Ximena's hand in marriage—while leaving it up to his beloved the decision whether to actually remove his head from his shoulders. The happy ending comes about through Ximena's decision not to execute the vengeance she has demanded throughout most of the play. Likewise, at the end of *Peribáñez*, the title character, who also has a price on his head for his revenge killing of the Comendador, presents himself at court and demands the reward —here the thousand *escudos*— on behalf of Casilda. The happy ending is again effectuated by the king's decision not to execute his punishment after hearing from Peribáñez the entire history of the Comendador's treachery.

But this brings us back full circle to the perfor-

mative resonance of the Cid ballad cycle in the development and resolution of *Peribáñez*'s class conflicts. Even prior to Peribáñez's appearance before his sovereign in the final scene, the discourse surrounding him remains profoundly haunted by the Cid's villainous threat to King Alfonso, a motif introduced into the play first by Bartolo and then by Casilda: Gómez Manrique informs the king that a "labrador" (3.23.872; I: 787) has killed the Comendador, and the king responds by inquiring whether this "villano" (3.23.879; I: 787) has been captured. Later, when Peribáñez arrives at court, a page again announces that a "labrador" (3.26.921; I: 787) wishes to speak with His Majesty, while Peribáñez introduces himself to the king as a man from a "villana casta" (3.27.948; I: 788). Thus, as with Leonardo's previously mentioned lament that a "villain" has killed the Comendador, this rhetoric heavily implies that Casilda's insidious threat has seemingly been fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the reverberating echoes of the Cid ballad again influence Lope's *comedia* text one last time by undermining this implication. When the king gives Peribáñez a final opportunity to explain himself before summarily executing him, this "villain" uses the confession both to implicate his aristocratic victim and to subtly raise (the question of) his own social standing through an oblique epithetical allusion to his newfound chivalric status:

Hallé mis puertas rompidas
y mi mujer destocada,
como corderilla simple
que está del lobo en las garras.
Dio voces, llegué, saqué
la misma daga y espada
que ceñí para servirte,
no para tan triste hazaña;
passéle el pecho, y entonces
dexó la cordera blanca,
porque yo, como pastor,
supe del lobouitarla.

(3.27.997-1008; I: 788; my emphasis)

Again, like the Comendador who forgives Peribáñez because he has become a peer, the King ultimately pardons his subject's vengeance precisely because he has become a Cid figure, a *caballero* whose sense of honor is matched only by his sense of loyalty. Indeed, the King's final action in the play serves to complete the process begun in act three when the Comendador elevates Peribáñez from "labrador" to "capitán." The King and Queen are so moved by Peribáñez's valor and by his overwhelming concern for his "fama," they agree to pay him the reward offered, they give him license to carry both defensive and offensive arms, and they officially put him in charge of the one hundred men he commanded under the now deceased Comendador. In short, the play's final scene resonates heavily with the reverberating echoes of the Cid's own

ritual knighthood in the ballad cycle:

Y en ella se habia armado
Caballero Don Rodrigo
De Vivar, el afamado.
El Rey le ciñó la espada;
Paz en la boca le ha dado,
No le diera pescozada
Como á otros habia dado,
Y por hacerle mas honra
La Reina le dió el caballo,
Y Doña Urraca la infanta,
Las espuelas le ha calzado.
Novecientos caballeros
Don Rodrigo habia armado;
Mucha honra le hace el Rey
Y mucho fuera loado,
Porque fuera muy valiente
En ganar lo que es contado,
Y en otros muchos lugares
Que á su Rey ha conquistado.
(Durán 491)

Of course, a traditional “source study” approach would probably not recognize this ballad as being intimately connected to *Peribáñez*, since there are virtually no linguistic traces —as there are for the other ballad resonances we have been exploring here— tying the *romance* to the *comedia*’s final scene. But therein lies the “insidiousness” of the *Romancero* echoes that permeate the play. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines “insidious” in

two ways: primarily, as “treacherous” and as “awaiting a chance to entrap;” and secondarily, as “having a gradual and cumulative effect[;] developing so gradually as to be well established before becoming apparent” (s.v. “*insidious*”). The first of these definitions certainly speaks to the implied threat of bodily harm inherent in Casilda’s citation of the “Santa Gadea” ballad when she cautions the Comendador that he is playing a dangerous game. But the second definition speaks to the cumulative nature of these ballad echoes over the course of the play, echoes that serve to “entrap” Lope’s audience within a deliberately “in-Cid-iou[s]” interpretative framework. From the very early scene in act one when Bartolo first evokes the “Santa Gadea” ballad, to the crucial moment in act two where Casilda cloaks her warning to the Comendador in the discourse of this same *romance*, through to the end of act three and its unrelenting variations on the theme of “ceñir espada,” the various echoes from the Cid cycle —along with all the reverberating semantic “rumors” that surround them (Holland 95)— gradually accumulate so that by the time the play gets to its final scene, audiences well-versed in the ballad tradition just might have the sneaking suspicion that they have somehow seen this all before; or, at a minimum, that they have at least heard it somewhere, perhaps even coming out of their own mouths.

NOTES

¹ Swislocki calls these ballads as “La adúltera” and “La esposa fiel,” while Mercedes Díaz Roig entitles them “Romance de blanca niña” (263) and “Las señas del esposo” (270), respectively. Throughout this present study I will defer to Agustín Durán’s terminology for the sake of consistency among the many differing ballad references I intend to make.

² I am aware of the paradox of insisting on the performative nature of these texts while having little recourse but to cite them literarily.

³ This earlier exchange proceeds as follows:

Bartolo:

¡Oh, que nunca le trujeran,
pluguiera al Cielo, de soto!
A la fe, no se alaben
De aquesta fiesta los mozos.
¡Oh mal hayas, el novillo!
Nunca en el abril lluvioso
halles yerba en verde prado,
más que si fuera en agosto.
Siempre te venza el contrario
Cuando estuvieres celoso,
y por los bosques bramando,
halles secos los arroyos.
Mueres en manos del vulgo,
a pura garrocha, en coso;
no te mate caballero
con lanza o cuchillo de oro.
Mal lacayo por detrás,
con el azero mohoso,
te haga sentar por fuerça,
y manchar en sangre el polvo.
Peribáñez:
Repórtate ya, si quieres,

y dinos lo que es, Bartolo:
que no maldijera más
Zamora a Bellido Dolfos.
(Act 1, scene 4; I: 756)

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**ANTÓN, EL SERVIDOR DE DOS AMOS EN
EL VALIENTE NEGRO EN FLANDES DE
ANDRÉS DE CLARAMONTE Y CORROY**

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Sabido es que los personajes de la comedia del Siglo de Oro que presentan profundidad y dimensionalidad en su caracterización, tales como Segismundo, don Juan Tenorio, don Alonso de Olmedo y otros por el estilo, permiten al actor aficionado como al profesional representarlos con cierta facilidad. Estas características de riqueza dramática existe también en los personajes femeninos, Estrella, Laurencia, y hasta cierto punto en doña Leonor, y a su vez en los personajes del gracioso: Clarín, Catalinón, Tello, etc. Sin embargo, la tarea de la interpretación de los personajes en las obras de los llamados dramaturgos de segunda categoría, el actor tiende a hacer una figura acartonada o caricatura de los mismos. Añádase además la difícil y ardua tarea de construir un personaje de la comedia a veces basado en las llamadas características de su tipo, usando como fuente las rúbricas de Lope en el *arte nuevo*. Es curioso notar, que tanto los aficionados como los profesionales tienden a esbozar entonces su rol de galán, caballero, dama, vejete, y gracioso basado en

estas lecturas paratextuales, creando un pastiche del gracioso. Dicho de otra manera, crean un esbozo del personaje, una imitación, cuando a juicio de este crítico y observador de la performance, debería estar caracterizando a un personaje. Moni Yakim nos recuerda que “*Acting is being rather than exhibiting. As an actor you do not imitate the character. The qualities and behavior of the character must integrate into your own being.*” (Yakim 2)¹. Este es el reto del director y el actor ante un clásico del Siglo de Oro porque la tendencia del actor del siglo veintiuno, ese actor de hoy día entrenado en las escuelas del “sistema” Stanislavskiano y todas sus elucubraciones, es “ser”, a la vez que representar.

Central a esta propuesta es elucidar una serie de consejos dramáticos para la construcción del personaje gracioso a través de la obra *El valiente negro en Flandes*. Partiendo de esta premisa, se examinará al personaje gracioso Antón en la comedia *El Valiente Negro en Flandes* de don Andrés de Claramonte, no sólo como gracioso sino también las repercusiones de ser negro y esclavo, dentro de la obra. Hay que tomar en cuenta que este trabajo no se propone aplicar las teorías ya expuestas por la crítica acerca del personaje del gracioso². Mucho menos se trata de un tratado donde se esboza y caracteriza al gracioso o a los graciosos en la comedia más bien una invitación a aplicar las técnicas de la actuación contemporánea para ayudar a caracterizar el rol de Antón y que el

actor no caiga en la trampa de crear un gracioso común, el estereotipo del gracioso, un personaje cómico por el mero hecho de que es un personaje que Claramonte identifica como gracioso. Más bien se debería tomar en cuenta que es un Antón, además de gracioso es *negro* y añadir que los estudios hechos por la crítica acerca de raza y etnia³ se pueden aplicar hasta cierto punto, siempre y cuando apoyen las motivaciones subtextuales del personaje en la obra. En otras palabras, aquello que sirva el texto teatral y pueda ayudar al actor a la creación de su personaje será de suma importancia a la construcción del mismo, siempre y cuando se pueda justificar dentro del mundo creado por Claramonte. Por último, siempre es difícil explicar, escribir y detallar aquello que tenga que ver con el proceso creador. Este tratado intenta como otros que caracterizan mis escritos, pasar a las páginas las teorías sobre el arte dramático, lo que Benabú y Rodríguez Cuadros han explorado en sus investigaciones, hablar sobre el arte de la actuación en el tablado.

No debe sorprender que Fra Molinero, en un capítulo donde estudia la imagen del negro en el teatro del Siglo de Oro, titule un capítulo “*El valiente negro en Flandes o el triunfo por las armas,*” ya que en la obra de Claramonte se presenta la fantástica historia de un negro que desea servir en los Tercios de Flandes y participar en la lucha de la guerra de los Países Bajos. Por su color no puede hacerlo pero lucha contra viento y marea

para demostrar que si. Lo logra por medio de valerosas hazañas y proezas increíbles: captura y lucha físicamente contra soldados de ambos bandos amigos y enemigos, capitanes, sargentos y al final sujeta a un príncipe. Sus prósperas hazañas le gana el título de maestre de Santiago, de Comendador. Juan de Mérida, ahora Juan de Alba, reestablece el orden, restaura honor y como conclusión tiene además un matrimonio interracial.

Sin embargo, junto a este negro no-esclavo, hace su aparición otro negro, Antón o Antonillo, el esclavo de doña Leonor. Aunque el personaje de Juan de Mérida reniega su condición de negro en la comedia el *Valiente negro en Flandes* y lucha por llegar al postre escalafón de las armas dentro de unas condiciones adversas debido a su condición de negro, es el gracioso negro Antón, sirviente de doña Leonor, quien logra ascender y “funcionar” dentro de los códigos del sistema racista del imperio Español⁴ aceptando su condición de negro esclavo y personaje cómico ridículo gracioso en la comedia sin la necesidad de arriesgar su vida, es decir por medio de hazañas peligrosas.

Juan de Mérida, desde el principio rechaza su condición de negro debido a que el color de su piel le niega la posibilidad de avanzar, servir y obtener el reconocimiento de los españoles. Se la pasa luchando a través de toda la obra entre un conflicto psicológico interno y otro externo, los soldados y el color de su piel. Sin embargo, es a través de sus hazañas y proezas militares que logra el

denominado objetivo Stanislavskiano, ser de España el mejor soldado y servir a su rey. Juan entonces se presenta como destaca Alfredo Rodríguez López Vázquez como un Indiana Jones, un Hércules, un superhéroe de raza negra en la España imperialista. A pesar de sus cualidades portentosas, se le presenta un problema y terror visceral: Antón o Antonillo, el otro negro, que además de esclavo, aparentemente es “inferior a él”.

Antón se nos presenta a primera instancia como el contrapunto de Juan. Para Juan, Antón no tiene aspiraciones ni representa la valentía que éste proyecta, él es un ser risible, un punto de ridículo para Juan. Empero, este gracioso no es el tipo gracioso físico de las comedias burlescas de Moreto, no es tampoco un gracioso erudito, como Tristán en *El perro del Hortelano* de Lope, y mucho menos es un cobarde como Clarín en *La vida es sueño*. Si Juan aspira a ser parte y participar el imperio que le reniega sus ambiciones, luchando contra él, mostrando su valentía, Antón no seguirá ese arduo camino. Antón funcionará dentro del sistema para subsistir. Si Juan siendo un negro libre lucha constantemente por subir y ganarse el respeto de la raza blanca española, Antón, siendo un negro esclavo, enfrentará la misma lucha, pero reconociendo que está en un ambiente dominado por la duplicidad, tendrá que obtener los mismos objetivos por los cuales Juan lucha sin enfrentamientos físicos que pongan en peligro su vida, siendo dÚplice el mismo.

La dualidad que presenta Claramonte es interesante, debido que dentro de la estructura de la obra y fuera de la obra el ser negro es visto como ser ridículo. A pesar de que Juan tome en serio sus acciones, estas no son tomadas en serio por el público español de la época. De acuerdo a Moreno, a los negros se les consideraba inferiores, intelectualmente y como grupo, uno sin poder y sin aspiración alguna (5). Por ello destaca Fra-Molinero que es una de las razones por la cual Claramonte puede esbozar tan fantástica historia, ya que “la visión cómica de los esclavos negros y sus circunstancias personales y sociales estaba íntimamente ligada a una consideración de sus personas como “anomalías”, fenómenos extraordinarios de la naturaleza...” (52). Esta información aunque conocida para los estudiosos de la literatura del Siglo de Oro es de vital importancia para los actores que interpretan a Antón y en cierto grado a Juan, ya que ambos provocan la risa, pero por diferentes circunstancias. El trabajo del actor es ubicar ambas razones y sacarle provecho, y donde las encuentra es durante el proceso creador con los demás actores, en el llamado trabajo de mesa.

Durante los ensayos teatrales, luego de esas primeras lecturas, el actor va creando una “biografía de personaje” para darle redondez y dimensión al personaje. En su investigación descubre que a mediados del siglo XVI la raza negra había aumentado en número y comenzaron a considerárseles como una amenaza al orden público y se pasaron reglamentos para que vivieran fuera de

las murallas de la ciudad, con la excepción de los esclavos varones y hembras que se les requería vivir y dormir en la casa de sus amos, como es en el caso de Juan de Mérida, su madre y Antón, esclavo de doña Leonor (Moreno 9). Además, el actor encuentra que a los negros de Sevilla del siglo XVI se les tildaba de incitadores, de ser bozales, sin razonamiento alguno, gente ridícula, escandalosos, y por su naturaleza inclinada a la irresponsabilidad pública (Moreno 11). Esto es lo que proyectan los personajes de Juan y Antón para los españoles en aquella época. El actor debe tener esto en mente en todo momento y no debe dejar caer esa percepción de la raza negra. Entonces si Juan de Mérida se presenta como el prototipo héroe, Antón se presenta como prototipo del personaje negro cómico risible de principio del Siglo XVI. Aquel con mentalidad infantil, el bobo que provoca risa y burlas, el que no es peligroso y necesita de una figura paternalista protectora (Fra Molinero 21).

A pesar de la anterior información, el actor debe preguntarse, ¿es Antón el paradigma del tipo cómico que abunda en las comedias del Siglo de Oro? La respuesta se halla en una hojeada a lo escrito acerca del gracioso y negro en la comedia: que hablan en sayagüés, piensan solamente en comer, le gusta bailar y hablan mucho y esto se halla también dentro del propio texto de Claramonte. A pesar de lo antedicho, el actor debe hacerse la siguiente pregunta, ¿Qué no se menciona?

Si el actor hace una relectura del texto, notará

que Claramonte esboza otro tipo de gracioso y negro. Cuando hace entrada por primera vez, el actor debe notar que este no es un típico negro gracioso de la comedia o entremés, excepto en el habla, ¿Es risible Antón por la manera en que habla o por alguna condición o defecto que provoca la risa? ¿En qué estriba la comicidad de Antón? Veamos su primera entrada al tablado⁵:

Salen Doña Leonor de hombre y Antón, negro

Antón. Turo lo que vosancé
 me ordenamo, Antón hacemo, 860
que neglo callar sabemo.

Da Leonor. Yo libertad te daré
si me guardas el secreto
que te fío.

Da Leonor. ¡Notable resolución
ha sido la mía!

Antón. Ansí
vengamo del branco⁶ aquí.

Antón. Mira si sa
aquí el falso cagayera.⁷

Lamentablemente, como señala Rodríguez Cuadros en su exhaustivo estudio acerca de *La*

técnica del actor barroco, habrá que dar por perdida algunas de las acotaciones tan presentes en las obras contemporáneas, aquellas didascalías que abundan en otras comedias y que no aparecen en el texto teatral de Claramonte y otros autores de comedias que no las incluyeron. Es entonces la responsabilidad del actor, no del director, hacer varias relecturas de su personaje, de su relación con otros personajes y su función en la acción. Esta primera entrada muestra a Antón tal como se querría ver a la figura del negro en el tablado, como un payaso, chistoso y risible. Antón con su manera de hablar desencajará del público presente la risa. Empero, haciendo una relectura del texto donde Antón se nos presenta como aguzado, y por medio de gestos contrarios a las acciones se podría visualizar y darle fuerza a lo que realmente dice Antón, porque el aparente mensaje se pierde en la enunciación pero no en la minuciosa recepción del mensaje visual-escénico. La mayoría de los entrenadores de actores y directores siempre han sugerido que a veces los descubrimientos efectivos durante el proceso creador en el teatro y cine surgen cuando se va más allá de lo obvio. A primera instancia queremos hacer a Antón como otro gracioso, energético, sonriendo y muy servicial, casi un personaje de las comedias de vodevil estadounidenses. Sin embargo hagamos un análisis en reverso, comenzando con el dialogo desde el final de la escena. Antón busca con detenimiento a don Agustín, el hombre que ha engañado a su ama, Leonor. Utiliza la primera persona plural cuando

reclama venganza, en el siguiente, aprendemos que está orgulloso de “ser gente preta”, porque estos saben guardar secretos, el que doña Leonor va vestida de hombre a un campamento militar y él es gente de bien. Nuevamente, en ese primer diálogo repite que sabrá callar y guardar secretos y que como todo personaje de servidumbre (hace lo que se le ordena). ¿Por qué lo hace? La clave está en lo que se convertirá su motivación primordial, el llamado superobjetivo stanislavskiano, la libertad. Añádase además que Antón va en busca de una muerte segura por varias razones a enumerar: viene por venganza con su ama, va a otro país con una mujer vestida de hombre pero va a un campamento militar, a donde se lucha una guerra, donde va ver violencia y va no como cobarde. Se distancia de los graciosos auriseculares, y mucho más porque viene a un costo mucho más importante y significativo: su libertad. En esto Antón no es semejante a los otros bobos este es un personaje gracioso negro porque no se le entiende, porque habla con otro acento, lo cual curiosamente provoca la risa. El actor debe prestar atención no sólo a lo que dice Antón también cómo gestualmente lo dice.

Siguiendo esta línea, se ha mostrado fragmentariamente hasta ahora, o por lo menos se ha presentado como probable que esta primera entrada del gracioso Antón apoya la idea de que ha venido en compañía de una mujer varonil para hacerle guerra a un hombre y si lo logra, ganará con ello su libertad sin tener que participar en la guerra de Flandes como su contraparte, Juan de Mérida, el

protagonista cuya obra lleva su título. El reto del actor que interpreta a Antón es presentar un gracioso en el habla que no va con sus acciones ni con su carácter. El siguiente diálogo entre Antón y Leonor con la entrada en exabrupto de don Agustín, ratifica lo antepuesto:

Sale el capitán don Agustín

(...)

Da Leonor. Antón, el ingrato es éste.

Antón. ¡Ah cagayera beyaca!
Llegamo a dallo matracá.⁸

Antón continúa algo bético en contra de don Agustín y esta vez le tilda de ruin defecación de caballo. En este cuadro, el comentario de Antón es gracioso por su pronunciación, pero lo que propone no, pretende golpear a don Agustín quien es un hombre blanco de los Tercios de Flandes. Se podría argumentar que Antón esté fingiendo o incitando a Leonor, sin embargo, intencionado o no, esto no se espera en boca de Antón, porque el *valiente negro en Flandes* es Juan, y no Antón, quien representa la figura del gracioso en la comedia. El actor no debe obviar que Antón posee algo en común con Juan de Mérida, es agresivo y osado también, otra característica para la formación de su personaje gracioso en esta comedia. Tampoco se sabe, por falta de didascalías, si el actor hace un gesto o movimiento como de ir a golpear a don Agustín, el hombre que engañó y sedujo a doña Leonor, no

obstante, se debe explorar esta posibilidad durante los ensayos para ver su efecto. Dramáticamente interesante sería ver que ya no hay uno sino dos negros valientes o uno en potencia que ha de servir en los Tercios de Flandes.

Seguido de este cuadro, Claramonte, desarticula el triunfo de haberle quitado las armas al enemigo y a su vez de su adversario Agustín con la introducción del equívoco erótico sexual. Leonor se le identifica como un paje de establos llamado Esteban y que Antonillo es su amigo y los dos viajan juntos. Como todo mecanismo del Siglo de Oro, el que Juan no reconozca a doña Leonor disfrazada de Esteban sirve como punto de risa cuando esta le comienza a hacer caricias e invitarle a beber y tomar posada juntos para pasar la noche:

Juan. Antón puede dormir con vos. 1065

Antón. Guardan fuera;
¿Yo con branco? Osten putas.

Da Leonor. (*Aparte*) Bien mi venganza se ordena;
disimula, Antón.

Antón. Simulo.

Obviamente las acciones y gestos de doña Leonor provocan en Juan cierta homofobia. Mas, ¿Cómo interpretar esta escena? ¿En que medida Antón participa activamente del engaño? Es decir, ¿Le importa a Antón que se le tilde de negro homosexual, sabiendo el peligro que esto puede

representarle entre este grupo de personas? ¿Es esta una situación cómoda para él como personaje? Juan ha sido invitado a dormir por doña Leonor/Esteban y Antón. Antón protesta a la idea de que duerma con él/ella. Sin embargo, doña Leonor le dice que disimule y Antón simula. Aparentemente, Antón no está enterado de esta nueva estratagema, por ello parece una protesta de parte suya. El actor debe reaccionar a la sugerencia que le puede costar la vida. Pero, a pesar de esto, Leonor le recuerda que le va la libertad en ello con una simple palabra, simula, que bien puede ser acompañada de un gesto, una mirada a él de doña Leonor. Ahora bien, el trabajo del actor es traerle opciones al director. Primero, Antón puede entusiasmarse con la idea de ir a pasar la noche en una posada porque puede comer. Segundo, Antón puede asustarse de tal manera que acepta simular pero hay un gesto que denota asco y rechazo de lo que propone doña Leonor, y tercero, aceptar como gracioso libidinoso interesado en las posibles oportunidades. Siempre, el actor debe tener a su disposición tres opciones para la acción en la escena, es al final el director que escogerá aquella que le sirva para la visión de la obra y su puesta en escena. Desde la perspectiva que se quiere lograr con este ensayo, el actor debe escoger una que dé variedad y vida a su personaje. Puede irse en contra del texto, lo que se denomina “*playing against the action and type.*” Es decir, el actor, Antón, para usarlo en este ejemplo, rechazaría la propuesta de doña Leonor pero luego haría una transición donde tiene que dar una indicación a

manera de gesto para el público por la razón que acepta participar en el equívoco erótico. Así la proyección de sus intenciones y caracterización le darán profundidad a su personaje.

En el segundo acto, tercer cuadro Juan es testigo de los varios encuentros entre doña Leonor y don Agustín, amén de los avances simulados entre Antón y doña Leonor. El conflicto interno de Juan, que el hombre de raza negra no se le tome en serio, se multiplica cada vez que ve a Antón acompañando a un paje que aparentemente es homosexual. Es imprescindible que el actor recuerde que los encuentros “erótico-sexuales” entre Antón y doña Leonor/ Esteban, aunque sean causante de risa, y cuyas razones no pueden abordarse en este tratado por falta de espacio, se hacen porque la frase clave que le motiva a seguir el juego es “*le va la libertad.*”

Da Leonor. No he visto
negro tan padre del yermo, 1310
a reveder. (*Aparte*. Desta suerte
lo confundo y lo divierto.
Disimula, Antón).

Antón. Simulo.

Da Leonor. La libertad te va en ello.

Antón. ¿Dónde vamo angora?

Voy 1315
Da Leonor. tras mi dueño; que me pierdo
por su talla y su donaire.
¿No es muy lindo? ¿No es muy bello?

y ¿no tengo muy buen gusto?

Antón. Seoro, sí. (Vase doña Leonor)

Indudablemente, la repetición constante de doña Leonor a Antón de que disimule, demuestra que Antón no le sigue el juego, al contrario se resiste. El actor debe entonces buscar un gesto, dar un paso hacia atrás, hacer una reacción que a su vez ayude a Leonor a recordarle lo que pierde si no participa. Antón accede y en su respuesta de simulo el actor hasta podría dividir la palabra en dos sílabas: “sí-mulo”, un sí afirmativo, seguido por un improprio. Lo cual doña Leonor puede captar o no, pero el público sí. Lo importante es que aparentemente Antón no es tan partícipe del equívoco sexual, aunque para algunos críticos aparezca como esclavo erótico, que en las letras es otro rasgo característico del negro en las comedias y en la literatura, ese negro prodigioso y exótico. (Rodríguez López Vázquez 11).

Se observa, pues, que para el Valiente negro en Flandes, se perciben conflictos internos y externos ejerciendo sobre los personajes negros: Juan teme que a Antón, además de ser negro, se le tilde de practicar el acto nefando junto a “doña Leonor/Esteban” trayendo consecuencias desastrosas para su campaña de negro en ejército de blancos. Al ver Juan a doña Leonor y Antón tomados de la mano y abrazándose, y hablando de la belleza de don Agustín, se aumentan su homofobia y el temor de ser culpable por

asociación. Esto puede echar al suelo todos sus intentos a que se le tome en serio. Si Juan representa el prototipo macho, español, quien se identifica con el imperio, Antón como gracioso, es el sirviente, el objeto erótico y ridículo del cual él quiere huir. Si se acepta, a manera de hipótesis, que con lo susodicho quedan al descubierto el conflicto entre Juan y Antón. Sin embargo, Claramonte pretende dar solución al asunto haciendo que Juan enfrente la situación:

Juan. *Aparte*

(....)¡Y tu
negro vil...!

1325

Antón.

¡Yo sa vil negro?

Juan. Vive el cielo, que te mate.

Antón. ¿Por qué Juan matar queremo
a Antoniyo?

Juan.

Vil, si más

con este paje te veo
en estos países nunca,
en público ni en secreto,
te he de quemar.

1330

Antón. Pues, ¿Quién damo
Comira a Antón?⁹

Juan. Yo.

Antón. Comiendo

Antón, el paje olvidamo, 1335
y a Juan por sior tendremo.
Damo y llevamo alabarda.

Juan.

¿Prometes lealtad?

Antón.

Prometo.

Dependiendo de los objetivos de Juan, de su acometida y la declaración de los versos, Antón tiene varias opciones: Enfrentarse a Juan con “¿yo soy negro vil?” como si se sintiese insultado, y entonces a manera de reto en la respuesta, como si él no fuera la cosa, ignorando o haciéndose el sordo, o tercero, asustado porque sabe que Juan es capaz de cualquier cosa. Dependiendo de la visión que tenga el actor y el director en conversación del personaje, el actor debe escoger aquella que mejor le corresponda. La primera se descarta porque habría terminado este cuadro con la muerte de Antón, la tercera es la vía rápida y obvia para provocar la risa y crear un personaje cómico risible pero patético, lo que no se propone en este ensayo. Queda la segunda, la más interesante, pues demuestra que Antón puede representar la escena como “el que tira la piedra y esconde la mano.” Al interpretar la situación como que no se entera de lo que le están hablando, Antón demuestra una picardía; nuevamente, le ayuda aquí su pronunciación. El actor debe buscar la acción a seguir, o sea la evasión de las preguntas de Juan o debe, por decirlo así, hacerse de la vista larga, hasta que escuche aquello que quiere oír: si abandonase al “paje,” Juan le da de comer.

El actor que interprete a Antón le sacará provecho por medio de algún gesto en complicidad

con el público que indique que él ha prometido lealtad a doña Leonor y no puede revelar su secreto. Entonces, debe caminar hacia abajo, las candilejas, y a manera de complicidad con el público, Antón debe ofrecer algo para negociar: el alimento. Es obvio que el paje alimenta a Antón de lo más bien, pero esto no lo sabe Juan. La excusa del hambre es aceptable ya que el hambre obliga. Juan soluciona el asunto no con la muerte de Antón, sino asimilándolo a su deseo homosocial, el de ser soldado español y por ende el prototipo macho. Entonces, Antón pasa de paje/esclavo de doña Leonor a ser la contraparte de Juan de Mérida, su paje, su criado, alguien que le ofrece un puesto de paje de soldado, a cambio de comida y lealtad, que son las palabras claves para Antón, el comer y la lealtad. ¿Pero lealtad a quién? Como el personaje Truffaldino de la obra de Carlo Goldoni, *Il servitore di due padronni*, Antón sirve ahora a dos amos, a la primera le promete guardar su secreto y lealtad porque le va la libertad y al otro lealtad porque le ha de dar de comer y le ha indirectamente subido de esclavo a lacayo. Entonces, Antón ha ganado por partida doble, y lo interesante es que no ha levantado ni un arma.

Abriendo un paréntesis al estilo Jodorowskiano¹⁰, parecería que Claramonte quisiese restarle atención a esta subversión del orden social, donde un hombre negro ordena a otro que abandone a su acompañante blanco y le siga a él, una acción algo antagónica en el público. Claramonte, a través de la burla del reclutamiento, atenúa la escena

anterior, haciendo que Juan intente transformar a Antón como un soldado de los tercios de Flandes:

Juan. Pues toma, y sígueme.

Antón. Vamo.

Juan. Más espacio y más severo. 1340

Antón. Aspacio y severo andamo.

Juan. Antonillo, ¿qué parezco?

Antón. Rey mago, y yo sun lancayo.

Juan. ¿Antón?

Antón. ¿Sioro?

Juan. Respeto;
que soy sargento de Flandes. 1345

Antón. Turu lu mundo sabremo.¹¹

Juan. ¿Antón?

Antón. ¿Sioro?

Juan. Camina.

Antón. Parecen cosan de negros. (*Vanse*)

Como se habrá visto, la escena desarticula los logros de Juan en la parodia de las levas y mucho más cuando el personaje de Antón en su duplicidad, se burla de lo que quiere Juan de él como nuevo soldado. Aquí, el actor debe por medio de un guiño o gesto acordado con el director, hacer partícipe al público de que Antón de quien se burla es de Juan.

En los versos 1995-2040 reaparecen nuevamente ambos personajes, Antonillo y doña Leonor, quien está todavía vestida de hombre. Viendo que “el leal Antonillo” sigue todavía en compañía de doña Leonor/Esteban, decide ponerle fin a las vidas de ambos personajes pero Leonor confiesa el enredo del equívoco sexual y se identifica como doña Leonor. Aclarado el enredo y el equívoco, doña Leonor sale y quedan Juan y Antón. Es necesario aquí crear una pausa donde ambos personajes se midan. Puede basta una simple mirada entre ambos y luego se rompa el silencio:

Antón. Sioro,
venganza dé en branco infame;
que con siora venimo
de Mérida a vengamo.

2030

Juan. Y ¿sabe que eres mujer?

Antón. Si, Sioro.

Juan. ¿Qué este perro me engañase?
Corrido quedo.

Antón. Mamólas;
que Antón simula.

Llama la atención la lealtad que Antón demuestra a ambos personajes, ya que con la confesión y salida de doña Leonor se sobreentiende que ha cumplido su palabra y ganado su libertad. Por tal motivo, el actor no ha de mostrar pavor ante Juan cuando quedan a solas, sino entre orgullo y respeto. Entre

ambos personajes hay una cierta admiración, por ello el verso de Juan “¿Qué este perro me engañase?/ Corrido quedo.” La escena entre ambos personajes ratifica su posición ante Juan. Antón como Tristán en *El perro del hortelano* es un buen actor y es leal, pero a diferencia de este Antón ha sido un actor a través de toda la obra con ambos personajes. En cierta manera, Antón ha sido dÚplice en sus acciones velando por su bienestar sobreviviendo a su manera dentro del sistema.

El tercer acto solidifica la figura de Antón como valiente y osado como Juan. La escena comienza en el palacio real, en Madrid. Ambos personajes aparecen ricamente vestidos y paseándose de arriba abajo esperando audiencia con el rey Felipe II y el duque de Alba. Parecería que Claramonte quisiese presentar con este cuadro la manera en que la gente de tez blanca trataba a los negros en la época a pesar de ser libres:

Don Pedro. ¿No reparáis en los negros, 2105
que son notables figuras?

D. Francisco. Dos días ha que los veo
en la antecámara así.

Don Martín. ¡Con qué gravedad el perro
se pasea!

D. Francisco. Y las pisadas 2110
el paje le va midiendo.

Don Pedro. Bien valdrán tres mil ducados
amo y paje. (Estornudan)

- Don Gómez. Aché.
- Juan. ¿Qué es esto?
- Antón. Estornudar gente enblancas,
hacendo burla de pretos.¹² 2115
- D. Francisco. Uchua
- Don Pedro. Mandinga.¹³
- Don Martín. Aché.
- Juan. Calla, y no hagas caso de ellos.
- Antón. ¡No hagan caso! ¡Juran Dioso,
si espada ensaco!
- Don Pedro. ¡Que tieso
y que grave va el perrazo! 2120
- D. Francisco. Las plumillas del sombrero
son muy donosas.
- Don Martín. Serán,
a mi parecer, del cuervo
de San Antón. (¡Pu pu pu!)
- Don Pedro. ¡Con que majestad ha vuelto
el rostro! 2125
- Juan. ¿Peieron?
- Antón. Sí.
- Juan. ¿A quién de los dos peieron?
- Antón. A vosancé.
- Juan. Negro, a tí.

Antón. ¿A Antón?

Juan. Sí. *(Vuelven a Peer¹⁴)*

Antón. ¿Y a quién peemo
angoras?

Juan. Ya huele mal. 2130

que a mi me han peido pienso;
mas yo haré que los cobardes
tengan más comedimiento.

Así desvergüenzas tales

a calabazadas¹⁵ suelo 2135

castigar. *(Dales)*

Como se ve por todos estos intercambios entre Antón y Juan hay un conflicto entre cual de los dos (es?) insultado. Esta escena le recordó a este crítico, el inicio de la escena entre Will Smith y Martin Lawrence en *Bad Boys*, quienes discuten quien de los dos tenía la culpa de que les estén intentando de robar el coche. Curiosamente, en España esta película de acción cuyos protagonistas son de la raza negra se tituló *Dos policías rebeldes*. Igualmente del anterior cuadro, hay que notar el cambio sufrido en Antón quien se transforma en soldado y fiero luchador que evoca el espíritu valeroso y agresivo de Juan al principio de la obra. El actor que hace de Antón no debe compararse en lo absoluto al gracioso típico de la comedia, ese personaje que “...supone el punto de vista más distanciado de la acción. Es cobarde...” (Oliva y Torres Monreal, 206). En la comedia *El valiente negro en Flandes* Antón es un gracioso, pero es más

que eso, uno que evoluciona a medida que pasa tiempo con Juan, por cierto, es interesante ver que las dos intervenciones finales de él en el tercer acto ya ha perdido su hablar sayagüés.

Por las razones expuestas en los versos anteriores, hay que concluir que tanto Juan como Antón se complementan de esta manera, la astucia y la valentía juntas, lo serio y lo cómico mezclados pero Antón no debe ser visto como el negro bufón, gracioso o tipo burlesco, de los entremeses de Benavente *El negrito hablador o sin color anda la niña*, este es un personaje que causa la risa en el hablar y porque habla mucho y baila, pero no es un gracioso físico como se mencionó. A final de la obra del *Valiente negro*, Antón logra su libertad con doña Leonor y reafirma su valentía junto a Juan de Mérida. El tercer acto nos presenta a un gracioso serio. El actor que interprete a Antón debe presentarse en este tercer acto erguido, firme y seguro de sí mismo, al dar los pasos, listo a salir a la defensa de su amo.

Estas acciones demuestran como Antón, a pesar de aparentes “defectos” de negro risible, bobo e infantil asciende de puesto paralelamente junto a Juan de Mérida, no a un puesto de comandante militar como Juan, sino como su igual y su mano derecha, un lacayo que con una buena interpretación, sea un gracioso mucho más complejo que sus contrapartes de otras comedias. Antón alcanza su libertad, su condición y su habla mejora, y todo esto a través de su perspicacia.

Me parece lícito concluir que Claramonte, como destaca Fra-Molinero, no sólo esboza una tesis donde el ser más ínfimo pueda servir a España en la guerra que sostiene contra los protestantes en los Países Bajos. De ser cierta esta aserción, debería incluirse en esta obra al personaje gracioso de Antón. Cabría hasta la hipótesis que Claramonte a través de las acciones de Antón que no sólo Juan sube al puesto que se le niega, sino que se trae consigo al personaje del cual se mofan y ridiculizan en las tablas de la literatura áurea.

Entonces, aquel que lee podría llegar a la conclusión que todas estas ideas son típicas del gracioso en la comedia, haciendo cien lecturas de gracioso, pero el reto estriba en que el actor no caiga en la trampa de hacer un gracioso porque ha leído *gracioso* en el texto. La labor del actor está en darle vida a ese personaje por medio de una caracterización profunda aplicando las teorías de análisis modernas sobre la creación de un rol, darle como todo ente viviente sobre el tablado esa individualidad. Es una constante búsqueda de la representación objetiva y sincera del rol que interpreta basándose en las posibilidades del texto y no de teorías y tratados, es en fin, lo que Claramonte querría comunicarles como actor, director y autor a sus actores e indirectamente a su fiel público, aquel que vino a *ver* y *oír* a la comedia.

NOTAS

¹ Las cursivas son para énfasis.

² Para las teorías y estudios sobre el personaje del gracioso véase Ley, Ch. D. *El gracioso en el teatro de la Península (siglos XVI y XVII)*, Madrid, _., 1954; Herrero, Miguel. “Genesis de la figura del donaire”, _, Vol. 25 (46-78), 1941; Maraval, Antonio. *El mundo social de la Celestina*. Website Cervantes Virtual; Montesinos, José F., “Algunas observaciones sobre la figura del donaire en el teatro de Lope”, _, 11, 1943. (185-209); Primorac, Berislav.

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³ Tampoco se intenta hacer un estudio del personaje negro en la comedia, para ello véase los trabajos eruditos de Molinero, Baltasar F., _ Madrid: Siglo veintiuno, 1995; Panford, Jr. Moses E. _, Society of Spanish and Spanish-American Studies, 2003; _: *Juan Latino* (Jiménez de Enciso), *El valiente negro en Flandes* (Claramonte), *El santo negro Rosambuco* (Lope de Vega) y *El negro del mejor amo* (Mira de Amescua), Dissertation, Temple University, 1993; Lopez, Nelson. _s. Barcelona, Reichenberger, 2005. Frida Weber de Kurlat ha escrito varios artículos sobre el personaje y el tipo negro gracioso también.

⁴ Para los trabajos sobre las minorías, esclavos, negros, y otros véase los escritos de Smith, Paul Julian. _ Oxford University Press, 1988; Thorton, John. _ Cambridge University Press, 1989; Phillips, William D., _ Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1990.

⁵ Todas las citas textuales de la obra *el valiente negro en Flandes* se basan en la edición del autor próxima a salir. *El valiente negro en Flandes, edición para actores y directores*. Barcelona: Reichenberger, 2005.

⁶ branco por blanco.

⁷ Aquí hay un juego con la palabra caballero/ cagayera, y cagalera. Desde el punto de vista del lenguaje de Antón, caballero cambia a cagayera o cagalera, creando una connotación con referencia a lo escatológico. Aparentemente, se le ha tildado de falso caballero a don Agustín, y a la misma vez de algo peor, un caballero de excremento. Entonces, don Agustín viene a ser ante los ojos de Antón, un caballero ficticio, irreal que no cumple su palabra.

⁸ “cagayera beyaca, es cagalera de caballo, caballero bellaco.” . “Ser bellaco es ser muy malo y de ruines respetos.” .

⁹ ¿Quién le dará de comer a Antón?

¹⁰ En Club Cultura.com, hacer un paréntesis jodorowskiano, significa interrumpir la línea de pensamiento e introducir un Nuevo tema que aclare y se distinga de todo lo relacionado a lo anterior. Alejandro Jodorowsky, director de cine y teatro, actor y escritor, en sus entrevistas siempre dice: “permítame hacer un paréntesis...”

¹¹ Todo el mundo lo sabe. Parece que Juan hace tantos alardes de sus logros que la noticia ya es vieja para Antón.

¹² La gente blanca ha estornudado haciendo burla de (nosotros los) prietos.

¹³ En el *Diccionario de la Real Academia* el término Mandinga o mandingo, es relativo a un grupo de pueblos africanos que comprenden los malinké, los saraokolé, los bambara, los soninké y los diula, que hablan lenguas de la familia nigeriano-congoleña; es también un individuo de dicho pueblo. Es de la familia de lenguas del grupo nigero-senegalés. En el Nuevo Mundo, la raza mandinga o Mandingo era codiciada por ser estos físicamente fuertes y robustos y buenos para la labor doméstica y agrícola.

¹⁴ De acuerdo a *_crepitum ventris emittere, latine Pedere.* El acto y efecto de emitir, tirar pedos. La escena se puede interpretar de varias maneras, que lo hacen físicamente emitir vientos del vientre, o que lo hacen con la boca como trompetillas.

¹⁵ Dar calabazadas es golpear a alguien en la cabeza con los puños o con algún bastón.

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ANCEENTS, MODERNS, AND THE AUTHENTICITY ISSUE IN THE *COMEDIA* PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP

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History repeats itself, as the old adage says, but what of literary history, or even literary historiography? Under the premise that our studies of *Comedia* performance may profit from the lessons that such histories can teach us, this essay proposes an analogy between our scholarship and the so-called “ancients vs. moderns” debate of early modern Europe. My aim is not to raise a polemic, as the notion of a debate might suggest, but rather to call attention to the ways in which our burgeoning discipline has thus far tended to oscillate between two working concepts of authenticity, for which I will posit the admittedly simplified terminology of “textual” authenticity and “cultural” or “communicative” authenticity. I find strong parallels between these positions and the kind of polarity upon which the so-called “Battle of the Books” was based.¹ Among these parallels is the fact that the debate over Aristotle’s authority as the standard-bearer for dramaturgy was never conclusively “won” by either camp, as Joseph M. Levine has argued. Like Levine’s as-

essment of the early modern *querelle*, insofar as “...there was much agreement beneath the noise of battle” (86), our critical assessments of *Comedia* performance today reflect a variety of perspectives that need not be seen as antagonistic or oppositional. The present goal, then, is only to suggest the ways in which our own “ancient” and “modern” voices inform our understanding of what constitutes an authentic rendering of the *Comedia*.

Thus the title of this essay does not imply an “old guard” in conflict with a younger generation of scholars. I refer to ancients and moderns as an analogy to our studies of the *Comedia* as it is performed today, a developing field that Jonathan Thacker calls “undoubtedly a growing field with implications for the future direction of the study of Golden-Age drama” (148) in the inaugural edition of *Comedia Performance*. It is a conflict not necessarily between two camps of *Comedia* critics, but rather between conflicting ideas of what services should be rendered by contemporary productions and performances of seventeenth-century plays. Does privileging the criterion of “authenticity” lead the twenty-first-century performance to a faithful reproduction of a classic or “classical” text, or does it render it a mere historical curiosity, unable to engage a twenty-first-century audience? Do substantial alterations to a Golden Age play (both as text and as spectacle) breathe new life into a linguistically and culturally fossilized artifact, thus allowing

a contemporary audience to access the *Comedia*, or do such changes defraud the original and corrupt its classical aesthetic merit? My own reading of *Comedia Performance* 1.1 and 2.1 detects this conflict at work even within some of the individual essays,² and I myself must confess to having sympathies for both points of view. These competing instincts that would have us embrace both an early modern and a postmodern staging of the *Comedia* are indicative of a discipline in transition.

To help elucidate this conflict I turn to Lope de Vega, whose *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* negotiates a conflict that may be very different in terms of its cultural, historical, and institutional circumstances, but that nonetheless resonates with and parallels our own disciplinary growing pains. A brief disclaimer: if my treatment of Lope's treatise is brief and general, it is because I do not aspire to offer a new reading of a text about which so much has already been written.³ Likewise the larger "Ancients vs. moderns" debate in which Lope participates, itself the object of numerous book-length studies from such eminent literary critics and historians as José Antonio Maravall and Alban Forcione, will need to be reduced to its simplest terms, as I use it as a point of departure for treating our own academic circumstances. Contemporary *Comedia* performance constitutes a kind of analogy, and like my use of the *Arte nuevo* and the "Ancients vs. moderns" debate as analogies to our authenticity

issue, it should be recognized as such—as a simulation rather than as a claim to equality.

To some extent, such claims to equality underlie our desire for twenty-first-century performances of *comedias* to privilege what I am calling textual authenticity. This term is admittedly problematic and in need of some clarification, especially in light of the fact that it might suggest at first glance that the published text of any given *comedia* is a fixed product transmitted directly from the playwright's pen to the printed document that we read today. We know that this hardly corresponds to the reality of seventeenth-century theatrical practice and its contemporary process of publishing *comedias*: several levels of mediation intervene between the playwright's original composition and the published product, and even more levels of "interference" occur between that original composition and the spectacle that would eventually be produced for a live audience. From copiers to editors preparing a collection of plays for publication on the one hand, and from stage managers and directors of particular productions (at the time called *autores*) to individual actors on the other, the distinct processes through which a play was invariably "filtered"—and all of this before considering the role of Church and State censorship—hardly make for a stable text that we might hope to "authentically" reproduce in postmodern times. Paradoxically, then, what I would call a "textually authentic" representation

may differ significantly from an original manuscript, and this fact problematizes the preservationist spirit behind many contemporary performances and their critical reception—whether we call such performances “period pieces” or “historically informed performances.” The “text” to which I refer is a confluence of sources (literary, anthropological, and historical) that we use today to construct what the original production, itself a semiotic system of which the surviving play-script can only offer partial evidence, might have been like.⁴

The *Comedia* scholarship of the last half-century has solidified our understanding of these various levels of intervention, allowing us to project this metatext onto the twenty-first century stage with increasing confidence. The preservationist will-to-authenticity that I am calling textual authenticity therefore includes but is not limited to the printed document of dialogue and stage directions that we call “text.” As a standard for critical reception, textual authenticity extends well beyond the level of the director’s explicit alterations to the printed text of a play’s *guión*, or beyond the correspondence between the words enunciated onstage and those published by the playwright centuries ago—although on such a level Matthew Stroud does speak passionately: “At least occasionally, some people would like to hear all the text, all the rhythms, all the narratives, and all the images that together form a *comedia* text” (93-94). Stroud’s

words furthermore suggest the broader semiotic “text” that is the spectacle of performance: all five senses witness an event in which elements such as set design, costume, music and diction can be judged according to their “authenticity”—in other words, according to their fidelity to how we understand or imagine those elements to have been performed originally.

The individual who chooses to see a seventeenth-century Spanish play performed today (rather than a contemporary play, film, or television program) will undoubtedly recognize some degree of sympathy for this perspective, for contemporary *Comedia* performance is necessarily an act of exhumation, with the play-text itself and all its staged sign systems functioning as an excavated cultural artifact. Laura L. Vidler analyzes one production that openly indulged this drive for textual authenticity, Brigham Young University’s 2003 production of Tirso de Molina’s *Don Gil de las calzas verdes*: those fortunate enough to attend the spectacle witnessed “a Spanish-language production using a standard edition of Tirso’s text” (71) that went to great lengths to recreate the atmosphere and physical setting of an original *corral* performance. Vidler also describes how our desire for textual authenticity may be satisfied even when the *comedia* in question has been translated into a foreign language: Dakin Matthews’s translation of Alarcón’s *La verdad sospechosa* respects “Alarcón’s prosody and versifica-

tion—the very *redondillas*, *romances*, *quintillas*, *décimas*, *tercetos* and *sonetos* used in the source text” (69-70).

As a further example of our academic appetite for textual authenticity in *Comedia* performance I offer my own naïve experience and subsequent disillusionment at the 2004 Chamizal festival, after the University of Puerto Rico’s Traveling Theater production of Tirso’s *El castigo del penséque*, directed by Dean Zayas. The point here has less to do with the specific details of this production, beyond noting its preservationist and “textually authentic” orientation (evident in costuming, set design, and the inclusion and selection of musical interludes and an *entremes*), and more to do with my own reaction to it. In a truly metatheatrical sense I was *engañado*, my disbelief fully and willfully suspended: I felt as though I had witnessed an authentic and faithful reproduction of the kind of *comedia de enredo* that was the mainstay of popular entertainment in early modern Spain. With the sequence of songs and interludes that framed the performance and its intermission, I could project myself into the seventeenth century *corral* and imagine the full-day spectacle of which I had so often read. After the performance, my sentiments were echoed by some of my colleagues, although without the same level of enthusiasm that I had expected. In hindsight I now understand their moderation and reserve, no doubt the result of their more extensive experience at the

Chamizal, for what we had witnessed was an approximation at best of something that was ultimately unrecoverable. Even though the 2004 production of *El castigo del penséque* and its packaging-as-spectacle was among the most “textually authentic” productions that I have personally witnessed, and even though as such I was an eminently satisfied customer, at the end of the day it was a simulacrum, not a time machine. More to the point, measuring its success according to the sense of authenticity perceived by me as a spectator meant that I was judging the event in terms of its adherence to my own understanding of the *Comedia*’s original performance contexts, and that understanding is itself a narrative informed by the various literary and social histories that I have read and studied. The twenty-first century discipline of *Comedia* studies has instilled in me an archetypal notion of what constitutes authenticity, a “master narrative” or metatext against which any *comedia* performance can be read and judged. In seventeenth-century Spain such a discipline would have been called an *arte*. By applying this mental construction of an *arte antiguo* to a contemporary performance, I had cast myself in a role analogous to that of the *Academia de Madrid*⁵ to which Lope de Vega explained his “new art” in 1609, in a discourse now known as the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*.

These examples bear witness to the fact that textual authenticity is a criterion that can exercise con-

siderable influence over contemporary *Comedia* performance. It is important to note that this mode of textual authenticity is not simply a matter of anthropological rigor, for as Stroud explains, its goal is ultimately aesthetic: above all else he calls for productions to focus on “capturing the essence of the aesthetic experience of the original” (94). Our notions of such an “original” aesthetic experience are of course determined in many ways by our own historically and culturally conditioned perspective (a fact which Stroud does address judiciously and perceptively)⁶, and in this sense we may say that the ability of a contemporary performance to meet this standard of textual authenticity depends not only on fidelity to the printed text and to the semiotic spectacle-as-text; it also depends upon matching the “text” of literary history as we have learned it. Such a history, a narrative that informs our interpretation of the texts that we read and the performances that we witness, ultimately becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, insofar as it constitutes our very means of judging “authenticity.” While such a tautological syllogism may be academically problematic, we must recall that the aesthetic pleasure that a textually authentic production affords its audience is a question of art (appreciation, reception) and not science—at least as we use these terms today.

The term *arte* for Lope and his contemporaries of course had a very different meaning, and for this reason his treatise operates as a defense of his

choice to write plays *sin arte*, in other words plays that flouted neo-Aristotelian precepts in order to better satisfy his paying public. There is further irony in treating the literary and intellectual context of his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* as analogous to our authenticity issue, given that the then-“modern” Lope is now counted among the voices of our “ancients” of classical authority. We should not forget that what this journal’s parent organization calls “Hispanic Classical Theater” was considered anything but “classic” in its own day, unlike the appropriation of the term *classique* in seventeenth-century France. While early modern French theatrical practice maintained a close dialogue with the neoclassical theories and precepts of its academy, Lope’s treatise suggests that the same cannot be said of the *Comedia*. Herein lies the irony of over-privileging textual authenticity: it calls for an authentic representation of a form that was from its conception a profanization of classical precepts, which Lope famously locked away with seven keys before writing his plays. José Montesinos observes that irony permeates the very name of this treatise: the term *arte* in 1609 implied established tradition and tried-and-true formula, thus rendering the modifier “nuevo” as paradoxical as would be the concept of a “brand new tradition.”

Lope was certainly not the first western artist or theoretician to resist the authority of classical rules: the ancients vs. moderns debate had been ongoing

for some time in Italy, where Franciscus Robertellus's appropriation of Aristotle's *Poetics* was among a slew of texts that reworked classical sources into a body of precepts and prescriptions meant to steer early modern dramatists towards the "essence" (in Platonic terms) of the ancient art of drama, both *dulce* and *utile*. Such textual pillars of authority were eventually contested by the likes of Giovan Giorgio Trissino, Lodovico Castlevetro and Julius Caesar Scaliger, as well as Giovambattista Geraldini Cinthio, whose principle argument will be familiar to readers of Cervantes's prologue to the first part of *Don Quijote*: Aristotelian precepts do not apply to new forms of dramatic and literary representation, since such forms were unknown and unimaginable to Aristotle in his lifetime.⁷ Compromises resulted from the debate, including the acceptance of the vernacular and the canonization of tragicomedy as a legitimate hybrid genre. As new modes of expression challenged traditional parameters and structures, the literati appropriated and endorsed them when necessary, to the point of justifying their canonization through the same neo-Aristotelian voice that had previously resisted them. In Madrid in 1609, the *Academia de Madrid* witnessed simply one in a long line of challenges to what constituted a science of dramatic art, delivered by the champion and principal instigator of the *Comedia nueva*.

The second mode of our will-to-authenticity, which I am calling cultural or communicative authenticity, constitutes a violation of the *letter* of the original play-text in order to preserve its *spirit*. In Matthew Stroud's contribution to the inaugural edition of *Comedia Performance*, an article that expresses a judicious awareness of how potentially divisive the authenticity issue can be, a telling comment is cited from the director John Igo, a "modern" whose comments on the 1981 adaptation of Calderón's *Celos aun del aire matan* were taken to task by the "ancients" of today's academy: "I came for the smell of grease paint, and all I got was embalming fluid" (Stroud, 79). In other words the criterion of textual authenticity calls for "embalming fluid," that is to say preservation and a kind of transparency-in-production to re-present the *Comedia*, as Dr. Stroud characterizes it, as "works of a certain place and time" (79). "Grease-paint," on the other hand, implies that contemporary *Comedia* performance is a particular form of twenty-first-century live theatrical practice that, regardless of its play-script's age or origins, can operate in the here and now as a cultural product to be consumed by a contemporary audience.

It is in this sense that we may consider attempts to represent a modernized *comedia*, for the purposes of connecting with and entertaining its present-day audience just as Lope had connected with and entertained his own audience, an attempt at a culturally

or communicatively authentic production. Questions such as "How does the theatrical practice of contemporary *Comedia* performance function today?" and "What type of cultural 'work' does it perform on us and for us?" are in my opinion very valid and productive questions; they are often overshadowed, however, by the question of how faithfully the original literary artifact is preserved, or how the "spirit of the original" is conserved despite some lamentable but necessary changes so as to dumb it down to a post-MTV American audience. Lope, too, had to ignore the rules and prescriptions of the high-culture classics in order to attend to his "barbarian" *vulgo* audience, much to the chagrin of the educated intelligentsia of his day (including Cervantes). Furthermore, the seventeenth-century production manager rarely left the playwright's original script intact, as his job as *autor* would be to guarantee popular success—if necessary, by reducing and otherwise editing the literary text to better fit the demands of his specific audience. In light of these considerations, the notion of an "authoritative text" is clearly problematic; it would be more appropriate to consider the original script a work-in-progress whose finished product would be witnessed onstage. Those twenty-first century productions that privilege cultural or communicative authenticity appear to embrace this fact more readily than does the "ancient" standard of textual authenticity.

Mr. Igo's comment is one that I think Lope would have very much appreciated for its casting of the divide between theory and practice, between traditional *Comedia* scholarship and the realities of contemporary *Comedia* re-production and performance. Perhaps his position vis-à-vis those scholars whom he considered to be archeological preservationists—and by extension, perhaps the position of those directors and players who will participate in future round-table sessions and symposia at Chimalzal and elsewhere—is analogous to the position in which Lope found himself in 1609 before the *Academia*. The irony and rhetorical complexity that has been observed in the *Arte nuevo* by critics like Edward Friedman and José Montesinos suggest that I risk oversimplifying things by drawing this analogy, for Lope was in no position to offer so bold a resistance to academic authority as does the contemporary director, for his goal was to promote a new theatrical phenomenon that would eventually be embraced by both “high” and “low” audiences. The artful rhetorical play that many have perceived in the *Arte nuevo*, in other words Lope’s simultaneous homage to and rejection of classical authority, is at least in part due to his cultural circumstances. We can only speculate as to whether or not the tone of this discourse on dramaturgy would more closely resemble that of John Igo’s comment, if Lope’s relationship with the academy were different and if his cultural circumstances were more like our own.

But putting all such speculation aside, the analogy I draw between our work and the circumstances under which Lope wrote the *Arte nuevo* does hold true to the extent that *Comedia* scholars come to the conversation as experts on what is now an *arte antiguo de hacer comedias*, an “*arte clásico*” even, and this knowledge of Spanish classical theater and its original cultural contexts makes us want to see in contemporary performance that which we have studied and imagined for years. For this reason Matthew Stroud laments the excessive reduction of the original text in Trinity University’s production of Calderón’s *Celos aun del aire matan*, a concession made to shorten the play for a 20th century American audience. While the plot of the original was preserved, he explains, most moments of lyrical embellishment were cut, thus denying the audience the chance to see “a baroque aesthetic onstage in full glory” (94). The “ancient” impulse in us craves textual authenticity and seeks justification for any significant deviation from the authoritative script—just as the *Academia de Madrid* sought from Lope an explanation, especially in terms of its flagrant violation of classical precepts, of the new phenomenon that was fast becoming Spain’s dominant form of popular entertainment.

In Lope’s case, the overwhelming success of his new art leaves him in a position of power before the academic court, as Edward Friedman explains: “The oratorical setting implies persuasion, a burden of

proof, or self-defense, but the tone of the treatise may indicate something on the order of a mock-trial, the answer to a playful request for a rationale where none is needed” (87-88). To back himself up Lope only needs to reference the undisputable fact of his success as a playwright: “Pero, ¿qué puedo hacer, si tengo escritas,/ con una que he acabado esta semana,/ cuatrocientas y ochenta y tres comedias?” (18). What was new to the ancients vs. moderns debate in Lope’s speech was a radical shift in what constitutes authority: although he personally knows and admires the classical form, he has no choice but to abandon it in the professional marketplace and to write instead for the paying public. His presentation to the academy, then, is an exercise of wit and a performance of intellectual skill, rather than a submission to authority. Regardless of their reception of him, his popular success and public patronage are secure.

In a sense, the twenty-first-century director who violates the “classical” or classicist precept of textual authenticity is picking up where Lope left off, and in the process she or he is instead privileging what I have called cultural or communicative authenticity. This equally vital “modern” impulse promotes artistic and creative freedom for those performing the *Comedia* today, just as it inspired the nineteenth-century *refundición* tradition.⁸ Like the ancients, the spirit of the moderns is well represented in the first volumes of our *Comedia Per-*

formance journal and regularly makes its presence felt at the ACHT Symposium in El Paso.⁹ In her study of a fascinating case of creative adaptation, that of a *refundición* of Lope's *El caballero del milagro* by Washington's GALA theatre, Barbara Mujica emphasizes the underlying question that the "modernized" or "culturally authentic" performance raises: "¿cómo crear un sistema de signos que permita al espectador estar en el 'aquí y ahora' de la acción dramática y al mismo tiempo mantener cierta conciencia de su propio contexto histórico?" (168). Because of the theoretical and practical innovations that have redefined the relationship between stage and audience many times over in the centuries since the Spanish Golden Age, this "modern" voice can speak with authority about the need to adjust early modern play-texts to the very different audiences for whom they are performed today.

We may address the issue of cultural or communicative authenticity from another angle by borrowing the Cultural Studies terminology of Stuart Hall, who deals with the complexity of television's communicative process in terms of its "codes of production" and "codes of reception." How well these codes agree with one another helps determine the success or failure of the production to be consumed as was intended. It seems reasonable to posit that at the height of its commercial and popular success, the *Comedia*'s codes of production and reception were in close contact and synchronicity. As the *Arte*

nuevo testifies, Lope produced hundreds of plays *sin arte*, in other words for the *vulgo* and not the academy. The guiding principle behind his codes of production, then, is his understanding of the codes of reception and consumption by which his audience operated; the levels of mediation through which his original texts would be filtered prior to performance would constitute further adjustments needed to match a particular audience's appetite. Today, audience codes of reception and consumption are obviously very different from those of early modernity, which points the voice of the "modern" in us to call for an adaptation of the codes of production informing the performance. To the chagrin of our "ancient" sympathies, this process of adaptation often challenges our call for textual authenticity, even to the extent of slashing, cutting, and otherwise altering the sacrosanct literary text.

Put this way, the voice of the "modern" in our 21st century academy favors adapting the codes of production to the cultural circumstances surrounding contemporary *Comedia* performance. These circumstances are the underlying base of our codes of reception and consumption as the audience, and thus the process of adaptation matches production to consumption, performance strategies to the receptive strategies of the 21st century audience. What this call to adaptation from the "modern" voice amounts to is a reproduction of the *Comedia* as an event equally dependent on the spectacle and on

how it is witnessed, regardless of what violence must be done to the *guión* in the process. It is in this sense that I call contemporary *Comedia* performance an analogy, for without the original audience no performance can exhume the original theatrical event in its entirety; it can only approximate. Ironically, doing violence to the original text is as authentic (in the cultural/communicative sense) as one could possibly hope, for the “ancient” in us can thus see the *Comedia* stimulate its audience in a way that approximates how it must have stimulated its early modern audience.

A common misunderstanding of the ancients vs. moderns debate is the assumption that the common sense of the progressive “moderns” eventually won out over the tired dogmatism of the ancients. Levine has found this assumption to be far from true,¹⁰ and I would stress here that our analogous authenticity issue will not simply resolve itself with an unseating of textual authenticity by the more progressive cultural or communicative mode. Today the *Comedia* is of course no longer the dynamic mode of popular entertainment that it was; it is a resurrection of what *was* popular and modern, the reproduction of a once-vibrant mode of entertainment that had its finger on the pulse of the theatergoing public. Contemporary performances of the *Comedia* now must exhume a literary artifact and take into account the fact that “historical curiosity” factors into the demands of its audience. The desire for the ancient

and textually authentic is something that scholars bring to the theater as spectators, for we form an important component of the *público* for whom these classics are often performed today: academic concerns regularly influence the contractual agreements that bring specific productions to particular venues in the United States (they are often hosted or sponsored by public institutions with an educational mission, if not directly associated with an American university). Moreover, a significant portion of modern *Comedia* performance activity is produced by American, Latin American, and Spanish universities. Public success and positive audience reception in this context means, on some level, pleasing the academy in a way that Lope could afford to ignore.

As twenty-first century scholars and intellectuals, however, we are well aware that our sense of literary history, just like any history, reflects our own concerns and interests as much as the aesthetic and ideological issues that influenced Lope and his colleagues to take up the pen or quill. One feature of this narrative is the canon, the body of texts from which contemporary producers choose the artifact that they will exhume onstage. This list of Golden Age Spain's "great works," like the term "Golden Age" itself, is determined by the academy and reflects our own interests, aesthetic sensibilities, and political and theoretical concerns. *La traición en la amistad*, for example, may never have been staged in María de Zayas's lifetime, but our interest in re-

covering female-authored *comedias* has made it canonical only in the last twenty years. The broadening of the canon urged on by feminist literary criticism, itself the consequence of a broader feminist social movement in the latter part of the twentieth century, is but one example of how the canon is elastic and unstable. In 2003 Zayas's only extant play was performed at Chamizal, which suggests the co-dependence of contemporary *Comedia* theory and practice. Even the 2004 selection of *El vergonzoso en palacio* says more about us than it does about seventeenth century Spain: although Lope suggests in the *Arte nuevo* that female cross-dressing was a crowd-pleaser in his day,¹¹ I suspect that our own examination of gender as a performative identity (thanks to 20th century feminist critics like Judith Butler) had more to do with its selection for the festival.

Attending the Chamizal festival leaves one with the impression that the presence of academics (many of them "ancients") among the audience is duly noted by those producing the plays. A university professor normally offers a brief oral introduction of the play about to be performed, and after the performance the players and producers are generally invited to discuss their work in roundtable discussions that include university professors. In this way the performances at Chamizal are framed from within a scholarly perspective that has traditionally privileged the criterion of textual authenticity. The

extent to which the performance itself aspires to satisfy such a desire will obviously vary from one production to the next, but the significant presence of the spectator-scholar brings the authenticity issue to the theater itself, which in turn spills onto the stage in a way that merits further exploration. If Lope banishes Terence and Plautus from the room while writing his plays, the twenty-first century director cannot afford to do the same with Lope, or with twenty-first century *Comedia* scholarship.

Perhaps then the difference between the ancients and moderns of *Comedia* performance studies is the difference between textual and cultural authenticity. Clearly we would do well to foster dialogue between them, for they share the goal of seeing the *Comedia* thrive in contemporary performance. That goal is to make the *Comedia* “matter” today, that is to say to make it relevant to our cultural circumstances. Establishing this sense of relevance is analogous to the challenge we face in teaching the *Comedia* to the 21st century American college student, and *Comedia* pedagogy can surely profit from both the textual and cultural modes of authenticity. *Comedia* performance is a complex matter, after all, for it involves both exhumation and consumption, an aesthetics both historically and contemporarily grounded.

NOTES

¹ The term “Battle of the Books” is generally used to describe a late seventeenth-century manifestation of the centuries-long ancients vs. moderns polemic, particularly in England. Baxter Hathaway has called the period of the early modern ancients-moderns dispute “The Age of Criticism,” in reference to the marked influence on literary production that the authority of neo-Aristotelian precepts exercised.

² See, for example, Lopez-Mayhew, Stroud and Vidler, all of whom present reasoned arguments that recognize the need to adapt the *Comedia* to the performance context of twenty-first-century stage, while respecting the need to preserve its original historical, cultural and aesthetic value.

³ See Birmingham, Friedman, Montesinos, and Parker, to mention only a few of the studies that have most directly informed my own understanding of the *Arte nuevo*.

⁴ In its simplest terms, the production oriented towards textual authenticity is the result of conscious decisions to approximate the qualities and circumstances of the *Comedia*’s original performance contexts. Regardless of whether those decisions specify a street, *corral* or palace setting, any decision to approximate seventeenth-century set design, gesture and movement, language and pronunciation, or costume and lighting is a nod to what I am calling textual authenticity.

⁵ See King for a detailed description of the *Academia* and its influence on contemporary literary production.

⁶ Stroud, 77-81.

⁷ Cf. Dukore, 121-24.

⁸ The *refundición* tradition, which lies beyond the immediate scope of the present study, is treated thoroughly and insightfully by Charles Ganelin in *Rewriting Theatre*.

⁹ See, for example, Lopez-Mayhew. In the 2004 ACHT Symposium, Christopher Gascón presented a paper that highlighted Isabel Ramos’s modernization of Lope’s *El perro del*

hortelano, in particular to identify with the U.S. Latino contingent of the New York City audience.

¹⁰ Levine, 72-75.

¹¹ “Las damas no desdigan de su nombre; / y si mudaren traje, sea de modo / que puede perdonarse, porque suele / el disfraz varonil agradar mucho” (17).

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PORLAND'S MIRACLE THEATRE GROUP AND *FUENTE OVEJUNA*

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The Miracle Theatre Group (MTG) in Portland, Oregon, is a non-profit organization founded in 1985 which dedicates itself to the production of Hispanic works of theater, art and culture through the efforts of three independent acting companies. MTG's mission is “[t]o provide quality Hispanic theatre, arts, and cultural experiences for the Northwest's urban and rural audiences” and “to present the freshest currents in Hispanic arts and culture” (MTG website). While they primarily produce contemporary works, within a twelve-month period, two of the three companies staged two very different productions of Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*: a post-modern interpretation of the Spanish language work in May 2004 and the premiere of a new English translation in April-May 2005.¹

One of the goals of MTG is to find plays that respond to local needs. Given that 2004 was an election year, MTG's Miracle Mainstage and Bellas Artes artistic director, Olga Sánchez, was especially interested in works that raise consciousness about

how a community can influence government and that make a statement about a community in action. She first heard of *Fuente Ovejuna* through Daniel Jáquez, Director of the NewWorks Lab at INTAR Theatre in New York City and Associate Artist at the Miracle Theatre Group. Jáquez, who had directed two previous productions for MTG, mentioned to her that he was working on a new translation of the play with William S. Gregory, a Portland playwright. Their dialogue ultimately resulted in the two MTG productions of Lope's play. The reviewer of the English production attests to the appropriateness of the choice: Lope's "400-year-old story echoes today's politics subtly yet forcefully" (Johnson).

The Spanish-language staging was an outgrowth of the Bellas Artes Spanish language acting program known as "Teatro Español," an ensemble of amateur actors and the only Spanish-language acting company in the Pacific Northwest. During the Spring of 2004, "Teatro Español" offered a course that focused on physical acting. Sánchez recommended *Fuente Ovejuna* to the instructor of the course, Christian Hernquist, as the play with which to culminate the course. As a student of Spanish literature,² Hernquist was familiar with Lope's play and agreed that it lent itself well to the physicality which was the focus of her course. The production was the first of three offerings of the Bellas Artes' "Festival Primaveral," running for two weekends (May 21-30, 2004) with performances on

Friday and Saturday evenings and a Sunday afternoon matinee. The final product was described and advertised as a physical and experimental post-modern adaptation.

Hernquist, who had previously been stage manager at MTG, has a self-described non-traditional style dictated by resources. During the course, actors were encouraged to explore abstraction in movement based on emotion and to manifest character through physicality. It was this very physicality that enabled her students/actors to better enter into the world of the play. As Laura Vidler has noted, “The [. . .] connection must occur, not only between actor and audience, but also between text and performer” (95). Although they were all native speakers of Spanish, most of the actors had had little or no exposure to the theater of early modern Spain and had difficulty understanding the original Spanish. As Hernquist met with them, they would discuss what was happening in the story, why, how the characters felt, and how those feelings could be expressed physically. Once the members of the ensemble understood the work, their attention was directed to making Lopé’s play accessible to a modern audience. Ultimately they took liberties with the text and changed the story, deleting some scenes, adding others, and revising still others. For example, the decision was made to present the play in two acts rather than the original three. The production opened with the ensemble pantomiming

actions associated with village life with each actor wearing a papier mâché half mask. The masks were worn just during this opening scene, which set the tone that the focus would be more on how their bodies expressed emotion rather than their facial expressions.

The English-language production was presented by the Miracle Mainstage, which stages works in English by Hispanic playwrights, as well as English translations of Spanish-language works, with casts of professional actors. It was the world premiere of the Jáquez/Gregory “translation and ever-so-slight updating” of *Fuente Ovejuna* (Johnson) and was directed by Jáquez himself. As the final work of Mainstage’s season, it was a bigger production and had a longer run than did the Spanish version, running for four weekends—from April 22 through May 29, 2005—again with evenings performances on Fridays and Saturdays and matinees on Sundays. It was a more language based, traditional production, maintaining the three-act format (although the audience was warned not to leave after the second act).

As had been the case with the earlier production, accessibility to a modern audience was also a major concern of the second production. The very act of translation reflects this concern. As Gregory notes, *Fuente Ovejuna* “should be much better known. I hope my translation/adaption will aid that. As with all my adaptions, one of my goal[s] with ‘FO’ is to shine a light on the original, not to

comment on it, but to celebrate it" (2/1/05). An important component of the production was a series of lectures intended to provide the audience with the historical, social and political context of the work,³ as well as an understanding of the task of creating a translation which honors and is true to the original while being relevant to a contemporary audience. As a non-profit organization, budget constraints are a factor with each MTG production. These lectures, as well as a printed study guide, were made possible through a grant from Oregon Council for the Humanities.

The Milagro theatre, where both productions were performed, seats 120. It is an intimate space whose configuration—the stage area is approximately 20' x 24' in a 3/4 thrust configuration—results in a great view of the stage for each audience member as well as wonderful acoustics that eliminate the need for microphones. A result is that the audience members are often within touching distance to the actors. This spatial arrangement was particularly effective in both productions in creating a connection between the audience and the work—the audience felt as though they were incorporated as townspeople. This metaphoric use of space is tied to the goal of consciousness-raising.



Fig. 1 Panoramic view of stage configuration

Although both productions utilized the same space and were technically stagings of the same work, there were significant differences between them. The first point of contrast is the size and make-up of the ensembles themselves. The Spanish-language production was realized by an ensemble of seven. The smallness of the company, as well as its gender makeup—three men and four women—required some creative casting decisions. There were four principle approaches to casting. The first was to delete characters when possible. For example, the decision to have just one monarch, as well as the fact that there were more female actors than males, meant that Isabel stayed, while Fernando was deleted. An alternative to character deletion was the creation of a hybrid character: Flores and Ortúñو became Flortúño. The ratio of female to male actors resulted in some of the characters experiencing a gender transformation—

Esteban became Estebana, while Juan Rojo became Juana Roja. While these gender changes would have raised issues of decorum for a seventeenth-century Spanish audience, the director and her cast felt that they did not alter the underlying message of the work.

Five of the seven members of the ensemble were either double or quadruple cast. One of the male actors was “Flortuño,” Maestre, Mengo and Alonso, while one of the females portrayed Jacinta, Juana Roja, Barrildo, and a soldier. The only two of the company to portray just one character were those who were cast as Laurencia and Frondoso. A final use of creative casting was the use of a sock puppet to portray Don Manrique giving his report to Isabel. The actress held the puppet on her left hand. As Manrique spoke to Isabel, the puppet faced her while she looked straight ahead. When she replied, she looked at the puppet, which now faced to the front. Although this was meant to be vaudevillian, it was intended to be more than just comedic relief. Its purpose was to show how ridiculous bureaucracy can be. It is reminiscent of the theater of the absurd, which aimed to startle audiences and cause them to rethink conventions through the use of innovative, unconventional means.

The ensemble of the English-language production was double in size and included ten men and four women. This larger cast enabled them to more closely follow the original work. There was some

double casting (three actors were double cast with speaking parts) and character deletion, but not to the degree required by smaller Spanish ensemble. For example, the scenes with the “licenciado” Leonelo were preserved in the English staging, whereas they had been deleted in the Spanish production. Because they were a professional ensemble with varying degrees of experience on stage, the production was able to incorporate elements beyond the capacity of many of the Spanish ensemble who were first-time actors. The incorporation of period music and dance (i.e., during the wedding scene) serves as an example.

The simple, evocative set designs of both productions are a second point of contrast. In both cases, the set was incorporated into the production and was a major element in each. For the Spanish production, the director chose to use white draperies. They were integral to the production in numerous scenes. Occasionally the village girls wrapped themselves in the curtains and/or used them to veil their faces. During the torture scene, Hernquist chose to have actors silhouetted behind the curtains rather than just hearing their voices off stage. During her scenes, Queen Isabel walked through them in such a way that they suggested columns in a palace. At the end of the wedding, the women held the draperies up like a canopy in a wedding tent. A post-modern use of the curtains occurred during the scene in which Laurencia rallied all the village women to fight with the men:

three of them posed behind the curtains like “Charlie’s Angels.” This use of levity allowed the production to draw analogies between pop culture and the politics of seventeenth-century Spain, thus strengthening the connection between the audience and the work without being pedantic.



Fig. 2 2004 production set design (Photo: Gerardo Calderon)

The softness of the drapery is in direct contrast with the harshness of the set design of the English production, which was comprised of three separate pieces of scaffolding. [See figure 3] The director had the following to say on this choice: “One of the ways to tell the story is through the set design. I’m sure people are going to question the scaffolding. It’s very evocative. You have to walk around it. You can see through it. It looks dangerous. It looks like it might fall. It could be a cage” (Jáquez). As the local reviewer of the play noted, the “set design,

a structure of bars that make a lot of noise when people are angry, at first seems a nuisance" (Johnson). This was first apparent in the opening scene of the play when the Comendador was waiting for the Maestre to appear. As the dialogue between Fernán Gómez, Flores and Ortúño proceeded, the Comendador moved between the pieces of scaffolding; the resulting noise, although initially somewhat distracting, actually very effectively underscored his impatience and anger. The incorporation of the set design into the action of the play was particularly effective during the scene of the attack on the Comendador. In an attempt to escape from the enraged mob, Fernán Gómez climbed up the center piece of scaffolding, which was then collapsed by the actors portraying the townspeople. Thus, the villain was both literally and figuratively brought down. [See figure 4] Like the Spanish-language production, the set design was also incorporated into the wedding and torture scenes. During the latter, the actors stood on one of the remaining pieces of scaffolding, facing away from the audience. [See figure 5] During the wedding scene, the harshness of the design was "masked" somewhat by the decorations for the wedding [see figure 6], but the scaffolding was visible, reminding the audience that the threat posed by the Comendador was still present.

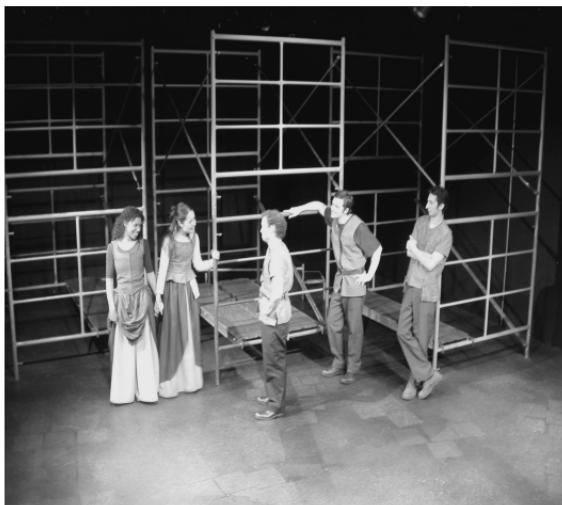


Fig. 3 View of three pieces of scaffolding (Photo: Paul McCullough)



Fig. 4 Death of the Comendador (Photo: Paul McCullough)



Fig. 5 Torture of Esteban (Photo: Paul McCullough)



Fig. 6 Wedding scene (Photo: Paul McCullough)

A second element of set design was the use of video monitors placed high on the far sides of the stage. Jáquez “used images of war, countryside, farmers, and executions, to help identify the scenes as they moved from location to location, and to support the action” (Sánchez e-mail). The ultimate goal of the use of the video monitors was “to bring a contemporary element to the production, as a comment on the timelessness of the play” (Sánchez e-mail). Again to quote the play’s reviewer, “Video screens with pertinent images add contemporary resonance to the play” (Johnson).

The final point of contrast which I shall discuss is the differences created by the physical vs. language-based approaches to the text. Since these differences are particularly evident in the treatment of the relationship between Laurencia and Fron-doso, it will serve as the focus of my discussion.

Because of the physical emphasis of the Spanish-language production, the relationship of the young couple was explored and expressed in physical terms, resulting in an erotic/sexual undertone. For example, at one point they shared a passionate kiss onstage, which, due to its duration, made some audience members feel uncomfortable. At another point when the two were hiding off stage, their physical appearance upon returning suggested that they enjoyed a “tumble in the hay.” The intent was to suggest that their relationship had already been consummated prior to their wedding. Since love often equals sex in today’s world, suggestions of this level of intimacy resonated with a contemporary audience.

The English production presented a much more traditionally old-fashioned view of their relationship. Frondoso and Laurencia’s feelings for each other were communicated through small intimate movements, such as him tenderly holding her hand while he looked deep into her eyes. The only kiss prior to their wedding was interrupted before it could even be realized.

That is not to say that the English production did not explore the issue of sex through physicality. In an area of convergence between the two productions, both chose to emphasize the physical force of the Comendador’s attempted rape of Laurencia at the end of Lope’s act I. In addition, both productions felt it was important not only to suggest the *possibility* that the Comendador had

raped Laurencia, i.e., through her disheveledness upon reappearing after the Comendador abducted her, but to make it clear that he had in fact succeeded. Thus, both productions eliminated part of Frondoso's penultimate utterance in Lope's play in which he affirms to the monarchs that Laurencia had been able to successfully defend herself:

y a no saberse guardar
ella, que en virtud florece,
ya no manifiesto parece
lo que pudiera passar. (vv. 2410-13)

In a society increasingly desensitized to violent crime, Laurencia's outrage is more easily understood if she is the victim of rape, not simply attempted rape. Hernquist felt that since rape is often an element of war, it was important to include it in her production. Gregory, who wrote the verses of the English translation, had this to say on the subject:

I thought a great deal about this issue [the "Rape Question"], consulted with [. . .] Daniel Jáquez and currently my feelings are these:

In my work I strive for what I refer to as "Emotional Logic," that is, a sense that the behavior of the characters possesses an organic progression based on their experiences and perceptions.

1. The Comendador threatens Laurencia sexually throughout the beginning of the play.
2. Both the Comendador and Laurencia define

their relations to one another in both power and sex terms.

3. Laurencia's actions, emotions, and speeches when she returns from her abduction are those of a person thoroughly abused and degraded. Therefore-- (since the area of conflict between the two characters was previously defined as power & sex) it is reasonable to assume that the abuse and degradation was rape. This outrage is the catalyst of the climax of the play. That she feels herself violated to the core of her being and her self-definition, and that in response she burns with a strength and directness which none of the other members of Fuente Ovejuna have found, gives clarity and focus to their actions.

"Fuente Ovejuna" is the story of an abused citizenry finally ignited to action by the rape of the mayor's daughter. I've elected to remove Frondosó's closing remarks about Laurencia not being raped, because I feel they run contrary to the shape of the drama, and that Lope included them as a sop to the contemporary pieties regarding the supposedly inviolate virginity of the stage heroine." (1/30/05)

In a subsequent correspondence, he further clarified his thoughts: "It is my hope that my adaptation will speak to the fundamentals of the story (Laurencia's feeling of violation and her galvanizing reaction) in a way which brings those fundamentals to a modern audience with a force and clarity comparable to the connection Lope enjoyed with his contemporary audience" (2/1/05).

Invariably a course on seventeenth-century Spanish theater sparks interest in seeing an actual production of a work. MTG's productions of *Fuente Ovejuna* provided an opportunity to do just that. Students from the author's institution attended both productions. For most audience members, however, the stagings were their first introduction to the theater of early modern Spain; they attended the plays because MTG has a solid reputation and is known for producing quality works. Neither production of Lope's play disappointed.

By default the Spanish-language production had a smaller audience. It was intended for a Spanish-speaking audience, which limited the potential viewers. In addition, given that it was advertised as experimental and post-modern, Hernquist feels some possible attendees may have been discouraged from attending. Some of the author's students, who knew the play through their *comedia* course, were a bit shocked by some of the liberties taken in this production. However, those with a background in theater responded much more favorably to these changes and to the work as a whole; they felt that Hernquist's strong hand as a director resulted in a strong production. The very use of English in the second production meant that it was accessible to much larger numbers. Its longer run, plus the fact that the review in the local newspaper described it as "one of Miracle Theatre's strongest shows to date," resulted in a larger audience.

Both productions got 21st-century Portlanders talking about Lope de Vega and the events of the small pastoral village in Southwestern Spain which he eternalized and how those events relate to political events of today. The timeliness of these two stagings highlights once again the timelessness of Lope's best known work.

Photographs courtesy of The Miracle Theatre Group.

NOTES

¹ The last time a work from seventeenth-century Spain was produced was the John Clifford translation of "Life is a Dream" in the Fall of 2000. MTG has expressed interest in producing translations of other classical Spanish works in the future

² Ms. Hernquist holds degrees in Spanish and Theater Arts from Portland State University. Although she has been the author's student, her introduction to *Fuente Ovejuna* was by another professor. Hernquist is currently a Spanish/theater teacher at a local high school.

³ The author served as a consultant for the English-language production and offered two of the pre-performance lectures.

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Interviews

SIN TELÓN: MONTANDO *EL GRAN TEATRO DEL MUNDO*. ENTREVISTA CON ALEJANDRO GONZÁLEZ PUCHE

SUSAN PAUN DE GARCÍA
Denison University



Sale al escenario un tropel de gente armando un escándalo. Una chica en minifalda mascando chicle detrás de unas gafas de sol enormes discute con una señora que podría ser una monja sin hábito o un

ama de casa sin estilo. Vociferan un mecánico de garaje y un tipo esquelético, con ojos exaltados de drogadicto. Estos y otros tipos urbanos representan en voz alta el caos con que se abre la representación de uno de los autos sacramentales más conocidos de Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Es un escenario prácticamente desnudo, salvo tres círculos enormes. El de la izquierda representa el nacimiento y el de la derecha la muerte; detrás del círculo del centro, el más grande, se deja ver una escalera enorme, y en la cima, se asoma un tipo con megáfono, el Autor. Tras la confusión de este preludio improvisado, viene la obra calderoniana, con algunas figuras alegóricas y el texto alterados para poder adecuarse al reparto limitado¹ con que viajó la Corporación Teatro del Valle al XXIX Festival del Drama del Siglo de Oro en el Chamizal en El Paso, Texas, para montar el 28 de febrero de 2004 el auto sacramental alegórico *El gran teatro del mundo* de Pedro Calderón de la Barca bajo la dirección de Alejandro González Puche.²

Según las notas de dirección que proveyó González Puche, su montaje del auto de Calderón es un intento de acercarse a la obra no desde un enfoque teológico o religioso sino...desde su óptica teatral. En esta obra El Señor desciende deseoso de fiestas y pone a prueba todo su genio creativo como Autor teatral. Su obra transcurrirá en el mundo como alegoría del edificio teatral y sus actores serán un gru-

po escogido de siete hombres representantes de la sociedad y de varios estados del alma.

Para representar esta obra el Autor delega su ejecución al Mundo, después de precisar los detalles y marcos de la representación asignará el papel adecuado a cada actor, dará las pautas de comportamiento, juzgará al que haya representado bien o mal, y finalmente lo premiará cenando junto al Señor en una alegoría de la Eucaristía.

Esta versión transgrede algunos de los principios del Auto Sacramental: primero porque su forma escénica está concebida para salas de teatro y no para una representación monumental en el exterior de una plaza, como lo acota el dramaturgo. Nuestro objetivo fundamental tampoco es el de educar acerca de los principios de la Eucaristía y el orden teológico del universo. Nos ha cautivado *El Gran Teatro del Mundo* como alegoría del teatro y la creación misma en el teatro. *El Gran teatro del Mundo* es una obra misteriosa, con pretensiones propias de la modernidad teatral con temas que se adelantan a Pirandello o a Becket. Para realizar esta versión hemos tomado el camino de justificar el auto sacramental y los acontecimientos descritos por Calderón a través de una *historia posible* y de esta manera abrir los sentidos inmersos en el texto. Nuestro propósito es poner a prueba las posibilidades estéticas de un género a veces injustamente encerrado en el costumbrismo teatral. La estructura del verso calderoniano trata de tomar sentido y forma en nuestro

manejo popular del español. Esta licencia la hemos tomado del carácter alegórico de la obra, alegoría que pierde muchas veces su sentido por ceñirse a una ilustración histórica cuando los temas y la percepción del espectador han evolucionado.

La Corporación Teatro del Valle, viene investigando de una manera constante las relaciones existentes entre la cultura popular colombiana y el repertorio teatral áureo. Nuestra tarea se ha convertido en pensar e interpretar estos textos entablando un diálogo con nuestra propia tradición cultural y teatral abriendo sus posibilidades de representación.

Este montaje se basa no solamente en los tipos del barrio moderno de una ciudad grande como Bogotá sino también en fenómenos tan actuales como el reclutamiento de gente “normal” para aparecer en los “reality shows” de la televisión, gente que acepta hacer un papel sin saber actuar o sin saber el argumento de la obra en que va a aparecer. Escuchamos por megáfono la voz sin cuerpo del Autor, quizás evocando a los evangelistas modernos que amplifican su voz por micrófono o megáfono.

En la siguiente entrevista—en el teatro del Chamilal el día después de la representación—Alejandro González Puche justifica las decisiones artísticas que tomó para llegar al montaje cuyo intento fue entretenir y a la vez comunicar el mensaje humano de Calderón.

SPG: Alejandro, ¿cómo llegaste a concebir este montaje, este concepto que has dado al auto de Calderón?

AGP: Hay en todo siempre una tradición personal. Tengo como una obsesión... por mi maestro, que se llamaba Anatoli Vasiliev³ y por mí mismo... de montar aquellos textos que hablan del teatro. Actué con mi maestro en *Seis personajes en busca de un autor* de Pirandello, que fue un montaje muy grande de Anatoli Vasiliev en Rusia. Después monté *La ilusión cómica* de Corneille⁴ que representa los primeros pasos de la llegada del teatro itinerante a las ciudades en Francia. *El impromptu de Versailles* de Molière⁵ es otro texto que he tenido la oportunidad de montar y andaba buscando un texto más o menos así, y me fui por *Lo fingido verdadero...* o *El gran teatro del mundo*. Entonces, aparte de esa biografía personal, me pareció que el problema de este texto [*El gran teatro del mundo*], tan hermético y tan cerrado, era que siempre se hablaba del auto sacramental y de la fe, pero no se hablaba del teatro y de lo que les pasa a los actores. Entonces decidí tratar de contar la historia a través del proceso de un montaje teatral, entendiendo que Dios—digamos el Autor—tenía que aparecer como un director teatral. Y todas las vicisitudes y las expectativas y las frustraciones que se tienen en un montaje teatral fueron la idea principal.

SPG: ¿Cómo llegaste luego a la decisión de montarlo como un reflejo de la vida contemporánea colombiana?

AGP: Lo que pasa es que el teatro, pese a lo que se diga, no es un arte limpio. ¿A qué me refiero con “limpio”? El teatro, al ser muy similar a veces a la vida, tiene todos sus pecados, sus basuras, sus incoherencias. Entonces el que El Señor tuviera que bajar a una ciudad colombiana sucia, con gritos, con peleas, parecía coherente. El Autor, que es una alegoría del Señor, quiere montar una obra de teatro, pero los teatros son unas dependencias poco limpias, que las puede cerrar cualquier ministerio de salud o de protección social porque en los teatros hay maltrato. El teatro es un arte muy sucio; solamente en el momento de la representación todo eso coge coherencia.

SPG: En esta representación, entran unas personas desconocidas, todavía sin identificarse, gritando, peleando. El público se despista, pues parece lo más lejos de un auto sacramental que se puede imaginar. ¿Es el caos antes de la creación del mundo?

AGP: Claro, y nosotros tuvimos una preocupación por tener siempre un referente a la realidad, a la realidad cultural en el sentido de acercar al público al texto y también de acercar el vocabulario—de unir los dos lenguajes, el de Calderón y el del barrio colombiano. Sí, esa fue la idea...

SPG: ¿Entonces buscaste “tipos” en realidad?

AGP: Sí, dimos muchas vueltas al principio, buscando la mejor manera de representar al Autor. Unas veces era un hombre muy misterioso que llegaba a una vereda⁶ de pescadores, después era una persona muy misteriosa que aparecía en las calles y seducía a un grupo de actores aficionados de los que hacen *Los matachines* en Colombia, en las verbenas populares. Fuimos evolucionando hasta que encontramos que el lenguaje urbano era el más adecuado. Si el espectador tenía que asombrarse del misterio, asombrarse positivamente del misterio del Génesis al que hace referencia *El gran teatro del mundo* aquí, debería sentir también la misma sorpresa de la creación. Y por eso de alguna manera la primera parte de la representación es mucho más limpia. Las personas del auto no solamente encuentran un papel o un personaje en su vida sino que encuentran la magia del teatro. Esa magia nos parecía una metáfora muy hermosa para la creación del mundo.

SPG: Cuando escuchábamos la representación, notamos una pronunciación muy marcada de los versos. ¿Eso se hacía adrede?

AGP: Sí, a veces yo tengo problemas. Por ejemplo, al mirar la puesta en cine de Pilar Miró del *Perro del hortelano*, se ve muy bien qué actores han actuado en teatro y cuáles no. Queríamos conservar el lenguaje de Calderón sin caer en un lenguaje absolutamente prosaico; queríamos encontrar las dos vías. A veces se logró una comunión exacta; por ejemplo cuando habla el Mendigo o cuando habla la

Belleza, se logra que la realidad sea poética, que los versos expresen la esencia del personaje. Y sin embargo hay otros personajes que se les siente hablar en verso forzado...

SPG: Es que va muy bien con el concepto de unos actores, no profesionales, que están en realidad inventando todo sobre la marcha. Y esa manera de declamar marcando muchísimo la rima, refuerza esa idea.

APG: Los personajes, claro, están apoyado el sentido del texto. Hay un momento en que uno de ellos dice: “Todos informes nos vemos.”⁷ Cuando leemos el auto sacramental, los personajes tienen nombres: el Pobre, la Discreción, la Hermosura, pero ellos realmente, antes de recibir los papeles del Autor, son personas informes, sin identidad. Se descubren a través del teatro y vemos cómo dignifican su vida, cómo su vida toma coherencia. A muchos el Autor les da papeles inesperados en su vida y a otros les da el mismo papel, o sea, muy similar a lo que son en el barrio. Ahora bien, nos interesaba mucho el momento en que se les quitan los papeles. Dentro de esa metáfora teatral, a veces hay otra exageración, que es el abuso de los actores naturales para hacer cosas artísticas. Hay ejemplos como el actor del *Ladrón de bicicletas*, que se vuelve famoso inesperadamente, una quimera artística, pero su fama no dura nada. Dura como la vida, muy poco. No dista mucho de lo que les pasa a muchos en los barrios.

Queríamos hablar de eso porque en nuestros países también abundan los vendedores de ilusiones, que llegan a un lugar con un proyecto artístico. Hay personas que creen en este proyecto y le dan su vida; los productores las contratan, las usan y se van. Y eso nos parecía que también había que nombrarlo.

SPG: Habías dicho que no te enfocabas tanto en la teología del auto sino en el dramatismo que contiene en realidad una representación teatral. Aunque en el reparto aparecen todos los personajes que creó Calderón en su auto, todos no aparecen en el escenario. Cambiaste personajes, fusionaste personajes, eliminaste personajes... ¿qué hubo detrás de todo eso?

APG: Pues una cosa es la cantidad de actores; eso es una cosa evidente, sobre todo en una compañía que viaja. Pero también probamos otras cosas, y las dos personas que fusionamos fueron el Mundo y el Labrador. El Mundo se manifestó más como metáfora que personaje... y vimos que como personaje no lo necesitábamos. ¿Quién era el Mundo? Una alegoría, un personaje que debía ser como un escenógrafo-utilero-dramaturgo, un autor de comedia, el que prepara todo el dispositivo escénico, el productor. Así lo hicimos, pero así no estaba en el texto de Calderón. Entonces se tomó la decisión de fusionarlo con el Labrador. Nuestro proceso fue como el célebre “Soneto de repente” de Lope: ir haciendo mientras se aprende. La experiencia teatral es que uno se va haciendo mientras se va formando; yo me

voy volviendo utilero porque ya he ayudado con los montajes. Esa fue la primera concepción. La otra fue la fusión del Rey con el Autor. Fue en parte para marcar el maniqueísmo que había en lo que queríamos contar: el Autor como vendedor de ilusiones a las que el personaje al principio no se entrega. Esa era una razón. Otra es que evidentemente la figura del Rey era Dios en la tierra; unimos los dos personajes.

SPG: Hay un elemento militar en el vestido del Rey.



AGP: Claro, porque el sueño del Rey es un sueño militar. La Hermosura quiere cautivar y avasallar al mundo a través de sus dotes pero él busca conquistar a través de las armas. Esa fue la idea del personaje del Rey. Otra fusión fue la Ley de Gracia, un personaje autónomo en la obra que habla desde el cielo. Probamos muchas pistas de sonido, buscando formas de manifestarlo, como un ángel que aparecía. Efectivamente llegamos a conseguirlo por un medio tan prosaico como hablar por un megáfono. Nos inspiramos en la explosión que hay ahora de las sectas cristianas en nuestros países que unen lo divino a una tecnología tan precaria como el megáfono. En estas sectas, los ritos son cantados y hablados de tal manera que el micrófono casi se vuelve en la presencia del Espíritu Santo en la tierra. Y en nuestra obra el megáfono es una reflexión de que la Ley de Gracia está más allá de una voz. Es una voz que tiene tecnología—muy precaria—pero tiene tecnología.

SPG: Quería volver al concepto de los vestidos porque, claro, es clave. La identidad de los personajes consiste en lo que ellos se visten. Me interesa saber cómo concebiste estos vestidos.

AGP: Lo único que adjudica el Autor son vestidos—vestidos y una denominación. Y las personas del auto tienen que inventarse su papel. Esos vestidos serán muy importantes. Uno empieza a entender la importancia de ese elemento en la representación española. Y cuando quitan los vestidos al final del

auto (porque los recogen), vuelven a su estado anterior, el de no ser actor. Actor es el que tiene vestuario. Creo que esa manía quedó hasta el siglo XIX y contra ella peleó Stanislavski, que el actor era un vestuario y los actores invertían en sus vestuarios. Fue diferente nuestro proceso de inventar el vestido del Rico. Tuvimos problemas con que El Rico fuera un actor negro. Creamos una imagen de la riqueza con un abrigo de pieles, con una máscara hecha de dólares que él se ponía. Para el Pobre hicimos una gran cortina, una gran cobija. Aunque en la representación se le dice “A ti nada te he de dar”,⁸ teatralmente no hubiera funcionado. Había que distinguir su apariencia antes y después de recibir su papel; el Pobre debe tener forma. Entonces justificamos que él se roba una cobija y se envuelve en ella como si fuera el gran abrigo de piel que lleva el Rico. Ahora, hay una parte que todavía no se ha logrado; todos son llamados a la cena final—una cena que hicimos con pan que los actores comen de verdad, como afirmación que el refrigerio es el momento más glorioso. El único que no es llamado a la cena es El Rico en el auto sacramental. Nosotros creíamos que teníamos que justificar eso a través de este actor que nunca quiso entregar sus vestiduras. Se niega a entregarse a su personaje, como una suerte de enajenación en el sentido de que él se cree la historia que está inventando. El [Rico] nunca quiere entregar sus vestiduras; no reconoce sus errores.

res y por lo tanto no es llamado. De alguna manera alegórica, hablamos de lo que pasa con las personas de dinero...

SPG: Es el único que no se arrepiente...

AGP: El no se arrepiente, claro. No dio limosna pero además no entrega su vestido. Nos parece muy claro justificar su condena de esa manera, dentro del teatro mismo. Ahora hay una cosa que yo no sé cómo justificar pero creo que nos puede dar latitud el hecho que sea teatro alegórico. Se dice “auto sacramental alegórico” pero el público quiere ver la imagen del Señor, aunque sea alegórico. El Autor es una alegoría, pero es un autor teatral, no es un autor



divino. Yo siento que hay muchas licencias que da la alegoría misma. Nuestro público entiende muy bien el lenguaje alegórico. Es una forma natural en la que siempre se entiende que hay algo muy importante detrás de ese mensaje. Es un teatro muy político los autos sacramentales.

SPG: Y claro, tú estás en el público con ellos, juzgando si has alcanzado la meta. Hasta ahora, ¿qué dices?.... ¿El público reacciona de la manera que tú quieras que reaccione, que esperas que reaccione?

AGP: Claro, sí, sentimos que la gente entiende mucho. Sentimos que se vuelve un teatro político porque aunque tiene tema religioso, resaltan las incoherencias teológicas del mismo auto, y la gente de eso se ríe mucho y disfruta. No es un problema el que se ríe, es muy atenta. Por ejemplo, el público se ríe en la parte del auto relacionada con los diezmos, con la limosna. Nadie da limosna, porque toda la gente está más ocupada en sus quehaceres y en su egoísmo personal. El Rico no es el único que no da - el Rey no da, el poder no colabora. La Iglesia es la única que da, aunque delega, claro. Muy cómodamente. Hay un mensaje que la gente capta muy bien sobre todo: el de la pobreza. El que el Pobre no recibe sino que “se le quita” (esas son palabras de Calderón),⁹ se vuelve un momento muy interesante. Es el único actor que quiere salir rápido de esta vida porque esa representación él consideraba haber nacido del pecado¹⁰ y la gente se identifica mucho con

él. Y uno trata de evitar un sentido como panfletario, no se si me entiendes panfletario...Por ejemplo, El Rico. El Rico como lo hicimos es un personaje que la gente recibe como personaje... no querido. Yo no sé porque. Y lo hicimos de muchas maneras con muchos actores y finalmente resolvimos hacerlo muy panfletario, evidentemente panfletario.

SPG: Define panfletario ...

AGP: Panfleto es un término acuñado en el teatro político, que un panfletario es una verdad evidente con poca profundidad: los ricos son malos, el capitalismo es malo. Es una verdad directa que no tiene ningún tipo de subtexto. Eso es como panfleto. Y tiene mucho de eso el auto sacramental.

SPG: Quiero cambiar un poco el enfoque a la cuestión de los efectos que creaste, sobre todo en la primera parte de la creación del mundo, efectos que se lograron con una sencillez asombrosa e ingeniosa. Yo creo que mis favoritos son el eclipse—una llanta de coche que pasa por delante de un foco—, el diluvio—la sensación de diluvio creada por agua vaporizada iluminada por detrás—, y la creación de las flores—hilos de banderines que salieron de unos tubos. ¿Cómo se te ocurrieron estos efectos tan geniales?

AGP: Lo que pasa es que también aprovechamos una metáfora ... A eso hay que añadir las necesidades, que en Chihuahua hace unos días nos pidieron que limitáramos el uso de la tecnología teatral. Hay que decir que el teatro se ha vuelto también muy

tecnológico, con el video beam, hasta el punto de que la tecnología es un elemento que hace casi todo posible. No tanto como el cine o como el video, pero en el teatro casi todo empieza a ser posible. Pero construir imágenes bajando un video beam o poniendo unas luces muy complicadas nos parecía que, primero, no daba sensación de cómo desde la basura se crea el mundo. Entonces, la idea de este monólogo del Mundo en el cual se recapitula toda la creación—la idea era poder crear esas imágenes desde el villorrio mismo, desde la basura misma donde ellos viven. Entonces, por supuesto, el eclipse era cuando pasa una llanta sobre una lámpara. Sí, el gran diluvio eran los aspersores que tenía una señora en su salón de belleza.. Las ingeniosas perspectivas, eran como las banderitas que pone la gente para las fiestas. Y sentimos que la gente agradece mucho más ese efecto y siente el milagro de la creación. No lo quiero decir con esas palabras pero desde la mierda misma—palabra un poco fuerte—desde la nulidad. Da la sensación de que se puede crear la ilusión en un botadero de basura, o la ilusión en un botadero de carros. Y que allí están todos los elementos de la creación y que el problema es que tú no los ves. Pero allí están el diluvio, el eclipse, las perspectivas. etc.

SPG: A mí me encantó. Además refuerza mucho la idea que todo es una improvisación. Estamos inven-

tado todo constantemente, que así es la vida, que no hay un plan.

¿Podrías hablar un poco de tus planes para el futuro?

AGP: Pues, estoy tratando de montar ahora con la Escuela de Teatro *La Arcadia* de Lope, basado en un drama pastoril, que es muy bonito. Y estoy tratando de despedirme del teatro del Siglo de Oro un poco, porque uno empieza a entender que es un teatro muy exigente, muy formativo. Hace falta también que el creador esté en continuo contacto con otras experiencias teatrales porque si uno se va y monta una ópera o monta una obra infantil o monta una obra contemporánea, después trae esa experiencia al teatro el Siglo del Oro. Si es muy monofónico, no funciona.

SPG: Pero también, te planteas unos retos difíciles.

AGP: Hicimos ya *El condenado por desconfiado*, hicimos *El astrólogo fingido*. Y sentimos que lo difícil en el teatro español no es tanto escoger la obra sino escoger el tema. Si uno realmente escoge el tema que hay, puede construir fábulas increíbles, con esas mismas palabras, que tienen una gran hermosura. Mas escoger el tema que ilustra la obra es como el camino que tenemos. Antes, yo siempre imaginaba que iba a montar el *Gran teatro del mundo* en el atrio de una iglesia con gran despliegue de pólvora, de andamios, de cosas increíbles; pero cuando empezamos a hacerlo descubrimos que era mejor no encerrar los sentidos detrás del monumen-

talismo mismo, porque cuando hay algo tan monumental la gente empieza a ver la escalera, la ascensión y las campanas y dejar de sentir el drama que significa la vida: venir a decir unas cosas, hacer unos papeles, después que se nos quitan esos papeles y ser juzgados.

SPG: Es decir, lo que estás buscando más que nada es que resalte la palabra del texto y que todo lo que haces en términos de montaje sirve a la palabra.

AGP: Es que esos textos... Yo quisiera que algún día se volviera que... Pienso que el teatro español tiene todas las capacidades del volverse lo que hoy es el teatro shakespeareano o la ópera: un género lleno de detalles deliciosos. Porque esas palabras sintetizan estados del alma y de la humankind en nuestra cultura ¿no?.

El Chamizal
1 de marzo de 2004

NOTES

¹ Personajes: El Autor, El Mundo, El Rey, La Discreción, La Ley de Gracia, La Hermosura, El Rico, El Labrador, El Pobre, Una Voz. Actores: Marleyda Soto Ríos, Jhonny Muñoz Aguilera, Néstor Durán Cortes, Felipe Pérez Agudelo, Manuel Francisco Viveros, Margarita Arboleda Franco. Se suprimió El Niño.

² La Corporación Teatro del Valle es una agrupación teatral dependiente del Departamento de Artes Escénicas de la Uni-

versidad del Valle (Cali, Colombia). Entrenado en la Academia Teatral Rusa (Gitis), González Puche fue discípulo y actor de Anatoli Vasilev. Entre otras obras, ha dirigido con La Corporación Teatro del Valle, *La gaviota* de Antón Chejov, *Días impares* de Carlos Enrique Lozano, *Fausto* de Goethe, *El Malentendido* de Albert Camus, *El astrólogo fingido* de Pedro Calderón de la Barca, *La ilusión cómica* de Pierre Corneille y *El condenado por desconfiado* de Tirso de Molina.

³ Director Ruso egresado del GITIS y discípulo de la maestra María Ósipovna Knébel . Director del teatro *Escuela de Arte Dramático* de Moscú. Ganador del premio *Nueva Realidad del Teatro Europeo* en 1990. Es uno de los directores mas polémicos e innovadores de la escena rusa actual. Dentro de su más célebres montajes figuran *Seis personajes en busca de un autor* de Pirandello, *Cersó*, y *La Hija mayor de un hombre adulto* de Víctor Slavkin, *Mozart y Salieri* de Puskin.

⁴ *L'illusion comique* se escribió en 1635. Corneille comentó que “el primer acto es solo un Prólogo, los siguientes tres constituyen una Comedia imperfecta, el acto final es una Tragedia y el conjunto es una Comedia.” Los personajes representan la gama total de la escala social. El espectador se pregunta si se representan a sí mismos en una “comedia imperfecta” que resume sus vidas.

⁵ Bajo el pretexto de un ensayo improvisado en Versailles, Moliére reune a sus actores e intenta explicar su concepto del drama y a la vez definir la poética de un arte dramático riguroso e innovador. En el proceso, ajusta algunas cuentas con los actores del Hôtel de Bourgogne. Esta obra, junto con *La Critique de L'Ecole des Femmes*, fue la respuesta de Moliére a la crítica severa que había recibido su *L'Ecole des Femmes*

⁶ zona de una parroquia rural o municipio

⁷ Verso 295; habla el Rey. Edición de la Biblioteca Virtual Cervantes. *Collection [sic] Cibertextos*. Realización de Miguel Garci-Gomez. Duke University.

<http://aaswebsv.aas.duke.edu/celestina/CALDERON-BP/GRAN-TEATRO/>.

⁸ Verso 605.

⁹ MUNDO A ti nada te he de dar,
que el que haciendo al pobre vive
nada del mundo recibe,
antes te pienso quitar
estas ropas, que has de andar
desnudo, para que acuda (*desnúdale*)
yo a mi cargo, no se duda. (598-604)

¹⁰ POBRE No porque así me he quejado
es, Señor, que desespero
por mirarme en tal estado,
sino porque considero
que fui nacido en pecado. (1193-97)

SEX, TREACHERY, AND REALLY BIG MOUSTACHES: CERVANTES'S *ENTREMESES* AT THE EDINBURGH FRINGE FESTI- VAL

JONATHAN THACKER
Merton College, Oxford

Kathleen Mountjoy is a doctoral student at New College, Oxford, working in the University's Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages. In her first year as a graduate student at Oxford Kathleen worked closely with The Royal Shakespeare Company in Stratford, UK, as they staged four Golden Age plays. (Her interview with Laurence Boswell, associate director of the RSC and the man responsible for the season, appears in *Comedia Performance* 2.1 (2005): 171-92.)

Whilst at Oxford Kathleen has set up a Playwriting and Dramaturgy Society, whose first project was to translate and mount a production of three of Cervantes's *Entremeses*: *El retablo de las maravillas*, *El viejo celoso* and *La guarda cuidadosa*. The first five performances were at the Burton-Taylor Theatre, Oxford (the studio theatre run by the Oxford Playhouse), and ran from February 15th to 19th, 2005. After a *particular*, performed for the Spanish cultural attaché at an Oxford College, the produc-

tion was revived at the Edinburgh Fringe with performances taking place in C Central on the North Bridge from August 5th to 14th, 2005.

Many of the cast were Spanish students, able to help with more than one aspect of the production. *El retablo de las maravillas* (*The Marvellous Puppet Show*) was translated as a group project by the Playwriting and Dramaturgy Society (with David McGrath taking a leading role); *El viejo celoso* (*The Jealous Old Man*) was translated by John O'Neill; and *La guarda cuidadosa* (*The Watchdog*) by Kathleen Mountjoy and Barbara Whitfield.

All of the music was written by members of the company, including *El agua de por San Juan* (the music to *El viejo celoso*) by John O'Neill, and the added *loa, Travelstained* (which accompanied *The Marvellous Puppet Show*), and *What's a Boy to Do?* (which accompanied *The Watchdog*) by Sam Thompson.

I talked to Kathleen after the show had closed at Edinburgh, and began by asking her how the plan to stage Cervantes's *Entremeses* had come about back in Oxford:

KM: The cast and crew of this play are all the fledgling members of Oxford's first Playwriting and Dramaturgy Society. The first meeting attracted a group of students in various faculties, studying anything from seventeenth-century Spanish art to Shakespeare to zoology. We had a shared love of

the theatre and specific interests in discussing playwriting and script development and analysis.

I described the initial aims of the society: to provide workshops for budding playwrights that would provide a space for interaction between those members whose interests were in writing and those who wanted to hone their dramaturgical, or script-analysis and development skills.

In order to give the Society a concrete project, the focus of the first term's work, in the autumn of 2004, was *translation*. I asked people to come forward with ideas of plays to translate and develop over the course of the term, with the aim of producing work informally ourselves in New College at the end of the term. A short play that we had written or translated, acted and directed by us, sounded like the ideal way to marry the different interests of those gathered in the room. No one raised their hands. Thinking quickly of plays I would want to translate, I suggested Cervantes's *Entremeses*. What could be more exciting to a group of young writers than an invisible and Marvellous Puppet Show? I sold the idea to the group through the contemporary relevance of the central issue of religious intolerance. Although, to be honest, this connection occurred to me after I had decided to suggest the piece on the grounds that an invisible set would make the play easy to stage!

JT: Who did the translations and what were the main obstacles you faced in translating the *Entremeses*?

KM: We decided to focus the remainder of our meetings that term on adapting and developing the script so that its engagement, or perhaps entanglement, with issues of *limpieza de sangre* could be rendered meaningful to a modern Oxford audience—one of the main obstacles of the period piece. To begin with, I asked if anyone wanted to step forward and work on an *adaptation* of *The Marvelous Puppet Show*, to bring it to the ‘modern day’ and see what the translation felt like updated and robed in contemporary vernacular. We spent several meetings discussing what kind of prejudice the townsfolk display toward the invisible puppets, as they distance themselves from all varieties of Jewish figures from Samson to Herodias. The Society talked about racism, about homophobia, about the intolerance of those with “street cred” against those we used to call “squares” or “the establishment.” This last approach proved to be the most interesting of the ideas, and we decided to work *The Marvelous Puppet Show* into a scene set at *The Cellar* (a trendy club in Oxford) involving contemporary students.

One of our members came up with a fantastic modern adaptation, which, had we had more time, we would have developed. However, over the course of our script meetings, we decided that a

metaphorical representation of a modern-day issue, in this case religious bigotry, through the presentation of an analogous seventeenth-century situation, was more powerful than an updated depiction of intolerance and deception. The hoaxers Chanfalla and Chirinos, who had been transformed into “Rob” and “Nick” to denote their thievery in the modern version, were changed back to their original Spanish/Italian names, and the play was re-translated by Sam Thompson and myself into a fairly stolid ‘literal’ version which we looked at again, beginning from square one.

We had applied for a slot at the Burton-Taylor theatre for February of 2005, and we wanted to begin rehearsals after Christmas. We therefore shifted the focus of the Society’s exploration into adaptation to a concrete need to develop a script for performance. We had a ninety-minute slot at the Burton-Taylor Theatre, and so decided to expand our repertoire to include three of Cervantes’s plays instead of just one, and decided to set them all in the Golden Age for continuity and to create a cohesive world into which to invite our audience. The two other plays we decided upon were *The Jealous Old Man* and *The Watchdog*.

JT: Having decided to be faithful in general terms to Cervantes’s play-text, did you apply the same policy to the language of *El retablo de las maravillas*, or did you have to update the jokes and references that might elude a modern audience?

KM: It was a long decision-making process, one that continued even from show to show in Edinburgh. The script settled finally into one that did not include many anachronisms, as a deliberate attempt to render it closer to the original. However, a few modern references the actors developed in rehearsal just stuck, such as when the malapropistic Benito refers to the great Puppeteer-wizard Tontonelo as Tarantino. David McGrath was instrumental in helping to clarify some elements for the modern audiences' benefit, such as translating the names of the characters to English, highlighting the theme of heredity by renaming Juan Castrado as Juan B'Stard. This allowed for Cervantine jokes: Juan continually corrected the pronunciation of his fellow townspeople, who in turn jibed him by constantly referring to him as "Bastard," prompting him to reply that "it is pronounced 'B'Stard'." The jokes and references did not have to be updated much, largely because the characters themselves are comic types whose antics are still recognizable to audiences today. The country girls, Juana and Teresa, for example, cannot hide their excitement about the "bull" that races through the stage, and "I can just see myself on his horns, Father, and ooooh, they're SO big" is just as bawdy and funny now as it was in the seventeenth century.

JT: You have intimated that the version evolved even through the play's Edinburgh run. Because you were working as a team, did the translation

process go on right through the rehearsal process that preceded it?

KM: I wanted to work on a “devised translation” of *The Marvellous Puppet Show*, and its modern relevance and staging challenges intersected with my interests in script-work and the staging of Golden Age plays. The concept of devised translation revolves around the fundamentals of collaborative rehearsal techniques applied to translation; effectively, it requires that the company contain Spanish speakers who can advise as to the literal meaning of the lines, working together with dramaturgs and playwrights who are better-equipped to render the poetry and provide speakable lines.

John O’Neill had a special interest in translating *El viejo celoso*, and his very faithful translation came to us complete with his own well-researched accompanying footnotes. The society embraced this play not only because of John’s wonderful translation, but also for its accessibility to a non-Hispanic audience. Many of the society members were familiar with Chaucer’s *The Miller’s Tale* and used that as a point of reference. In Cervantes’s play an envious old man marries a much younger woman, only to be cuckolded by her in his own home. We used the similarity with the Chaucerian story in our press copy as well, selling it as: “A ribald, vulgar and satirical play,” but like the story of the knight, it is counterbalanced by a certain pathos. We chose *La guarda cuidadosa* because of its raunchy humor and

because Barbara Whitfield and I, who co-translated it, were intrigued by how the puns and wordplay would render into English. In this play, two competing suitors fight to win the heart of their fair mistress; one a local sexton and the other a battle-worn, braggart soldier. One of our Society members (Alexis Gallagher) has an interest in long-form improvisation, and has experience with working in the *commedia dell'arte* style, and so this format of short scenes featuring stock characters suited his interest and talent. We were all able to learn from him.

The Watchdog follows in the tradition of the *commedia dell'arte*, whose influence can be seen throughout in the presence of the stock characters such as the beautiful and indecisive young Cristina, the kitchen maid, and her overbearing mistress. In our Society meetings we discussed how Cervantes, always intrigued by marginalized groups and the criminal fraternity, brings novelty to these typical characters, including in his fold a variety of tricky beggar-boys, an enterprising but dim-witted cobbler, and a host of other swindlers and rogues. The students of Spanish noted the similarities between these characters and some familiar to them from Cervantes's novels.

JT: It is interesting that you should bring up Cervantes's prose. We know that he was unsuccessful as a dramatist once the *comedia nueva* had taken shape. Would you agree with those who believe that

his drama was written to be read rather than performed?

KM: Of course not. Although his drama and his fiction are thematically linked and oftentimes situations and characters are repeated from one to the other, there is a fundamental difference between his novelistic genius and his talent for writing dialogue structured for the stage. *The Jealous Old Man*, for example, revolves around a physical joke, in which Lorenza's young lover is hidden behind a tapestry with his own figure painted on it. When the old man refers to the painted figure, young Cristina mistakenly thinks he has discovered the young man behind, and almost gives the game away. This joke highlights Cervantes's sense of stagecraft, and the scene is clearly not written to be read, but needs to be enacted visually onstage in order to work. Whether or not Cervantes's drama suited the popular taste of his own day, it definitely has a place within our culture of contemporary situational comedies and other thirty-minute entertainments punctuated by bursts of interruption (commercial or otherwise).

Cervantes's rather episodic full-length *comedias* cater to their audiences in this way as well. This kind of drama is especially well-suited to a Fringe audience, which is prepared to come to the theatre at 2:45 in the afternoon and see three short, entertaining pieces of theatre with enough of a message to give their afternoon a bit of depth. This was the purpose of the *Entremeses*; and it is a remarkably

apt way to enrapture a road-weary and oftentimes overtired Fringe audience.

JT: Do you see a problem with putting on three farces in a row rather than using them as *entr'actes*?

KM: Yes, and in fact one of our reviewers in Edinburgh felt that he had been asked to digest a series of entrées and was unsatisfied without a full meal. (We joked: had he never been out for *tapas*?) We worked around this problem by staging an initial *loa*, an introduction to the evening in which our leading lady, who the audience saw as Lorenza, Chirinos, and the Ama, explained in a Spanish-style song that we have three tales to tell, each with their own set of characters and their own charm. Throughout the evening, before each play began, the same narrator-figure came out and introduced each play separately, to tie them together and give the audience a bit of context in a humorous song.

Another potential problem is that the three farces might not tie together and therefore might not leave the audience feeling that the evening had come to a clear resolution. To solve this, we had a certain amount of continuity among the characters that spanned all three plays. The actor who plays Rabelín, for example, in *The Marvellous Puppet Show*, portrays the Rinconete-type *mozo* in *The Watchdog*, and so this character is recognizable and memorable for the audience. They “know who he is” when he first comes on with his dishevelled clothes and imploring freckled face. But certainly

the best example is “Cristina, Cristina, Cristina.” The actress who plays Cristina, the young maid in the first play, appears in the same dress and ostensibly is the same young woman in *The Marvellous Puppet Show*, and then she reappears again in *The Watchdog* as Cristina once again, always in the same dress. At the end of the final play she chooses one of her suitors, and the play concludes with a celebratory marriage song and dance. So in this way, the three farces do come to a recognizable conclusion with the one continuous character’s marriage, and this affords the audience a bit of closure. A *comedia* must end in marriage, right? And so our three-act farcical *Interludes* did as well.

JT: Do you believe any of the playlets are better suited to performance today than others?

KM: *The Marvellous Puppet Show* was the most difficult play to stage because of the rather un-PC conflict between the Christians and the Jews. On our first night in the Burton-Taylor theatre, a member of the audience was wearing a yarmulke and some of our actors felt uncomfortable with the final scene of that play, in which the townsfolk chase out the Quartermaster shouting, “He’s one of them! He’s a Jew!” Despite all our rehearsal conversations about the satirical message of the show, the intimate performance space allowed the actors full view of their audience who they had to hope understood that they were showing up bigotry and hypocrisy, not being offensive bigots and hypocrites themselves.

But again, I think that the message of the play is one of modern relevance, and it is the skill of the performers that brings out Cervantes's clever depiction of the bigots of his day. We tried to make our message clear by including in our programme note the following: "This sketch, which is reminiscent of the 'Emperor's New Clothes,' is Cervantes's superbly modern attack on racist bigotry, here directed against the Old Christians who persecuted the Spanish Jews in seventeenth-century Spain." I expected the performance to speak for itself, and I believe it did, but the note was there to be read.

Of Cervantes's other *Entremeses*, I think those that lend themselves more readily to modern staging are *El rufián viudo* and *La cueva de Salamanca*, the latter of which would present similar challenges of invisible staging to the *Puppet Show* but without the difficulty (or opportunity) for the religious-hatred motif. We know that *La elección de los alcaldes de Daganzo* would work onstage from the very successful staging of its counterpart scene in *Pedro de Urdemalas*, put on by the Royal Shakespeare Company last year.

JT: What was your biggest challenge as a director, and what was the biggest challenge for the actors?

KM: The *Entremeses* require a bawdy groundedness and physicality in order to be funny, and although all the actors in this project were exemplary at understanding the humour on an intellectual level, at times I found bringing forth the physical demands

of the show a tall order. Apart from the logistical difficulties of changing costume three times in ninety minutes, (and we used full period costumes donated by the RSC) the actors found the text challenging at times because of certain references, such as to the Old Testament figures in *The Marvellous Puppet Show* (including the genealogy of Herodias which is important to the final scene). Imagine trying to explain to a group of English actors that the reason Cristina tells her father to cover up because the magical rain will turn his beard to gold is possibly, but not certainly, because it will cause him to resemble Judas, and you will understand some of the moments that were trying for the actors. Marrying our more scholarly appreciation of the *Entremeses* with the demands of “making it funny” is the challenge of dramaturgy, and our Society struggled with this always mismatched pair of goals.

JT: Were there major differences between the first Oxford productions and the Edinburgh revival?

KM: We were fortunate to have David McGrath join our company in the role of Benito in *The Marvellous Puppet Show*, taking the place of an actor who couldn’t be with us at the Fringe. Dr. McGrath was instrumental in helping us to rewrite and re-conceptualize our understanding of that play, and made changes to the script that opened new doors for line interpretation. We made major changes to the music, and in fact the company devised a com-

pletely new *loa* and short introductory songs to re-settle the audience before and after each piece.

We also changed the order of the performances: in Oxford *The Marvellous Puppet Show* came first, followed by *The Jealous Old Man*, with *The Watchdog* bringing up the rear, but in Edinburgh we decided that the wash of cold water that was the Jew-baiting play could perhaps be tempered by the softer and more accessible *Jealous Old Man* preceding it. We were right about this, as the audience response to the entire evening of plays changed after this alteration was made; they were much more comfortable, felt they had been given permission to laugh, and therefore seemed to enjoy the performance much more as a result.

JT: Did anything surprise you about the audience's reaction to the plays?

KM: We were most surprised by the positive reaction to our marketing scheme in Edinburgh. We sold the plays under the tagline: "Sex. Treachery. And Really Big Moustaches!" We ran a deal with the box office that offered a pound off the ticket price for anyone who wore a moustache to the show (including those who donned the cut-out one featured on our flyers). The quirky energy of our moustachioed production team attracted many curious audience members who otherwise may not have been immediately drawn in by Cervantes at the Fringe.

Also, by the time we got to Edinburgh, the cast was much more comfortable with the show and had settled into their characters enough to improvise, and, as a result, we definitely played up the metatheatrical opportunities in the play, directly addressing the audience consistently throughout the performances. For example, little Rabelín, who plays both the “Friend of the Blessed Lucia” (Andrew) and Manuel, who sells his “strong Portuguese cloth,” also begs money from the audience, as he enters from the center aisle through the audience and panhandles his way to the stage. I was surprised by how much the audience laughed, and at things I never would have predicted! In Edinburgh we even invited members of the audience (including one of our translators, John O’Neill) to dance with the actors during the *El agua de por San Juan* song.

“WHAT THE HELL ARE THE MORMONS DOING AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE THEATER?”: AN INTERVIEW WITH JASON YANCEY

LAURA L. VIDLER
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In spite of his youth, director Jason Yancey is already making waves in the *comedia* world. Yancey’s Spanish-language productions for English-speaking audiences have both adhered to and challenged tradition for the sake of audience education, mentorship and fun. Yancey seeks to exploit the “Golden Age cool factor” in hopes of creating a new generation of *comedia* fans. Previously in this forum I have described the various staging strategies and techniques used by Yancey in order to achieve this goal.¹

While a student at Brigham Young University, Yancey initiated what has become an annual event on campus. Other than the Chamizal Siglo de Oro Festival in El Paso, TX, BYU is the only other place in the United States where audiences have come to expect at least one *comedia* per year. With academic support from the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, faculty members Dale Pratt and Valerie

Hegstrom, and with financial support from the ORCA Mentoring Environment Project, Yancey has now directed four *comedias*, including a US premiere of a recently discovered play. His productions include: *La dama duende* (2002), *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* (2003), *El muerte disimulado* (2004), and *El caballero de Olmedo* (2005). His production of *El caballero de Olmedo* was performed at the 2005 Chamizal Siglo de Oro festival.

Clearly, some of the innovations Yancey has developed through four years of *comedia* production are unorthodox. Some have even shaken up the scholarly community. Following Yancey's presentation at the Seventh National Symposium on Theater in Academe at Washington and Lee University in October of 2004, renowned drama critic Les Essif replied, "What the Hell are the Mormons doing on the cutting edge of foreign language theater?" Yancey himself has likened the BYU *comedia* project to a mission—a passion to be shared with the world.

Following a performance of his *El caballero de Olmedo* on the campus of Brigham Young University in March 2005, I had the opportunity to talk with Yancey about his innovative approach, BYU's *comedia* project and about the importance of educating kids about the Golden Age.

LV: How did BYU get started in the business of *comedia* performance?

JY: I had noticed a course in the catalogue on Hispanic Theater Production, but it was never offered. Dr. Hegstrom told me that it was only offered if there was sufficient interest, and I said, "Here I am—I'm interested. I want to direct a full-length play in Spanish."

LV: What factors influenced the play selection for each year's production?

JY: The first year we wanted to pick something that was familiar to a lot of people—something that was representative of what the *comedia* is and something that was fun. However, if you want to see *Fuenteovejuna* or *La vida es sueño* you can do that in a lot of places. We wanted to do something a little different but not obscure. We considered many different issues—whether to do comedy, tragedy, the number of characters, the story line, the conflict. We are most concerned with the audience understanding, so we try to pick a play that's somewhat easy to follow but also entertaining and fun to watch.

LV: In the past you have chosen to produce straight comedies—*La dama duende* and *Don Gil de las calzas verdes*, for example. This year you directed a tragicomedy, *El caballero de Olmedo*. Considering your predominantly English-speaking audience, what has the reception been like?

JV: This has been a kind of transition play for us. The last three years the plays we've done have been very strong, silly, fun comedies, and we wanted to see if our audiences could deal with that shift—if they would follow us into places that weren't necessarily so funny, and so far they have. I think it's important, though, that we maintain the comic element in our productions because we have a brand-new, fresh audience that has never seen *comedias* before.

LV: One of the most unique aspects of BYU's productions has been precisely that—you have an audience that doesn't know anything about the *comedia*. The majority of your audience doesn't even speak Spanish. You have chosen to produce your plays in the original language but with an eye to helping your audience understand the action. Can you talk about what motivated you to take this approach and what staging techniques and strategies have you used to make this happen?

JY: I don't like translations. It's hard to find a good translation. On the other hand, it's easy to find a good original. Our program is all about education. When you do a play in classical Spanish you have to teach your audience the new rules of the game. Not only that, you have to educate the actors as well. We do a lot to teach the actors first. We teach them all about Golden Age theater in a year-long course. If any audience member asked any question of the

Golden Age of any of the actors, they could answer it and they're excited about it. They love talking about the Golden Age and teaching others about it. So we start with the actors first.

As a director, I start from the point of view that no one in the audience is going to understand a single word—I can't trust that the language is going to do the work. The language will do some of the work, and I try to make sure that the audience understands the language that is important to understand and that they get the jokes. To accomplish this we try to be very physical so that the gestures and the emotions of the actors communicate what the language is saying. I also cut the script a lot. I try to boil it down to its most essential elements without robbing it of its poetry. I try not to alter the rhyme scheme; I only take out chunks that fit together.

We also do a lot of written materials—we have a comic book guide the audience uses to follow along as they watch, and we also do a lot of education in advance. There is a thorough play guide written by students in the class that discusses various aspects of Golden Age Spain, baroque theater, and the play in particular. We also use little bits of English interspersed throughout the production, which help keep the audience on track.

LV: Talk about the use of English interjections throughout the play. A lot of scholars are against

this on principle. How do you feel they help your audience?

JY: It doesn't just originate out of thin air. It's not just me making up something. I train the actors so that they know the kinds of things they might say. A lot of those they make up on the spot in response to an audience member. For Lope's audience, I feel certain that the actors spoke directly with the audience away from the text on a regular basis. The more we do it the more I find that the text has little places like that where certain lines or words are designed to be directed toward the audience. We try to do that, too. Of course Lope's audience spoke perfect Spanish—ours doesn't. For me to start making all of those side comments in Spanish would mean ignoring the majority of my audience. It also serves to separate what we've added to the text from the original elements. It helps the English-speakers to feel a part of the production; you can see their faces light up, "Ah! I got that joke!" and it keeps them on their toes. Without it, I feel like a lot of them would sit back and start to tune out what they're hearing and miss important things. The English says, keep paying attention, you're going to get some of this and it's going to be fun.

LV: It's fascinating to me how the English interjections, even though they're away from the original Spanish text, actually help to promote the authenticity of the environment. Can you talk about

how you've moved away from a fourth-wall, proscenium stage atmosphere and incorporated the audience in a *corral*-type environment?

JY: When we did *La dama duende*, my goal was to recreate the theater environment in the *corral*. We did a lot of research on what kinds of things happened in the *corral*, how audience members behaved and that sort of thing. We built a set that looked like a *corral*, it had three doors, the stage was roughly the same size, and we also divided the audience. We had the men sit in the front and the women all sat in the back, and then we just watched to see what would happen. We handed out bean bags that the audience could throw at the actors. It created this very interactive world in which there was no fourth wall and never any idea of a fourth wall.

Over the years I've learned how to control that and how to use that both in preparation and rehearsals to get the kind of responses we want out of the audience. It might seem to the audience on a given night, then, that the show has become chaotic and that things are happening that the actors hadn't planned on when in fact it is never like that. The actors are always in charge, and in rehearsals they have thought of possible responses and have planned their responses accordingly. It's usually fairly predictable. I feel that the text was written for that kind of an audience. The text wants an audience that will speak to it. They are a character in the play.

It surprises me that critics worry about us cutting characters from the play and yet they don't worry about cutting the audience.

LV: How is directing a *comedia* different from directing other types of plays?

JY: It is different. I've done a lot of Shakespeare and some contemporary works as well, and it takes a different approach. We do a lot of education so that the actors understand that there are new rules to this game. Asides work differently, the audience works differently, all the cultural things come into play; questions of honor, rules of the society that certain people can be together and others can't, and of course the formula of the *comedia* is very different than that of Shakespeare.

It really does take a different approach and the actors need to have a different mindset from the very beginning. If they take it like a Tennessee Williams play, then it becomes very stiff and the audience will not get involved like they should. We try to do a lot with the actors from the very beginning to make them understand that this isn't Tennessee Williams, this isn't Shakespeare, the *comedia* is its own animal, its own creature and you need to learn how it behaves.

LV: So what sort of practical exercises or techniques do you use to help prepare your actors for this kind of experience?

JV: That's hard because we don't really have actors. Over the years we've had only a handful, maybe five or six cast members who were actually trained actors. Most of them are students first, so they need to be trained in basic acting technique. We do a lot of acting exercises even before auditions—I'm an animal, this is my objective. We start with the very basics. In rehearsals I ask a lot of questions. I try very hard not to tell them what to do. I like them to explore and find how the game works on their own.

When they get on stage I'm not going to be there to tell them how to respond. I want the actor to understand both the play and the dynamic of the *corral* so intimately that they are capable of acting and interacting on their own. I'll do that in rehearsals. What happens if an audience member responds this way or that way? Once the show runs, it's still a rehearsal. The audience/cast dynamic is constantly fluid—things are constantly being added or removed based on new things that happen each performance. I think Lope's actors were very skilled at recognizing and manipulating that dynamic, so my goal is to get my actors to that level as well.

LV: Frequently, productions of classical theater are considered to be "traditional" or "modern," but your performances are difficult to classify. At times you seem to want to educate, such as in your reconstruction of a *corral* theater in *La dama duende*. At other times you allow for significant flexibility. To what extent would you consider your

productions historical? didactic? modern?
revisionist?

JY: I think we really are somewhere in the middle. I don't want to say that I'm modern entirely because everything I want to do is to educate contemporary audiences on the *comedia* and about the Spanish Golden Age—I really don't want to set Lope in the 1920s. I don't want to ignore what the *comedia* was. On the other hand, I am not entirely historical. I do take liberties with the text and I do make adaptations for a new, modern audience that is going to understand the play very differently than Lope. Perhaps I am modernly historical? I start with the original environment of the *comedia*. They say that you can't step in the same river twice, but even though that river has changed, you can get a pretty good idea of what that river felt like. You do that by starting with the original game plan, the original rules of the *comedia*, and by making those same rules apply to a modern audience. Sometimes that means you need to add pop culture side comments because the audience will relate to that in the same way that Lope's audience related to his references to contemporary culture.

We are helping a modern audience to behave and to understand the play in the same way that a historical audience behaved and understood the play. It's somewhere in between the two worlds. I think there are a lot of scholars who are quick to identify

those interjections of the modern world—you can't mention *Spaceballs* in a *comedia* and have it be historical. Well, maybe not, but our audience got the joke and understood the underlying principle of the cultural reference. Maybe the tool isn't historical but the concept is.

LV: When Pope John Paul II died I heard someone on CNN call him a “modern traditionalist,” referring to his use of modern technology to get across a conservative agenda. Do you think that term could apply to you?

JY: “Modern traditionalist” . . . I can go for that. I have often reflected on where I would place my own philosophy on the scale in comparison to others, and “modern traditionalist” is a good way of putting it. I in no way want to abandon the classical forms, but at the same time I recognize a clear and necessary imperative to make those forms relevant in the twenty-first century. Anyway, I feel that if Lope were here today, he would be using a variety of historically recent or modern techniques to accomplish his agenda. Times and audiences change. If the texts are to survive modern performance they must find a way to change as well.

LV: Outreach is a big part of BYU’s Golden Age Theater project. How do your younger audiences respond to the plays?

JY: Outreach is something that we take extremely seriously. We are trying to resurrect the *comedia* so we want to excite a whole new generation of

comedia fans. To do this we need to help them along by teaching them what to expect from Golden Age plays and Golden Age culture. When we go to schools we perform three short scenes; this year we are working from *El burlador de Sevilla*, *La dama boba* and *El caballero de Olmedo*. Our actors give a forty-five minute presentation on the *comedia*; they talk about what the Spanish Golden Age was, what were some of the exciting things to do, and, most importantly, why the Spanish Golden Age was so cool. That is our goal: to get across why the Golden Age is cool. They talk about playwrights, history, etc. The most exciting part is when some of the kids get to perform their own impromptu *comedia*. Every *comedia* must have a *galán*, so we pick a *galán*, we pick a *dama* and a *gracioso*. We play with them to improvise a new *comedia* where they get to be the characters. Afterwards, we have a question and answer session. The kids love it.

It's exciting for me to watch how excited they get about four-hundred-year-old theater. They ask the most wonderful questions that adults are sometimes afraid to ask. This is an audience that, as they go on, if they ever have a chance to see another *comedia*, will say, "Oh! I remember this group, I remember something about the Spanish Golden Age and it was really fun...I don't know what this play is but let's go see it!" How many middle school kids do you know that would say, "If I ever had the

chance to see a Chekov play, I'd go!" Never! We're planting the seed for future audiences.

It also helps us—a lot of these kids will come see the show and they're excited because they already know some of the actors. They'll say, "You see that actor onstage? I know them—we talked at my school." They get excited, they get their friends excited, they get their families excited and they come. Getting audiences to come is more important in a lot of ways than anything, because if no one comes, it doesn't matter what you're doing onstage.

LV: A big part of the program at BYU is mentorship. You are funded by a mentorship grant and the whole course functions on a mentorship model. Your faculty advisors, Dale Pratt and Valerie Hegstrom, are just that—advisors. They mentor you, you mentor actors, actors mentor kids in the outreach program. Can you talk about why the program is based on this model and what it means to the production?

JY: We begin the production with a two month mini-course. During that period Dr. Hegstrom teaches about the *comedia*. It looks much like a typical college course in Golden Age drama. The other half of the semester is theater-based. I teach them about acting, we do acting exercises and serve as a general mentor to help them understand what it means to be an actor. During this period the students begin work on a research paper which will be published as part of the play guide. Graduate

students get involved at this point mentoring the undergraduates throughout the research, writing and editing process.

As we go out and begin to interact with audiences and students in the outreach program, the actors themselves begin to teach others what they've learned. I think that what makes the play work is that mentoring chain. The professors teach about the academic things that they know and the actors learn that. They have a base and then they make it their own. They make it real and personal and applicable to what they're doing. In a lot of classes the papers that you write don't mean that much, but that is not at all the case in this class. The research that you do is directly related to the material that you will teach younger students as well as to how you develop your character onstage. It means that the education that you get on the *comedia* is personalized and important which, as we have seen, dramatically increases retention of the material. Every year students from previous productions will come back to see the play, and they're still excited about the *comedia*, and they still retain much of what they learned.

LV: The success of this process is evident in the question and answer sessions after each performance. Someone in the audience will ask a question that anywhere else might have gone directly to you or to the faculty, and yet it is almost

always one of the actors who pipes up with a competent and articulate answer. It's really impressive.

JY: The idea is dramaturgy. In the theater world you have a dramaturge that does all the research. Here we have students do the research. We have someone who did research on *Fabia* and *Celestina*, for example, and one cast member did extensive musical research in order to recreate the ballad in the play. Whenever I have a question, I can go to the student who researched a particular topic, and I take that back to rehearsals. In the Q&A sessions I consciously try to let them field the questions so that they can show others what they've learned. It also reinforces in the actors' minds the learning they've done.

LV: And all their work is published in the play guide, isn't that right?

JY: Yes. Like any publication, it is a permanent record of their efforts. It lasts longer than just a paper for a class. You can go back and refer to it later, and it helps to inform, not only your viewing of the play this year, but also other viewings in the future.

LV: This is your last year at BYU after having directed all four of BYU's *comedias*, and you will be going on to your Ph.D. program this fall. What are your plans for future productions and what will happen to BYU after you're gone?

JY: I don't know yet, but I know that we're all very concerned about that. Last year we lost our production manager who had been with us for three years, Melissa Mills. She was instrumental to the start up and success of the program, so we had to scramble to figure out who would do all the jobs that she did. We did manage to do that, so I imagine that next year will be the same. Before I leave we'll sit down and figure out who will direct the next productions. My hope is that it will continue.

One of the challenges that we face is that it's an enormous project. It's not a project about putting on a play. It's about outreach, it's about publication, it's about teaching the class, and it's about teaching people how to be actors, so we really need a solid plan and we don't have one yet. We'll come up with something, though, because we have an audience that enjoys the plays. Every year people who ask us what our next project will be and how they can get involved. I hope that this audience becomes a Chamizal-like audience in the sense that they're familiar with *comedias*, they like them, and they keep coming back year after year.

In my own travels, I am hoping that I find a department that is willing to suffer with me a little bit. It's a lot of work, so finding some kind of support is important. I'd like to do some eighteenth- and nineteenth-century theater, maybe *Don Álvaro*, expand out a little bit and do some new things.

LV: Well, I wish you the best of luck in the future and I thank you very much for our chat.

JY: It's been my pleasure. Thank you.

This fall Jason Yancey began work on his Ph.D. in Spanish at the University of Arizona.

¹ Laura L. Vidler, “Coming to America: Translating Culture in Two US Productions of the *Comedia*,” *Comedia Performance* 2:1 (2005): 69-98.

Theatre Reviews

Don Quixote Rides Again. By Miguel de Cervantes. Adap. and dir. by Chris Bond, Repertory Theatre, Birmingham UK. 9 July 2005 (Play's run: 24 June – 9 July 2005).

DUNCAN WHEELER
Wolfson College, University of Oxford

Chris Bond's musical version of *Don Quixote*, produced by the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in association with The Shysters, provides one of the more surprising and idiosyncratic celebrations of the novel's fourth centenary. This adaptation, clearly aimed at a family demographic and starring Matthew Kelly (stalwart of British light entertainment television) demands minimal prior knowledge of the source text, theatre or history and is a quantum leap away from the Rep's previous foray into the Spanish classical canon in 2004 with Calixto Bieito's raunchy and innovative production of *La Celestina*. Though the three lead roles are occupied by professional actors (Kelly as the knight from La Mancha; George Castigan as Sancho Panza; and David Fielder as Tomás de Torquemada, the Grand Inquisitor), the remaining cast of seventy is constituted by local amateurs and members of The Shysters, a Coventry based group for actors with learning difficulties.

The production is most successful when recreating what Anthony Close terms the “holiday atmosphere” of Cervantes’s prose. Kelly and Castigan deliver raucous lead performances revelling in an easygoing and warm banter that is consistently engaging. Though Castigan is not sufficiently plump to exploit the comic archetype of a short fat man accompanying a tall thin one, his rustic accent, hailing from the less sophisticated areas of Northern England, reproduces something of the spirit of La Mancha. The supporting ensemble’s spirited performances, though lacking in polished finesse, are effectively partnered with Jo Collins’ infectious musical score to imbue much of the play with a seductive aura of primal exuberance. Unfortunately a second, not so successful, play emerges as a bathetic counterpoint to the comic vitality of the main action; Bond’s attempts to recast a good-hearted romp into caustic political satire unintentionally constitutes the play’s most genuinely *quixotic* enterprise.

The ideological stance of the production is clear from the opening scene depicting the coronation of Queen Isabel; a diagonal row of soldiers on one side of the stage is complemented by another of nuns and monks. The church and the military are intended to represent two axes of power and even the spheres held by the soldiers resemble the crosses brandished by the religious contingent. The Catholic Queen proclaims “Spain for the Spanish” and a

surprisingly uplifting musical number on “ethnic cleansing” plunges the audience straight into the *leyenda negra* of Spain’s imperial past. Any remaining subtlety is relinquished as the Grand Inquisitor asks with a malicious relish, more befitting pantomime than drama, who they should persecute first: the Moors or the Jews.

Despite this rather awkward and simplistic beginning, the drama of the first half is of sufficient merit not to be sabotaged by political and historical reductionism. Bond’s rewriting of the text initially provides the show with an element singularly lacking in Cervantes’ novel: a clear linear narrative. The Inquisition are burning books as part of their evil plan to indoctrinate the Spanish population and Don Quixote’s erstwhile commitment to intellectual freedom leads to a skirmish which leaves a priest and member of the Inquisition dead thus precipitating the need for a rapid exit from La Mancha. The knight and his squire’s escape paves the way for a series of adventures that showcase a dynamic stage chemistry that oscillates between intimacy and frustration, vitality and exasperation.

Particularly impressive is a scene set in a brothel. Predictable yet effective laughs are secured by Quixote addressing a prostitute in such a high-flown register that she is prompted to ask, “Are you taking the piss?”. Suddenly a man attacks one of the women causing the knight to jump to her defence; Quixote is stabbed, but, in a moment salvaged from

farcical tomfoolery by Kelly's expert comic timing, is saved by a copy of "Orlando Furioso" secreted inside his shirt. He then forces the aggressor to retreat providing the ideal pretext for a celebratory dance whose cod-Spanish choreography, music and costuming provide such a seductive sensory overload that we are charmed into forgetting the inherently clichéd and predictable nature of the scene.

The first half culminates with the appearance of that universal symbol of the Quixote, the windmill; in this case, an impressive wooden construction at the side of the stage. Unfortunately, for the knight, attacking the windmill allows him to be captured by Isabel and her Inquisition goons; even more unfortunately for the audience it signals an about turn in which a fun irreverent take on a classic text becomes a dry and hackneyed political tract.

Following an interval, the play recommences with rumbustious style as Quixote is incarcerated alongside English prisoners who have all the bravura and charm of a group of football hooligans after twelve pints of lager; even as they are led to the gallows, they chant "Lizzie, Lizzie, Lizzie" in honour of their English queen. The scene is nevertheless completely undermined by a verbose exposition by the Spanish knight on their "pride and prejudice". From here on, Bond seems to lose faith in both his own dramatic material and the mental faculties of his audience; characters are morphed into ciphers that supply contrived and superfluous com-

mentaries on the action. When Quixote is tortured, any pathos is jettisoned as Tomás enters into a never-ending diatribe on how the Inquisition will indoctrinate the country through education. Sancho eventually convinces the “Mighty Moor” to attack the Christians thus allowing Quixote to flee their evil clutches. The play reaches its political and dramatic nadir as the *goodies* passively watch the two fighting factions whilst singing a mawkish anti war-song. The scene is made even more saccharine by the inclusion of Tom, a child and fellow-prisoner who clearly voices the sentiment of the production by asking “How can war be holy?”; one cannot help but wonder how the *manco de Lepanto* would have answered that one.

The production is also in a mad rush to include as many contemporary political references as possible; whilst an Inquisitor’s flippant reference to some rogue merchants being killed “resisting arrest” emerges organically, a group of cloaked inquisitors interrupting their Latin chants to motion “Respect to the Hoodies” is forced and completely devoid of humour. Worse still is a scene where Isabel, on seeing her beloved Inquisition defeated, salvages hope from the thought that their ideological torch will subsist and be resurrected in five hundred years time in the guise of Pope Benedict; even if we accept the partisan politics of such a comment, it commands no dramatic effect and raises only a couple of smug chuckles.

If Bond succeeds well in setting the narrative in motion, he finds the denouement more problematic. By eschewing the ambivalence of Cervantes' text and pitching the knight in a battle of good versus evil, Quixote is elevated above us as a traditional hero figure and hence no anagnorisis can occur at his death; instead we are offered quasi-transcendence as he reassures his family and friends that his spirit will live on; an incongruously religious sentiment in such an avowedly secular play.

Despite such a lamentable second half and any political reservations we may have, it would nevertheless be churlish not to applaud a production that is often highly entertaining and clearly produced in a spirit of good will albeit misguided. The attempt to widen the audience for Golden-Age works bodes well though it is to be hoped that future productions will work harder to move beyond the standard itinerary of religious fervour and sadistic persecution already so firmly entrenched in the popular imagination.

Los empeños de una casa. By Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Dir. Margarita Galbán. Adap. Margarita Galbán and Lina Montalvo. Bilingual Foundation of the Arts, Los Angeles. 27 February, 2005. (Play's run: February 17- March 20, 2005).

BONNIE L. GASIOR
California State University,
Long Beach

What do you get when you mix one part misperception, one part misunderstanding, and one part mishap (throwing in a dash of *gracioso* and a smidgen of double entendre for spice)? If you answered The Bilingual Foundation of the Arts's production of *Los empeños de una casa*, you win the first slice of the pie. Now, whether or not you like the flavor and texture, that is to say the end product, is a question of preference and one that ultimately depends on the viewer's like or dislike of condensed staging, blatant sexual innuendo, and the borders of slapstick comedy.

The play's original opening *loa* is replaced by a short scene in which Sor Juana herself (Sonya Smith) listens to and criticizes the other nuns as they attempt to read and understand her poetry. The fumbling and folly of the other nuns serve to underline Sor Juana's rare intellect and subsequent frustration with her audience. A perturbed Sor Juana, not satisfied with their readings, is forced to recite her poetry as she intended it to be read. Af-

terward, she is immediately ambushed, bagged, and taken off stage by a male. Because she does not struggle, and because several of the nuns who have had their backs to the audience reveal themselves as males, perhaps to prepare the audience for Castano's (Ray M. Quiroga) cross-dressing scene later on, the audience expresses amusement at the turn of events. A feminist might interpret this surprise attack as a manifestation of male anxiety (i.e., the threat Sor Juana poses to the patriarchal system), yet the actors do a good job of keeping the ambience light, airy and thus distanced from such a postmodern construal.

As the play opens the audience finds itself on the outside of Dona Ana's fishbowl as she converses with Celia, (Alejandra Flores), her servant. Characters enter from both sides of the stage as well as from a back room set direct center. This back room functions well in this play, for it gives the viewer a true sense of being in a house, as opposed to the simple linearity of only a right and left exit and entrance. The effect enhances the levels of confusion, both visual and linguistic, that occurs within the house's walls.

Mere moments after Sor Juana's abduction, the same male reappears as a character in the play totting over his shoulder the same sack used previously to whisk away Sor Juana. As its contents are revealed we are cleverly introduced to the play's fe-

male protagonist, Leonor, again played by Sonya Smith, who, now donning male clothing, proceeds to tell the audience her story. The story itself is not worth recounting here. However, the way in which the story is told *is*: as Leonor explains to us why she is dressed as she is and why she has been deposited in the house in such a manner, a flashback is used. The spectator is cued by a dimming of the lights and a sudden flurry of activity involving a series of male characters about to duel. Leonor, while all of this is unfolding, takes her place on top of the table as if mounting a surfboard and continues to narrate while the action plays out. When the flashback ends, the lights readjust, cueing the audience to shift back to the present and Leonor's predicament.

The subsequent scenes include a number of entertaining incidents between Ana, Carlos, Leonor, and Juan that take place in the dark. Slowly, the plot unfolds, especially at the moment when Don Pedro, Dona Ana's obsessed brother, is introduced along with his motives, the primary one being the ensnarement of an already "married" Leonor. Don Pedro turned out to be the most salient of the cast on this particular day. He was funny when he needed to be yet his humor did not overshadow his acting ability nor did it attempt to overcompensate for a lack thereof. While Smith surely delights the audience with her stunning beauty, she has a tendency to be overdramatic. Pedro, played by Ernesto

Miyares, is a very solid character who Miyares portrayed brilliantly and as faithfully to the text as possible.

Toward the end of the play the capacity-filled audience (of 99), who up until this point has been delighted with the antics of the cast and the plot as a whole, becomes aware that the reunion between Leonor and Carlos is immanent. By act II (which corresponds to Act III), it is as if all of the house's rooms slowly converge into one, signaling the play's end and resolution of conflict among the characters.

But before this happens, the public is treated to what they surely considered as the play's highlight and most comical scene: the transformation of Castaño, the play's *gracioso*, into a woman through cross-dressing. In what plays out on the stage for some ten minutes, Castaño meticulously removes each article of female garb he contemplates using in his self-induced metamorphosis from a bag. These items include jewels, a veil, and what many would deem a very grotesque *basquiño*. As he places each piece of the costume on his body, the pitch of his voice heightens and his excitement augments, signaling his "feminization" to the audience. Once his disguise is completely assembled, the audience cannot help but laugh at its mismatched colors (blue and red dress, purple cape, and a black kerchief) and style. This, in combination with the essence of

any true *gracioso*, makes for a highly amusing spectacle. Though the scene was somewhat overdone, relying solely on exaggerating femaleness to elicit laughter (Castaño does not hesitate to flaunt his enormous hips and supple bosom [created by two oranges from the fruit bowl]), the theater was completely enveloped in a cloud of mirth.

Overall, the play was far from perfect. Still, as I reflected on my experience, ever-so-conscious of my own viewing of a seventeenth century play with twenty-first century eyes, I realized that the staging did have its merits and strengths, which I mention throughout this review. But more importantly, if we remember how Lope emphasized the importance of connecting with *el vulgo*, I return to my metaphorical recipe and conclude that the play, on the whole, surely satisfied the ravenous audience.

El caballero de Olmedo. By Lope de Vega. Dir. Jason Yancey. Brigham Young University, Provo, UT. 17 March 2005. (Play's run: 10-19 March 2005)

LAURA L. VIDLER
United States Military Academy

After a successful, if controversial, performance at the 2005 Siglo de Oro Festival at the Chamizal National Memorial in El Paso, TX, Brigham Young University brought its production of *El caballero de Olmedo* back to its home campus and a brand-new theater. The unnamed venue, now informally known as the “Casa de Lope,” is located in BYU’s newly-opened Humanities building and provides an intimate performance space for BYU’s Hispanic Theater Production program. Sponsored by the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, supported by faculty advisors Dale Pratt and Valerie Hegstrom and directed by Jason Yancey, the Hispanic Theater Production program at BYU has produced four *comedias* in four years: *La dama duende* (2002), *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* (2003), *El muerte disimulado* (2004) and *El caballero de Olmedo* (2005).

This year’s production was marked by many of the innovative staging techniques and performance strategies developed over the company’s previous productions. Although the majority of BYU’s audiences are English-speaking, performances are given

in the original Spanish verse. Through pre-performance audience education, the use of physical comedy, dramatic gesture and audience participation, Mr. Yancey creates a production that is, at once, traditional and modern, authentic and innovative.

The annual productions are well-known around campus and the first hints of marketing of the new play were met with excitement and anticipation. Cast members wore production t-shirts daily, both in the days before and during the run. Posters, print ads and television notices ran through all the campus media outlets. One could even catch a commercial while standing in the checkout line of the campus bookstore. In addition, the cast and crew published a thorough play guide well in advance of the campus opener. As the performance is the culmination of a year-long course and workshop, Hispanic Theater Production, the play guide included articles written by students on various aspects of the Golden Age in general and of the play in particular. Also included were a plot summary, photographs, director's notes and a scholarly guest contribution.

The first impressions of the production, therefore, were made well before Don Alonso's opening soliloquy. All indications were that BYU's *El caballero de Olmedo* would be an attempt to reconstruct and resurrect an important historical play—a laudable goal for a university production. In fact,

there were many elements of the production that demonstrated a concerted effort to educate the public about Golden Age Spain. It was clear, for example, that a great deal of time and energy went into the research, design and execution of period costumes and stage properties. Furthermore, the performance was given in Lope's original 17th century Spanish verse, albeit with some cuts. Nevertheless, this was not a "reconstructionist" or "historical" production in the traditional sense. Nor was it fully "modern"—Alonso and Inés were not, for example, set in Victorian England or in a 20th century American urban housing project. Still, through added English *apartes* with careful references to American pop culture, modern scientific theory and contemporary oral tradition, the audience was drawn into what Mr. Yancey calls the "rules of the *comedia* game"; a dynamic, interactive *corral*-like environment in which there is no so-called "fourth wall," and in which the audience becomes a principal character in the play.

In spite of the venue's proscenium stage, audience participation began immediately upon entering the performance space. Surrounding the "outdoor" scenery of leafless *papier maché* trees and a fallen "log," were several groupings of large, red cushions. Select audience members were invited to sit on the stage for the duration of the play. (*Fig. 1*) Their presence blurred the boundaries between actor

and audience and allowed for dramatic interaction between the two throughout the play. In combination with the minimalist, natural setting, the arrangement promoted a sense of timeless oral tradition, of a storytelling around the campfire which binds a community to its shared past. Lope himself, of course, highlights the importance of oral tradition in his play by appropriating the ballad of *El caballero de Olmedo* as a unifying theme of the work. To bridge the gap for a modern audience unfamiliar with the Early Modern ballad, Mr. Yancey opens the play with a sort of campfire sing-along, beginning with *La Bamba*, made famous in the 1950's by Ritchie Valens. While clearly a violation of musical space-time for a "traditional" *comedia* performance, the sing-along between "historical" cast and "modern" audience of a shared musical experience mirrored the importance of the ballad of *El caballero de Olmedo* in the Spanish baroque collective consciousness and invited the audience to meet the players on a sort of theatrical bridge. Yancey builds this type of bridge throughout the play in a variety of ways—connecting past to present in ways that help a modern audience understand, and even more importantly, *experience* Golden Age culture in a dynamic and vivid way. Appropriately, *La Bamba* was followed by a chorus of the *romance del caballero de Olmedo*, researched and reconstructed by

cast member Christopher Lewis, the production's Don Rodrigo.



Fig. 1—Audience members seated on the stage surround the cast.

Clearly, the most controversial aspects of Mr. Yancey's staging include such "interruptions" of contemporary culture and English language in Lope's text. Tello, for example, disguised as a Latin teacher reassured Inés's father:

DON PEDRO: ¿De dónde eres, galán?
TELLO: Señor, soy de Provo, Utah
DON PEDRO: ¿Dónde estudió?

TELLO: En la universidad de Brigham Young

Although completely anachronistic and unfaithful to the original, the modification to Lope's text was designed for the specific audience at hand. Thus, the text could be modified for each performance on the tour. At the Chamizal performance, for example, Tello was from El Paso and studied at the University of Texas, Austin. This is just one example of how Mr. Yancey was able to make the play relevant and funny to a modern audience.

English was also used sporadically throughout the performance much to the dismay of some scholars. It can be easy to forget at times that the performance was not designed for an audience of Spanish-speaking *comedia* professionals, but rather Mr. Yancey has designed the production to be accessible to English speakers as well. To that end, much of the comedy in the first two acts was more melodramatic than pointed in delivery and included some English-language interjections and exaggerated physical gesture. In Don Alonso's opening monologue, for example, a young lady was plucked from the audience to "model" Inés's beauty. Emilio Ferreira in the role of Don Alonso attempted to get her to fake a duel with him to illustrate the power of Inés's hands. A bit nervous and unsure of how she should react, she stood frozen to the spot. He finally convinced her to play along with a re-

mark in English: “Come on, I’ll look stupid if I’m fighting by myself!” This physical gesture combined with the actor’s playful encouragement set the tone for an entire evening of audience-cast interaction.

The most brilliant use of this relationship took place during Act II of the play in which Rodrigo considers how to rid himself of his rival, don Alonso. When the actor consulted an audience member for advice in English, he was delighted to discover the clever comic-book plot summary designed by the cast members to assist English-speaking audience members in following the play. As he read the plot summary, Rodrigo seemed to “choose” his course of action—as if the audience member herself had influenced the outcome of the play.

Nevertheless, the metatheatrical nature of these dramatic interpolations served an important function. Mr. Yancey seemed determined to recreate, if not a “faithful” 17th century staging, then certainly an “authentic” *corral* environment. This has been evident in previous *comedias* directed by Mr. Yancey as well, including his 2002 *La dama duende* in which bean bags were distributed to audience members for the specific purpose of encouraging audience/actor interaction. (Fig. 2)



Fig. 2—Fran Morón (right) as Leonor and Amanda Lee Noble (left) as Inés interact with a member of the audience

The set design also had a measurable impact on the integration of the audience into the performance. Unlike the costuming, the set design for this production was minimalist and, therefore, enormously flexible. The generic locale easily served as a variety of outdoor spaces, including the road between Medina and Olmedo, the tournament, the street at night in front of Inés's house as well as the general "campfire" framework for the entire performance. Ruano de la Haza has remarked that Golden Age set designers relied on poetic ingenuity and public imagination to transform the open-air sunlit *corral* into *lugares extraordinariamente originales* (131).

Mr. Yancey makes clever use of the natural setting for the various urban and domestic spaces in the play. When the *gracioso*, Tello, must hide from Inés's father, for example, he finds a concealed spot in the "house" by crawling inside the hollow log. The log also serves repeatedly in Mr. Yancey's staging as the *reja*, the garden gate of Inés's home that is the secret meeting spot of the lovers. All communication, whether spoken or written, that passes through the garden gate happens at the log's imaginary barrier. (Fig. 3)



Fig. 3—Inés and Alonso declare their love at the log/reja, accompanied by their respective servants, Tello (Jared White) and Ana (Elisabeth Ellsworth)

Admirably, considering the resources available to him, Mr. Yancey has created a unique and innovative piece of theater. With a cast of college students, only one or two of whom are trained actors (and one who, amazingly, speaks no Spanish at all—Christopher Lewis, in the role of Don Rodrigo, is a Portuguese student), Mr. Yancey's direction manages to capture the delicate balance of the *tragicomedia*, moving his audience both to howling laughter and to tears. In the lead roles, Amanda Lee Noble as Doña Inés and Mr. Ferreira as Don Alonso were instrumental in the success of the performance's shift from the *capa y espada*-like comedy of the first two acts to the foreboding, supernatural atmosphere and tragedy of the third. Mr. Ferreira does not, at first glance, seem the stereotypical *galán*. He is neither very tall nor overly elegant. He is handsome, but not devastatingly so. Furthermore, he is a highly gifted comedic actor, so it was difficult to imagine at the beginning of the play that he would be able to carry the work through the *gravitas* of Act III. Nevertheless, he succeeded admirably, managing to convey a believably gentle love for Inés, rather than the frothing, obsessive writhing so common to other Alonsos. Ms. Noble brings a youthful exuberance to the role of Inés. She deftly managed to handle one of the most difficult challenges of the role: the transition from Inés as gig-

gling sister, to passionate lover, and grieving woman.

Other notable performances included Mr. Lewis as Don Rodrigo and Rebeca Lindheimer as Fabia. Mr. Lewis, rather more *galán* than Mr. Ferreira, was wonderfully playful with the audience as the story's villain. He took full advantage of every opportunity to incorporate audience reaction into the body of the performance, contrasting his outward appearance of gentlemanliness with his character's inner cowardice. His singing voice was also notable as he led the audience in a chorus of the ballad of *El caballero de Olmedo* at the opening of the play. One of the greatest challenges of a college production is the casting of older characters. Ms. Lindheimer as Fabia performed admirably in the Celestinesque role and displayed a remarkable range, exhibiting a sharp, comic sensibility and a wise maturity as the *alcahueta*.



Fig. 4—Rebeca Lindheimer (center) as Fabia

Most importantly however, the troupe filled the “Casa de Lope” to capacity every night. Over the past four years, the Hispanic Theater Production workshop has managed to educate the Brigham Young University community about Spanish Golden Age Theater. Many students, staff and faculty come back each year because of their faith in the quality of the product. Mr. Yancey has remarked that, “Getting audiences to come is more important in a lot of ways than anything because if no one comes, it doesn’t matter what you’re doing on-stage.” Mr. Yancey has likened the Hispanic Theater Performance workshop to a mission—a mission to spread the word about Spanish Golden Age thea-

ter, and to create a new generation of *comedia* fans in the United States. His production of *El caballero de Olmedo* is his most ambitious project to date and its success at BYU, on tour and in school outreach programs bodes well for the future of *comedia* performance in this country.

Photos courtesy of Jason Yancey

La hija del aire, segunda parte. By Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Dir. Jorge Lavelli, Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires, Teatro San Martín. Teatro Español, Madrid, España. 9 January 2005.

ELLEN C. FRYE
William Paterson University of New Jersey

One of the highlights of the winter theatre season in Madrid this past year was the production of Calderón's *La hija del aire*, by the Complejo Teatral de Buenos Aires and directed by Jorge Lavelli. Semíramis, queen of Babilonia, was played compellingly by Blanca Portillo. From her first moments on stage, when Semíramis began speaking her lengthy, prological monologue, it was clear that Ms. Portillo possessed an incredibly powerful voice, which reverberated through the theater. Her gestures, body language, and overall acting were all superb. Although Portillo herself is attractive, her character was quite ugly – for example, Portillo contorted her face into hideous expressions and frequently wore a scowl – and her appearance had a macabre feel to it, which was appropriate given the myth behind the story. Just like Semíramis, every character, as well as the musicians and singers, had white paint covering their faces and necks, which

contributed to the chilling, morbid atmosphere of the performance. The comb that Semíramis held during her opening-monologue grooming session ended up becoming an interesting prop, as shall be mentioned below. The actors in the roles of ladies at court were Eleonora Wexler (Astrea), Paula Requeijo (Libia), Julieta Aure (Flora, and double for Ninias and Semíramis), and Emilia Paino (who also played a soldier and the goddess Diana).

The generals Licas and Friso resembled futuristic astronauts. They wore a type of military jump-suit, Licas in red and Friso in blue, which was appropriate as Friso was the general of the sea and Licas of the land. In their short scene, both Joselo Bella (Licas) and Marcelo Subiotto (Friso) showed fine acting skills, as they both exuded the confidence of a real general and the subservience such a general would show to a superior. Both men possessed strong voices which projected well into the theater, like Portillo's.

The following scene opened with an interesting twist, as another character entered and stood behind a tall, wide, white screen. It was Lidoro, king of Lidia, played admirably by Luis Herrera. He was dressed in a long, white trench coat and scarf, and as he listened to Semíramis speak, he splayed his fingers on the screen, the visual effect that of a beast's claws. As her speech concluded, the screen spun sideways and Lidoro walked "through," to be-

gin his lengthy monologue. While he spoke his 200+ verse speech, Semíramis walked about stage, holding her huge comb, gripping it tightly at intervals when Lidoro said something that made her angry, and actually combing her hair when she thought something was amusing. The comb served as a visual indication for the spectators of Semíramis's quickly shifting emotions. In the program, director Lavelli states that: "Semíramis sería algo así como la permanencia de un espíritu perverso, de ambición y de auto exaltación indestructible, propia de la naturaleza humana. Y la obra, una suerte de parábola sobre el absolutismo inseparable del destino político del hombre."

Chato, played to the hilt by Cutuli, looked like a wolfman, which was quite appropriate for his *gracioso* antics and remarks. His long gray hair matched his beard, which Semíramis repeatedly pulled. The other soldiers were played by Gustavo Böhm (Soldier I), Alejandro Zanga (also Flavio, *criado*), Sergio Sioma, Francisco Napoli (also Anteo, *consejero* of Irán), and Emilia Paino. After the brief battle, Lidoro was taken prisoner, Semíramis's son was pronounced king by the population, and Semíramis renounced her throne.

Ninias, Semíramis's young son, was played by Blanca Portillo herself, who had the exceptional ability to change voices appropriately and convincingly, not to mention the boyish figure, which was hidden under her dress as Semíramis. In fact, some

members of the audience quietly speculated about whether it was the same actor or not; one could see some attempts to read the cast list in the dark. As the play continued, the real Ninias was “kidnapped” and locked away, while Semíramis stripped naked on stage (to the mild shock of some spectators) and impersonated Ninias, so she could continue to rule. Shortly thereafter, Semíramis-as-Ninias revealed her secret love for Licas, entered into a political agreement with Friso, and continued to govern, all the while disguised as Ninias.

In Act III, the ensuing scene among all the young lovers, Licas, Ninias (really Semíramis now), Libia, and Astrea, was highly emotional, with the mistaken identities and many complaints about jealousy and the trials of being in love. Portillo continued to be quite convincing as a young man, grabbing himself in the nether region occasionally, for example. She also conveyed the emotions of a boy who has suddenly become king: he was no longer the compassionate leader from Act II, administering justice, but rather completely intolerant, belligerent, and punishing to all. Of course, that had been the reigning style of Semíramis, but Portillo was able to modify it slightly, in order to convince everyone that it was indeed a different person, a younger one at that, suddenly coming into power and enjoying every moment of it (very reminiscent of Segismundo in *La vida es sueño*).

As the performance approached its conclusion, Irán entered with his army, riding a jeep and carrying a rifle. He came to battle with Ninias in order to free his imprisoned father, Lidoro. Upon winning, he liberated his father, and in childlike fashion, ran up to him for a hug, juxtaposing his valiant warrior persona and reminding the audience that both Irán and Ninias were mere children. Immediately thereafter, the goddess Diana shot an arrow from off-stage, which hit Ninias (still really Semíramis). Ninias fell down (much to the glee of the taunting Chato) and then died. The citizens called for the return of Semíramis as their leader, and they discovered the imprisoned Ninias, who became the fair and forgiving king. Lavelli closes his summary of *La hija del aire* with the following: “Se puede deducir que, aunque legendaria, esta historia sobre lo arbitrario y lo paradojal del poder político concluye con un gesto de perdón. Para Calderón, un intelectual comprometido con la Contrarreforma, no podría ser de otra manera. Con nuestra realización hemos tratado de situarnos en la libertad del «barroco», donde lo trágico y su contrario se complementan.” In sum, this was a powerful production of *La hija del aire*: it was extremely well-conceived and expertly directed by Lavelli. The actors were superb, most notably Blanca Portillo, who received numerous rounds of applause from a very appreciative audience.

El castigo sin venganza. By Félix Lope de Vega y Carpio. Dir. Eduardo Vasco, Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico. Teatro Hospital de San Juan, Almagro, Spain. 17 July 2005. (Play's run: 14 July – 24 July 2005.)

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This past summer the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico brought two productions to Almagro: Cervantes's *El viaje del Parnasso* and Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*. The performance of *El castigo sin venganza* opened with the Duque de Ferrara and his servants Febo and Ricardo on one of their nightly ramblings. The actor playing the Duque, Arturo Querejeta, carried out his role extremely well, exuding the pompousness associated with the character and pronouncing his lines with a strong, reverberating voice. As the play opened, the talented Ángel Galán was softly playing melodious notes on a piano in the background, creating a false sense of serenity which would directly oppose the chaotic conclusion of the play. Febo and Ricardo, being played by Fernando Sendino and Jesús Fuente, complemented the Duque quite well, in the sense that although they were both younger than him, they were dressed alike, discussed women, and helped to hide the Duque's true identity. Eva

Trancón, in the role of Cintia, matched the men line for line and offered the spectators both background information and foreshadowing through her opening monologue. After continuing the discussion about women and his refusal to marry until now, the Duque delivered his commentative monologue about comedias and several active spectators seemed amused with the intertextual references.

Shortly thereafter, Batín and Conde Federico entered to some quiet, surprised whispers of the audience, mainly due to their physical appearances. Notably, Batín the gracioso (played by Francisco Merino) appeared to be much older than Federico, who was extremely well-played throughout the entire performance by Marcial Álvarez. Batín was dressed like a businessman from the 1950s; his smart, clean-cut appearance did not seem that of the typical gracioso. The piano music continued playing softly in the background as the Duque continued his evening “hunt” for women.

In the following scene, a backdrop of ragged, ripped cloth seemed to hint at the messy family situation which was about to ensue. Behind the backdrop were several women, whose shouting voices were clearly heard by all, while three men (Lucindo, Albano, and Floro) entered, dressed in outfits from approximately the 1930s era. Almost immediately, Federico reappeared carrying Casandra (expertly played by Clara Sanchis) in his arms; and her facial expressions throughout the perform-

ance, along with Federico's, were magnificent. Every spectator seemed able to sense the intense love-at-first-sight feelings that both were experiencing. Casandra, with an extremely amorous expression on her face and in her voice, expressed her gratitude to him for saving her. Batín struggled with carrying Lucrecia (played by María Álvarez), and deviating briefly from Lope's written text, she commented upon the "hombres necios," receiving quite a bit of laughter from the audience.

In the following scene, Marqués Gonzaga and Rutilio entered, being played by Daniel Albaladejo and José Vicente Ramos. The Marqués was wearing a black hat, almost like a beret, a light tan overcoat with military bars along the shoulders, and tall black boots, all of which enhanced his militaristic (some spectators later said fascist, as they were exiting the theater) appearance, which was heightened by the sound of a car or truck motor starting up in the background. As the scene changed, the Duque was talking with Aurora, played by Nuria Mencía. She endowed the role with more life and passion than appears in the written text; for example, she patiently and empathetically listened to her uncle, the Duque, elaborate on his frustrations about having to get married, then delivered her informative monologue in a highly emotional manner, including her suggestion that she marry his bastard son Federico. Upon the entrance of Batín, the conversation

changed, and Batín announced the arrival of Casandra. Juxtaposed with this previous scene, in the next Casandra and Federico appeared alone holding hands, a gesture which of course is not in the stage directions, but which was an extremely effective decision on Director Vasco's part. They immediately dropped each other's hand when the other characters entered, to welcome Casandra to the palace.

Among the entering characters was the Duque, who embraced Federico and Casandra at the same time, hugging them both tightly to his chest, in such a manner that their faces were in very close proximity and they looked as if they might lock lips in a kiss, which in the end they did not do, but rather a demure kiss "hello" on each cheek. The picture of all three together took on an almost incestuous feeling, knowing in advance of course that the son had already fallen in love with his soon-to-be stepmother. At the end of the scene, Batín and Federico were speaking alone, and Batín stated that Casandra may be in love with Federico, whose facial expression remained saddened, and thus concluded the first act of the play.

The second act began with Casandra's opening monologue in which she bemoaned her state of abandoned wife, with the Duque always gone, and this elicited several sympathetic sighs from the spectators. Upon the entrance of the Duque and his son Federico, Casandra was again ignored by her

new husband so she exited quickly, while Federico was informed by the Duque that he had arranged a marriage for him to Aurora, who then entered. After the men left, Aurora remained and Casandra entered, and after the brief dialogue, Aurora departed, making way for the quick entrance of Federico. Their confused love triangle, exacerbated by the proposed marriage to Aurora, was deftly captured in Federico and Casandra's conversation. Both actors made excellent use of gestures and body language, such as facing back to back to demonstrate their jealous frustrations, as well as facial expressions, to portray their shifting emotions, from hurt, anger, and jealousy, to love, passion, and warmth, and back again.

Shortly thereafter, in the scene in which the Duque announced his departure for Italy and that Federico would stay at home to govern, the foreshadowing was captured in Federico's eyes. The audience could almost see his mind jumping ahead to the possibility of spending time alone with his beloved Casandra, even though he said aloud that he should go with his father. The third act (the actual second half of the performance) opened with the Marqués, again in his military outfit complete with medals, speaking with Aurora, who delivered a long monologue about the "connection" between Casandra and Federico. The Marqués suggested that he and Aurora go to Mantua together, whereupon

Federico and Batín entered. After the Marqués exited, Aurora seized the opportunity to express her anger with Federico by slapping him fiercely, another action fittingly incorporated by director Eduardo Vasco. Upon her departure from the scene, Batín and Federico were alone again, and then Casandra entered, and in another action directed by Vasco, she kissed Federico. After their brief dialogue, she expressed her anger at Federico for discussing his impending marriage to Aurora, and immediately the Duque himself returned, with his men still dressed in fascist, militaristic attire, stating that he was a changed man.

In the subsequent scene, the Duque read the letter informing him about Federico and Casandra's love affair, and the ominous future was heightened by his attire, full military gear complete with multiple medals and tall boots, having just returned from battle. In a dazzling display of human emotion on the part of Arturo Querejeta, every possible sentiment crossed his face, from disbelief and horror to sadness and anger, not to mention the love which he felt for both individuals until this very moment. Employing soliloquial discourse, he plotted his revenge and before the spectators' eyes, the metatheatrical situation was verbally constructed, in which Federico would actually kill Casandra unknowingly, and then be murdered himself by another. Meanwhile, Federico then entered and asked his father for permission to marry Aurora, which the

Duque granted, and alone again, he questioned why he so quickly accused his son.

The next scene, in which the Duque eavesdrops on Casandra and Federico in order to ascertain whether or not they are in love, involved a highly symbolic use of props: the Duque tightly clutched the large cross hanging on his chest. After a long, passionate kiss (an action not found in the stage directions), the couple exited. In contrast, the Duque showed little passion toward his wife in a later kissing scene. While alone with Aurora in the next scene, he gave her permission to marry the Marqués over his son Federico, and everyone's fate was thus sealed. After Aurora's exit, with the Duque alone in the scene, a women dressed all in black entered with a sword in hand and walked across the stage, which served to foreshadow the play's violent end.

Federico's murder of Casandra at his father's command took place behind the middle curtain so that although the spectators did not actually see each individual movement, but only the outlines of the actors. Federico entered again to very loud music and mayhem created by the other characters on-stage, a prelude to his own murder by Marqués. The woman dressed in black reappeared with the sword and handed it to Batín, who then closed the performance with the final words of Lope's text. As Eduardo Vasco states in the program: "En esta comedia tardía de Lope, como en todo su teatro últi-

mo, el amor, que ha protagonizado su dramaturgia casi de manera absoluta, es ya otra cosa; no es un juego de galanteos y satisfacciones entre damas y caballeros, ni tampoco el enamoramiento cortesano doliente; es una pasión compleja, poderosa y madura que no entiende de formas, contextos ni convenciones.” “Complex passion” perhaps best encapsulates the feelings of most of the spectators who attended performances of this production of *El castigo sin venganza*: clearly, most spectators are very fond of the play itself (as was overheard in some pre-performance conversations), but many were disappointed with the updated, modern costumes, which contributed an unwanted comparative reminder of the Franco era. In the end, the majority of spectators left the theater fairly disappointed, and the actors only received minimal applause, certainly not the rounds of curtain calls that the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico often enjoys.

Book Reviews

Bentivegna, Patricia. *Parody in the Género Chico*. New Orleans: University Press of the South: 2000. Paper. 339 pp.

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Patricia Bentivegna's book is a welcome addition to the growing number of studies on the *género chico*, that quintessentially Spanish genre that achieved truly phenomenal popularity in the final decades of the nineteenth century and first decade or so of the twentieth. Dealing, for the most part, with the lives of common folk of the day, and set primarily in Madrid, the "little plays" of the genre were often performed in what were known as *teatros por horas*. The most famous of these theaters was the venerable Apollo of Madrid, located on the Calle de Alcalá. There, as at all such venues, reasonable prices and double- or even triple- and quadruple-features allowed patrons to see several entertaining works in a single evening for very little money. The pieces themselves were frequently, but not always, comical in nature, and although they sometimes contained musical interludes—in which case they were, in effect, miniature *zarzuelas*—they did not necessarily do so. More than anything, what

united them as a genre was the way in which they celebrated contemporary urban existence and the values of those who had the good fortune to be a part of it.

The focus of Professor Bentivegna's book, as its title indicates, is on the use of parody in the *género chico*. Although the genre contained other kinds of parody as well, Bentivegna sensibly focuses her study on one specific type, takeoffs of earlier theatrical works. For purposes of categorization she divides these into two general sorts, those that burlesque works of musical theater—operas, operetas, *zarzuelas*, and so on—and those that send up “straight” plays. Then, within each of these categories, she further subdivides the plays she discusses according to whether the work satirized in them was of foreign or native origin. Her organizational scheme is thus both lucid and useful.

The parodies examined in the course of Bentivegna's monograph have, she finds, several characteristics in common. They tend to have been premiered fairly close in time to the works they spoof, probably in order to build on audience familiarity with those works; they frequently have punning titles and character names; they lower the social level of the characters from that which marked the source material; they quote liberally from the object of their satire in the interest of mocking it, and so on. Also typical of these pieces is that those that parody works drawn from musical theater tend themselves

to feature music, while those that parody “straight” plays do not.

The majority of the works studied by Bentivegna are very little known today, and she has done her readers a real service by drawing attention to their obvious delights. Rather surprisingly, perhaps, among the parodies that she has uncovered, there is only one based on a Golden Age play. That is a piece by Pablo Parellada (1855-1944) entitled *Caricaturas*. Divided into five scenes, each a burlesque of a different author, the work takes as one of its targets Tirso’s *Don Gil de las calzas verdes*. In spite of its brief extension, it manages to convey much of the story line of Tirso’s play, deriving considerable humor in the process from some of the same jokes found in the original, most notably an extended riff on the name “Gil.”

Bentivegna’s book is highly recommended to all those who would learn more about the pleasures of the *género chico*. It is clearly written, solidly researched, and last, but not least, filled with amusing quotations from the works she studies.

Escalonilla, Rosa Ana. *La dramaturgia del disfraz en Calderón*. Anejos de RILCE 47. Pamplona: Ediciones Universidad de Navarra, S. A., 2004. Rústica. 350 pp. 16 €. ISBN: 84-313-2188-1.

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Este libro analiza detalladamente todas las formas posibles del disfraz en la obra completa de Calderón. Aunque la autora estudia aspectos de la personalidad, el ocultamiento, las actitudes, los gestos, la voz y el lenguaje en particular, el travestismo ocupa la parte principal de su interés. Los resultados en sí son fascinantes. De las 22 obras en que aparece el recurso de la transformación del personaje histriónico en otro del sexo opuesto, la Dra. Escalonilla ve un predominio de este recurso en la comedia, donde aparece 17 veces en 14 obras. En cinco autos sacramentales aparece siete veces. Curiosamente, en el teatro breve aparece sólo tres veces. Más fascinante aún es el predominio de los 21 personajes femeninos disfrazados de varones (13 en las comedias, siete en los autos y uno en el teatro breve) y la escasa aparición de los personajes masculinos disfrazados de mujer (cuatro en las comedias y dos en el teatro breve). Igualmente impresionante es que los personajes femeninos, en la mayoría de los ca-

sos, hacen uso del travestismo por móviles amorosos, y que las mujeres disfrazadas de hombre fingen múltiples personalidades con más frecuencia que los hombres disfrazados de mujer. Aunque la actora no enfatiza este último hecho, el lector puede captar que una actriz en el Siglo de Oro español en efecto tenía más posibilidades actanciales que un actor de la misma época. Esto es más impresionante aún cuando recordamos que en Inglaterra en el mismo período la mujer no ejercía papeles histriónicos en el teatro.

Técnicamente, el uso variado del travestismo en Calderón hace hincapié en un dramaturgo excepcionalmente flexible y en una dramaturgia de una variedad impresionante, aún para nuestros tiempos. Recordemos que en el Barroco el travestismo era considerado un pecado. Asimismo, un moralista del calibre del Padre Ignacio de Camargo, en su *Discurso teológico sobre los teatros y comedias de este siglo*, censuraba las comedias precisamente por su aspecto pecaminoso y su alabanza de la hermosura. No obstante, Calderón, en una obra como *El castillo de Lindabridis*, no sólo disfraza a Claridiana de varón sino que hace también que como tal, Lindabridis se enamore de “ella”. Obviamente, Calderón, como poeta de la corte, tenía el apoyo del Rey y del Conde-Duque de Olivares y, por lo tanto, estaba exento de preocupaciones respecto a censura. No obstante, el Calderón que Escalonilla presenta no es el de la naturaleza conformista y actitud religiosa

diseñado por José Antonio Maravall o José María Díez Borque. Al contrario, éste es un dramaturgo adelantado a su tiempo, vanguardista, moderno.

Ideológicamente, el uso del travestismo en Calderón sorprende por lo que Escalonilla llama “ese feminismo reivindicador” (255). A diferencia de Lope de Vega o Tirso de Molina, quienes usan este recurso, según Escalonilla, por su aspecto lúdico, gracioso y juguetón (313), Calderón lo usa, de nuevo, según la autora, como un recurso revelador de lo que puede hacer una mujer. Es importante notar que la mujer calderoniana no cambia de carácter al disfrazarse de hombre. Rosaura, en *La vida es sueño*, o Semíramis en *La hija del aire*, no dejan de ser mujeres varoniles por el cambio de ropa. Al contrario, según Escalonilla, el disfraz sólo permite que su auténtica personalidad resalte de manera que no ofenda a los hombres. O sea, Rosaura causa menos pavor (a los hombres) por su indumentaria masculina, que la coloca en el rango masculino (donde el valor es aceptable). A la vez, el disfraz varonil sirve para proteger la supuesta debilidad femenina (esto calmaría a los hombres). Finalmente, como Lope sugiere, el disfraz varonil, así como el cambio de ropa en escena, provocaban placer en el público (esto satisfaría a los hombres). Por lo tanto, el disfraz femenino sirve múltiples propósitos y muestra a la mujer en forma calidoscópica, diversa, poliédrica y completa (no como sujeto pasivo o manso). Escalonilla ve esta forma multidimensional de presentar a

la mujer calderoniana como una “visión progresista de la mujer que ofrece Calderón en su teatro” (278).

Este estudio preciso y detallado de la obra completa de Calderón donde aparece el recurso del travestismo es persuasivo y convincente. Sin embargo, el personaje de la mujer fuerte disfrazada de hombre que aparece en el teatro clásico español no es único en Calderón. Pensemos por ejemplo en “el” *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* de Tirso de Molina o en la *Tragedia de la gran Semíramis* de Cristóbal de Virués. No obstante, sobresale en este estudio la preponderancia de este recurso, que Escalonilla considera como “elemento unificador de la dramaturgia calderoniana, ya que aparece en los tres géneros teatrales analizados” (305).

En mi opinión, este estudio es indispensable para mejor entender al dramaturgo e ideólogo Calderón. Es también imprescindible para cualquier actriz que tenga que hacer un papel femenino calderoniano. Desafortunadamente, un actor que trate de entender mejor el papel del personaje masculino de este autor no encontrará mucha información práctica, pues el poeta no parece haber prestado tanta atención al actor disfrazado de mujer como a la mujer disfrazada de hombre.

McKendrick, Melveena. *Identities in Crisis: Essays on Honour, Gender and Women in the Comedia*. Teatro del Siglo de Oro, Estudios de Literatura 77. Kassel: Edition Reichenberger, 2002. IX + 217pp. ISBN 3-935004-52-4.

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This is a collection of previously published essays on areas of ongoing interest for the *comedia*. It is divided into two sections, the first of which is titled with a quotation from Américo Castro: “El honor puesto en crisis como honra”. The first and longest essay, “Honour-vengeance in the Spanish *comedia*: a case of mimetic transference,” proposes the theory that honour is such a perennial issue in dramas of the period because it is a proxy (via transference) for other issues in the society, such as *limpieza de sangre*. It does not deal with matters involving staging. The second and third essays, also dealing with the topic of honour, “Celebration or Subversion? *Los Comendadores de Córdoba* reconsidered,” and “Lope de Vega’s *La victoria de la honra* and *La locura por la honra*: Towards a Re-assessment of his Treatment of Conjugal Honour,” take the view that, rather than straight-forward tragic

honour plays, Lope was dealing with the topic ironically. This essay comes closer to dealing with matters of staging via the controversy about how the play is read for production. McKendrick suggests that the entire play could without strain be played for laughs as a black farce (52). The essay “Calderón and the Politics of Honour” deals with the interpretation of the wife-murder plays, while the following essay, “Anticipating Brecht: Alienation and Agency in Calderón’s Wife-Murder Plays,” compares the effects produced in the society viewing the murders to the estrangement or alienation effect described and practiced in twentieth century plays by the German author.

The second section has as title another quotation, this one from María de Zayas: “Como son los hombres los que presiden en todo.” These essays are especially relevant for the director of the play to decide on an appropriate portrayal of the female character. The first entry concerns Justina, the heroine of Calderón’s play *La devoción de la Cruz*, with her assumption of selfhood, both as a human being and a spiritual one. “Gender and Symbolic Space in the Theatre of Calderón” outlines the playwright’s use of symbolic space in order to portray the enclosure and helplessness of women in the wife-murder plays, defining space as symbolic “when it ceases to be merely a place in order to reflect or sum up in some way what is going on in the play and how the audience reacts to it” (138). Added

examples beyond these plays further amplify Calderón's use of such symbols as house, room, garden, and convent to this end. The idea of exposure and helplessness is carried into the following treatise, "Retratos, vidrios y espejos: Images of Honour, Desire and the Captive Self in the *Comedia*," in an exposition of the ways likenesses are akin to possession, often specifically a man's possession of a woman and a world controlled by men. "El Libre Albedrío y la Reificación de la Mujer: La Imagen Pintada en *Darlo todo y no dar nada*" continues the exposition of the control of men in a survey of the figure Campaspe in several treatments and the unique point of view taken by Calderón in recognizing her right to self-determination. "Men Behaving Badly: Calderón's *La niña de Gómez Arias* and the Representation of Language" examines the characters of the play and particularly their expressive language which the author judges worthy of being made into an opera.

All of these essays are worthy of reprinting, especially with the point of presenting the continuing thread of the author's developing thought on these timely topics, and form the two coherent units of the text. A small interference in the reading is the infrequent appearance of errors in syllable division at the ends of lines, such as "betwe-en" (223) and "counterproducti-ve" (207).



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Cover Photo:

The Storm Theater production of *House of Desires*, by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, January 2006. Directed by Peter Dobbins . Translated by Catherine Boyle. Pictured here: Jessica Myhr as Doña Ana and Gabriel Vaughan as Don Carlos. Photo by Kelleigh Miller. Our thanks to The Storm Theater for supplying this photo.

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