A NEW ANTHOLOGY OF
EARLY MODERN SPANISH THEATER
Play and Playtext

Bárbara Mujica
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

Human beings are performers. From earliest times, people performed for the spiritual edification, education, or entertainment of audiences. Theater is only one kind of performance. Long before there were plays in the modern sense, people engaged in performative activities. Evidence exists of the performance of rituals, ceremonies, games, and story-telling even in the most primitive of societies.

It is difficult to pinpoint what might be called the “universals” of performance. Richard Schechner notes: “At the descriptive level there is no detail of performance occurring everywhere under all circumstances. Nor is it easy to specify limitations on what is, or could be treated as, performance” (Performance 251). Nevertheless, Schechner offers a few guidelines. Performance does not require a script or a stage, but usually involves certain rituals—masks, costumes, physical actions, or sequences of events presented in “a set way or improvised according to known rules” (Between Theater 117). Such happenings are “non-ordinary,” that is, they take place at special times (for example, initiations, holidays) and/or in special places—although a performance space can be simply an area performers open on a busy street. What is performed is encoded, that is, distilled or held, in certain kinds of communication that can include speaking, movement, or sequencing.1 In spite of these generalizations, performative practices vary so widely that it is impossible to craft a rigid definition.

For performance to be meaningful or even recognizable as such, spectators must be able to decipher the performance codes+ (symbols and systems) that are employed, which is difficult to do across cultures. As we study Spanish theater, we must be aware that some of the codes intelligible to early modern audiences may be lost to us and that many of the references may strike us as alien. Since meaning is in large part determined by context,2 our distance from early modern Spain necessarily hampers our comprehension. Furthermore, we must remember that text constitutes only a fraction of the spectacle, which consists not only of dialogue but also of paralinguistic+ or nonverbal signs, such as music, sound effects, lighting, props, scenery, and movement. Even if we could recapture the original phenomena of these plays—which, of course, we cannot—we do not possess the cultural wherewithal (belief system, values, social context, familiarity with performance convention) to grasp them as early modern spectators did. It is not surprising, then, that modern theater directors have often drastically reworked early modern plays to make them intelligible to today’s audiences.

MEDIEVAL PRECEDENTS

The dearth of texts of medieval plays has led some scholars to conclude that before the sixteenth cen-

1. See Schechner, Between Theater and Anthropology 116. 2. Paul Ekman proposes that certain panhuman facial expressions make it possible for us to “read” emotions across cultures. Such universal signs have obvious applications to intercultural theater. See The Face of Man.
Introduction

tury, little theater existed in Spain. With the exception of the Auto de los Reyes Magos, written around 1200, and a brief play by Gómez Manrique dating from about three hundred years later, no extant performance texts are available. However, theater is not the same as dramatic literature. A law permitting clergy to perform religious plays for the purpose of edifying the public appears in the Siete Partidas, a collection of legal codes compiled by Alfonso X el Sabio (1221–84), which suggests that some form of theatrical activity existed in medieval Spain. Recently scholars, combing cathedral libraries, church pronouncements, chronicles, traveler’s reports, and other documents have found detailed descriptions of liturgical and court drama.

In Spain and elsewhere performance existed in the form of spectacles such as jousts, singing and dancing, juggling, acrobatics, and bullfighting as well as in the form of recitations by jongleurs+ (traveling minstrels), sermons, and dramatized Bible stories. Bruce Burningham has underscored the importance of the energy generated by the plethora of medieval performative activities. He argues that the focus of modern scholars on staged performance has caused most of them to underestimate the magnitude of the jongleuresque influence on early modern theater. Jongleurs traveled light, performed alone, and opened a performance space wherever people happened to gather. Medieval audiences did not “go to the theater”; instead theater was created where travelers, patrons, or shoppers could become spectators—in taverns, town squares, and markets. Popular audiences might enjoy these entertainments at festivals and aristocrats at banquets and ceremonies. Since they often had to compete with other performers, including acrobats and bear-baiters, jongleurs had to make their presentations particularly colorful and attractive.

Karoline Manny argues that eventually two types of performative activity (spectacular and recitative) merged. The purely spectacular evolved from court celebrations in which “jousting and tilting become mock battles that take place on primitive stages such as galley ships and carts with facades of castles” (1). In the case of the recitative tradition, songs and dances evolved into mimed performances on carts in which actors played roles. From the ninth century on sung tropes3 had been part of church worship, and these evolved into re-enactments of Bible stories performed at Christmas or Easter. Burningham stresses this merging of performative traditions in Spain. As the Church expanded, religious performance also expanded, incorporating elements of secular entertainment practices: “As the locus of the liturgical dramas moved from inside the ecclesiastical edifice out onto the streets, the vitality of its language began to resemble that of the witty medieval storytellers, its high-born characters became more and more like those of the epics and romances, and its low-born characters began to interact with the audience in ways more than reminiscent of the buffoons and acrobats who juggled knives in the town square. Above all, the themes became less doctrinaire and all the more recognizably human” (Radical Theatricity 218). Performativity and humanness are precisely the hallmarks of early modern Spanish theater. The originality of Europe’s great early modern playwrights, including Lope de Vega, argues Burningham, derives more from the performance traditions they saw in the streets than from the liturgical literary traditions they inherited.

However, performance was not limited to streets, churches, and palaces in the Middle Ages. Performances in Latin were popular in Spanish universities. The discovery in 1429 of twelve comedies by the Roman playwright Plautus (c. 254–184 BC) and in 1433 of commentaries on the Roman playwright Terence (c. 195–159 BC) awakened interest in these authors, whose works became models for imitation among students. Performances on profane (nonreligious) topics, called juegos de escarnio,+ dealt in a satirical manner with many of the same topics (for example, unrequited love) as the Latin models. Students and priests also composed religious plays in Latin, called juegos escolares,+ on biblical or liturgical themes. Since these juegos were improvised rather than scripted, some scholars are reluctant to classify them as theater—although, as we have seen, theater does not actually require a written text. Until the mid-sixteenth century, profane university theater was routinely performed in Latin, but in 1574 the humanist Lorenzo Palmyreno composed a play in which Castilian, the language of the general public, predominated. Palmyreno’s play represents a significant step toward the creation of a popular theater directed toward non-aristocratic audiences.

3. in the medieval Christian Church, a phrase or text interpolated into the service of the Mass.
By the early sixteenth century some kinds of performance activity in Spain had begun to evolve into a form more recognizably akin to the early modern comedia+ (play). The appearance in 1499 of La Celestina, a novel in dialogue, represented a significant step toward the creation of what we would call a play in the modern sense. Although not performable, La Celestina inspired many imitations, some of which could have been staged. Lope de Vega, considered the father of the Spanish comedia, read the work with great attention and modeled one of his most memorable dramatic creations—Fabia, the bawd in El caballero de Olmedo—after the main character. La Celestina shares several features with later Spanish plays, among them the intermingling of comic and tragic elements, characters from different social classes, the graciosos or buffoon, strong female characters, psychological depth, and a domestic, upper-class environment. At the same time, religious theater continued to develop in Spain. Processional and ceremonial performances were important parts of Corpus Christi celebrations. The farsa sacramental evolved into the auto sacramental,+ a one-act play that elucidated some theological, biblical, or liturgical theme.

THE SCHOOL OF SALAMANCA

Like other European monarchs, the Spanish King and Queen, Ferdinand and Isabella, promoted performance, art, and scholarly activity. New ideas were flowing into Spain from Italy, where the Renaissance was in full bloom. Salamanca, a university city and great intellectual center, produced Spain’s first significant playwright, Juan del Encina (1468–1530). The son of a shoemaker, Encina became a musician and served at the Cathedral of Salamanca before initiating studies in law. Later he traveled to Rome, where he absorbed many new artistic ideas. His life trajectory is an example of the kind of social mobility that was possible for a talented, ambitious man at the beginning of the sixteenth century.

Initiator of what has come to be called the School of Salamanca,+ Encina produced a number of secular and religious plays, all of which he called eclogues+ (eglogas). Although he used classical models, he modified them to include references to everyday life, including business and politics. In his later plays, this tendency toward Renaissance secularism is quite marked. Encina wrote in sayagués,+ perhaps a rustic dialect of the area around Salamanca, perhaps a made-up language. Later the term came to be used to designate any rustic dialect used in literature, and the use of sayagués became a literary convention. Encina’s first eclogue was composed for Christmas and performed at the palace of the Duke of Alba in Alba de Tormes. At the palace, Encina directed, staged, and acted in his own plays and also composed poems and music. Many of his works are secular and comical. For example, in Egloga X, Cupid shoots an arrow at a shepherd and makes him fall in love with an atrociously ugly girl. Even his religious eclogues are often farcical in tone and the emphasis is more on the human than the divine. For example, in Egloga III, two hermits on their way to Jesus’s tomb run into Verónica, the Jewish woman who had wiped the Lord’s sweaty, bleeding brow. Although at the end an Angel appears and explains the Resurrection, Encina stresses the astonishment of the hermits and their very human reaction to Jesus’s suffering.

One of Encina’s most important followers was Lucas Fernández (1474–1542), his rival for the post of cantor at the Cathedral. After being ordained, Fernández wrote poetry and musical compositions as well as plays, and, like Encina, he lived and performed for periods at the palace of the Duke of Alba. In 1514 he published a collection of his plays entitled Farsas y eglogas al modo y estilo pastoril y castellano, which contains both religious and profane works. With the exception of the Auto de la Pasión, these plays are light and humorous. Like Encina, Fernández incorporates music into his plays, all of which end with a villancico.+ What distinguishes Fernández’s theater is his use of language. His plays are in verse, and the meter varies from one play to the next. Typically, the nobles speak Castillian while the country folk speak sayagués.

Another of Encina’s followers is the bilingual dramatist Gil Vicente (1470?–1537?), who is considered the father of Portuguese theater as well as an important contributor to the early Spanish stage. As court dramatist, he wrote in both Portuguese, his mother tongue, as well as in Spanish, which enjoyed great prestige among the Portuguese nobility. A description of Vicente’s work can be found in the Introduction to his play, Auto da barca da Glória,
in Chapter 1. All of the dramatists of the School of Salamanca produced both religious and profane theater for the courts of nobles. Secular plays on pastoral, knightly, classical, or novelistic themes were performed at all sorts of gatherings. This type of theater would later evolve into the grandiose productions that became a feature of the courts of Philip III and especially Philip IV.

ITALIAN INFLUENCE

At the beginning of the fifteenth century strong cultural and political ties existed between Spain and Italy. Alfonso V of Aragon, uncle of King Ferdinand, conquered the Kingdom of Naples, then a separate political entity, in 1442 and created a thriving Renaissance court there. He also brought the powerful Borja (Borgia) family to Italy. The Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella supported the Aragonese claim to Naples against the French in the Italian wars, starting in 1494. Ferdinand’s struggle against France and Venice for control of Italy eventually became the center of his foreign policy. The Aragonese monarchy in Naples and the Borja family in Rome buttressed Spanish power, and Spain eventually came to control Naples, Sicily, Sardinia, and Milan. In the 1480s Ferdinand and Isabella became patrons of the church of San Pietro and the adjoining Franciscan convent, an event that marked Spain’s deepening cultural involvement in Italy. The King and Queen were generous benefactors who supported Spanish and Italian artists and intellectuals. Many Spanish writers went to Italy, resulting in a rich cultural cross-fertilization.

Writing at the same time as the dramatists of the School of Salamanca, Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (1480?–1530?) took Spanish theater in a different direction. While Encina, Fernández, and Vicente retained many themes and attitudes of the Middle Ages, Torres Naharro shows a clearer influence of the Italian Renaissance. He wrote only one religious play, Diálogo del Nacimiento, which was modeled after Encina’s eclogues on sacred themes. His other plays are secular, on novelistic, fantastic, or realistic themes. Torres Naharro was born near the Portuguese border and studied at the University of Salamanca. He became a priest and possibly shared the position of cantor at the Cathedral of Salamanca with Lucas Fernández. In 1503 he left for Rome, where he met many Italian and Spanish humanists. At the time, some ten thousand Spaniards lived in Rome, where there were Spanish bookstores, eating establishments, schools, and churches. Spanish and Roman artists and writers intermingled and shared ideas. In 1513 Torres Naharro received the protection of an Italian noble, perhaps a Medici, which would have afforded him the opportunity to travel throughout Italy and attend plays by Italian writers. Later he entered into the service of other Italian nobles in Rome and Naples. In 1517 he published Propalladia (roughly, “Pallas’s favorites”), an anthology of eight plays and a long preface or introduction in which he explains his ideas on drama. He notes that a play should have five acts and between six and twelve characters. He distinguishes between realistic plays (comedias a noticia+) and fictional or poetic plays (comedias a fantasía+). This is the first example of an exposition on dramatic theory in Spanish.

Torres Naharro’s plays are lively, amusing, and sometimes multilingual. One example is his Comedia Serafina. This play begins with a humorous introduction in which a shepherd recounts his two disastrous love affairs, then gives a synopsis of the play. This is necessary because the characters speak four different languages—Latin, Italian, Castilian, and Valenciano—and the argument is quite complicated. Torres Naharro’s Comedia soldadesca deals with the most miserable aspects of military life, leading critics to conjecture that the author may have served in the King’s army. Rather than a plot, it consists of a series of episodes in which different types of soldiers are depicted. Torres’s best known play is Comedia Himenea, a precursor of the type of comedia de capa y espada+ popular on the seventeenth-century stage. Probably created for the wedding celebration of some powerful aristocrat, the Comedia Himenea is the first known Spanish play to depict marriage within an urban setting. (The writers of the School of Salamanca set their plays in pastoral locales.) The play is notable because it not only calls into question the practice of arranged marriages, but also redefines relations between classes. Himenea, the protagonist, offers his servants his friendship and assures them that they are his brothers. In this new, more democratic outlook, Torres Naharro reflects the atmosphere of reform that was beginning to spread throughout many parts of Europe. Torres’s flaunting of convention earned him the wrath of the Inquisition, and in 1557 his plays were banned. Although, as far as we know, they were never performed in Spain,
they were widely read in the 1520s and 1530s, when they inspired many playwrights to experiment with the new Italianate style.

While the authors of the School of Salamanca and Torres Naharro were writing for palace audiences, in the streets a different kind of theater was developing. In 1554 Lope de Rueda (1510–65) created the first known Spanish traveling theater company. Tremendously popular, the troupe performed Italian plays in translation as well as original Spanish plays, some of which were written by the director himself. Lope de Rueda has been called the first Spanish man of the theater because he wrote, directed, and acted. Fast-moving and often hilarious, his short plays, called pasos, featured many of the same popular stock characters that later playwrights would develop: the pícaro, the petty criminal, the student, the gypsy, and the poor peasant. In 1558 Lope de Rueda, who was then living in Valladolid, requested money from the city council to build several permanent theaters, called corrales, an indication of the importance that professional theater was beginning to achieve in Spain.

Around this time, Spanish interest in Italian drama and culture began to intensify. In 1548–49 Prince Philip (the future Philip II) visited Spain’s vast territories in Italy, strengthening cultural bonds between the two countries. Italian actors and impresarios were drawn to Spain hoping for royal patronage, but some soon discovered that it was not only palace theater that offered opportunities. Popular theater could be lucrative as well. Italian theater companies began to cross the Peninsula bringing new kinds of entertainment. Melveena McKendrick writes: “So important and far-reaching was their impact that it is essential not to view Rueda and his Spanish contemporaries in isolation from them” (Theatre 46).

One significant Italian contribution was the commedia dell’arte, a type of theater that flourished in the sixteenth century and continued to exist into the nineteenth. Commedia dell’arte was an improvisational theater in which each play was based on a preestablished scheme. Actors learned speeches, jokes, or anecdotes related to different situations and worked them into dramatic presentations. John Rudlin explains that “actors took pre-existing folk forms, improvised masking, music and dance and developed them into a theatrical medium.”

Instead of a script, actors had a general outline of a play that stated, for example, “love scene” or “jealousy scene.” To create the play they worked within fixed norms using stock characters such as the clever maid (Colombina) and the astute and winning manservant (Harlequin). Rudlin stresses that the commedia dell’arte was an actors’ theater, since the players themselves invented the spectacle. The very name commedia dell’arte, although difficult to translate, suggests a “comedy of the comedians” or “of the actors.” “The entire theatrical transaction rests on their shoulders: the actor as histrion and author, stage manager, storyteller, director” (Dario Fo, quoted in Rudlin 15). All the actors wore masks except those playing the lovers (novios). During the last decades of the sixteenth century Spanish and Italian troupes competed for audiences throughout Spain. McKendrick suggests that in the 1660s it was the Italian companies, with their commedia dell’arte offerings, that filled the gap in the commercial theater between Lope de Rueda and Lope de Vega.

THE CORRAL THEATER

By the mid-sixteenth century popular theater had become a commercial enterprise. Patio theaters, known as corrales, began to appear in different cities and to charge for attendance. The Italian actor and impresario Alberto Naselli, known as Ganassa, arrived in Madrid in 1574, and then went on to Seville. Like Lope de Rueda, Ganassa sought to run theaters for profit. His company performed before all kinds of audiences and charged exorbitant entrance fees, which sometimes got him into trouble with the authorities. In spite of his high prices, audiences flocked to his shows.

At the end of the sixteenth century a number of lay brotherhoods called cofradías received exclusive rights to found public theaters in order to help them finance their charitable endeavors, such as feeding the poor and founding hospitals. The Cofradía de la Pasion y Sangre de Jesucristo, founded in 1565, began to sponsor plays in their own yard and then in hired yards; the Cofradía de la Soledad de Nuestra Señora, founded in 1567, started backing plays around the same time. These theaters were simply the backyards of houses. After a

\[5\] Under the auspices of the King and the Council of Castile, the Brotherhood of the Sagrada Pasión founded a hospital for poor women suffering from fever (Rennert 26).
number of disputes, the two cofradías joined forces and built permanent corrales. Two such theaters were constructed in Madrid: the Corral de la Cruz (1579) and the Corral del Príncipe (1582). By 1587, all other corrales in Madrid had fallen into disuse.

A corral de comedias, as the new kind of permanent theater was called, was located in the patio of a house. At one end it had a raised platform, sometimes in the shape of an apron stage+ (one that fanned out toward the audience). Dressing rooms were located below and behind it. The stage itself had two levels. On the bottom level there were three doors—one on each side through which actors entered and exited, and one in the middle, which opened onto a “discovery space.”+ (These doors were probably covered with curtains, rather than wooden planks.) The discovery space revealed surprising or even shocking scenes to elicit admiratio, a sense of awe in the spectators. On either side of the stage a ladder or stairs led to the second level, which could be used to depict balcony scenes, mountains, towers, and so forth.

In the sixteenth century sets were generally simple. Scenery could be painted on the wall of the house where the corral was located or on curtains that could be changed for different scenes. The balconies and windows along the walls of the principal building and adjacent houses formed aposeños, boxes reserved for aristocrats of either sex. The clergy occupied a smaller box or gallery, called the desván. The lower-class men, called mosqueteros, stood in the open, uncovered area in front of the stage or else rented stools or benches on raised gradas, or bleachers, on the sides or at the back of the patio. The gradas could actually be contiguous to the stage, which practically eliminated the distance between actors and audience; in fact, the gradas were sometimes integrated into the action of a play (Ruano, “Actores” 79). Lower-class women sat in an area called the cazuela. In the Madrid corrales, an area above the cazuela was reserved for municipal and other authorities.

Located in the center of the city, the Madrid playhouses became important cultural draws. Even the king and queen attended performances at the corrales, as did the clergy and the members of the wealthy, landed elite—a class that nearly tripled in number during the first fifty years of the seventeenth century. But not only the educated attended the theater. In an era before cinema and television, theater was a popular entertainment. Yet, as Jane Albrecht has shown, it did not reach everyone. The cheapest way to see a play was standing, which cost 24 maravedies at the beginning of 1615. Entry into the gradas cost 40 (Albrecht, Playgoing 76–77). Although early modern Spanish theater has often been characterized as “popular,” it was out of reach for the poorest of the poor.

Albrecht calculates that “average daily attendance at both Madrid theaters might have been 950 in their heyday, the first decades of the seventeenth century. This represents less than half of full capacity at just one of the corrales, the Príncipe. It is a mere one-half of one per cent of Madrid’s seventeenth-century population of 175,000” (56). Albrecht adds: “Full capacity at both theaters, approximately 3800 people per day, as might have happened on some Sundays, would amount to two percent of Madrid’s total population” (56). Of those in attendance, many were aristocrats or priests, even though some moralists strongly objected to the clergy attending secular plays. Others were government workers, artisans, or other common folk, hungry for entertainment. However, the urban working poor never got to see a play.

During the 1570s and 1580s plays were performed only on Sundays, but by the 1590s they were performed during the week as well. It was Gasnass with his eye for profit, who first requested and received permission to perform plays on two workdays a week. Even so, Sunday continued to be the most popular theater-going day. Reformers objected to weekday performances, arguing that people were indulging in entertainments when they should be working. Albrecht notes that an act of the Sala de Alcaldes de Casa y Corte of 1602 prohibited workers from going to the theater los días de trabajo (78). Defenders of the comedia noted that many important lessons could be learned from plays and that common folks needed recreation. But if not the urban poor, who were these “common folks”? Albrecht argues that the Madrid corrales were actually court theater, not in the sense that the plays took place in a palace or were privately financed, but rather in that they constituted “a theater that spoke to the ideals and conscience of the elite—nobles, new and old, caballeros, simple hidalgos and their wives, sisters, and hangers-on, the clergy, students, and well-off artisans and merchants who aspired to nobility—who made up the majority of
the audience” (100). We must keep this in mind when we speak of the *comedia* as “popular theater.”

Madrid and Seville were the major theater centers during the seventeenth century, but many cities and towns had *corrales*. Thanks to pioneering studies by scholars such as John Varey, John J. Allen, and Luciano García Lorenzo, we have begun to reconstruct important aspects of *corral* history. Varey published numerous documents pertinent to the construction and administration of *corrales* in books mentioned in the Preface and listed in the Bibliography. Allen has provided detailed descriptions, documents, and plans of the Corral del Príncipe in Madrid in his groundbreaking *The Reconstruction of a Spanish Golden Age Playhouse. Teatros y vida teatral en el Siglo de Oro a través de las fuentes documentales*, edited by García Lorenzo and John Varey, contains essays based on archival data that elucidate, among other matters, the financing of theatrical productions.

We have also benefited from some fortuitous discoveries. In 1950 a *corral* was discovered in the town of Almagro, near Ciudad Real, in a *posada*. In the eighteenth century the new Bourbon government banned the *corrales* and the Almagro playhouse was walled up. The building became an inn known as El Mesón de la Fruta and later La Posada de las Comedias. In 1950 the owner discovered the *corral* when he knocked out a wall while renovating his property. Researchers examining the municipal archives uncovered documentation attesting to the building’s earlier function as a *corral*. More recently Juan Sanz and Miguel Ángel Coso were instrumental in renovating a *corral* in Alcalá de Henares. The project is of particular value because the original playhouse was converted into a neoclassical proscenium+ theater, then a romantic theater, and finally a cinema. Sanz and Coso were able to salvage parts of all of these, thereby providing a glimpse of four hundred years of Spanish theater in a single building.7

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7. “Excavations revealed that [the space] began as a theatre yard, of which the paved floor, tiers, boxes and gallery (reserved for female spectators) are preserved today. Then in the mid-eighteenth century (1769) the enclosure was turned into a neoclassical proscenium arch theatre. The impressive wooden stage dating from that period, and which gives the space such splendid acoustics, is once again visible today thanks to excellent restoration. More was necessary because in 1832, when the theatre was transformed into a romantic Italian-style auditorium with an uncommon elliptical floor, the wooden dome was covered by a false ceiling now removed. After 1945 the building was used as a cinema, until closed and left derelict in the 70’s.” (Jassa Haro.) 8. The *Arte nuevo* was delivered as a speech to the Madrid Academy some years after its publication.

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**LOPE DE VEGA AND THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL THEATER**

Although many playwrights contributed to the development of Spanish theater, it was Lope de Vega (1562–1635) who defined the *comedia* (a term that at the time simply meant “play”) and gave it a formulaic identity in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), available on the accompanying website (yalebooks.com/mujica). The *Arte nuevo* is an important period document on the early modern stage. However, it is not a well-developed manifesto, but rather, as Jonathan Thacker says, a “practical man-of-the-theatre’s guide to (and apology for) what has been shown to work in the Spanish *corral* at the turn of the seventeenth century” (*Companion* 27). The formula Lope put forth was not meant to impose a rigid framework on dramatic writing. It was, in Melveena McKendrick’s words, an “enabling device” (*Theatre* 75). It worked because it was elastic, that is, easily adapted to different dramatic genres, plots, tones, and moods. It “enabled dramatists of diverse abilities and temperaments working within its parameters to make great and distinctive contributions of their own” (75). It succeeded not only in the *corrales*, but also at court. The effectiveness of Lope’s formula is evinced by its longevity. Playwrights respected the guidelines Lope set forth until the end of the seventeenth century and beyond.

Naturally, no description of the *comedia* can be reduced to a formula. Lope’s notion of what made an effective drama was colored irredeemably by his desire to please the general public, not by a desire to rigidly codify an art form. Lope wrote for a broad spectrum of theater-goers, not just for the cultured elite. Spain had long had a popular theater, but Lope made reaching the average spectator the highest objective of his dramaturgy. He was flattered when aristocrats and even the king praised his plays, but pleasing them was not his primary goal. Consequently, he developed themes and styles that had mass appeal.

Lope made significant changes to the structure of the *comedia* that would influence dramatists long after this death. Before Lope, plays often had four or even five acts. Although other playwrights had experimented with the three-act *comedia*, it was...
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Lope who definitely set the number of acts—called jornadas+—at three. The formula was exposición-nudo-desenlace. In the first act, the dramatic problem is laid out. In the second, the plot is brought to a head. In the third, the dilemma is resolved.

Lope also defined the function of the different meters used in dramatic poetry in his Arte nuevo. Although not all of Lope's followers used verse forms as he instructed, a surprising number of them did. Examples of the most frequently employed meters in the comedia appear at the end of this Introduction.

McKendrick describes the comedia as essentially thematic; it is "a form of play whose structural principle is normally dramatic causality, whose unity, for all the dynamism of its action, tends to be thematic, and which uses imagery as a major instrument of structural and thematic cohesion" (Theatre 75). Lope views love and honor as themes that consistently appeal to spectators. Like the theorists of courtly love+ and Neoplatonism+ who preceded him, Lope regards love as a laudable passion that promotes noble behavior unless it degenerates into irrational jealousy. The obsession with honor on the Spanish stage is one of its most distinguishing characteristics. In his Arte nuevo Lope recommends honor as a highly effective plot theme: "Los casos de la honra son mejo- res / porque mueven con fuerza a toda gente" (327–328). Honra, as it was understood in early modern Spain, was linked to an individual's social status. Noblemen and rich peasants presumed to have honor by virtue of their lineage and their pure Christian heritage, but their honor could be sullied by a transgression, real or perceived, of the implicated woman. Lope appreciated honor as a dramatic theme because it provoked intense reactions. Honor served as a catalyst for highly dramatic situations in which husbands either had to kill their beloved wives or else face public scorn. This set the stage for grandiloquent soliloquies and highly charged confrontations.

In composing his plays Lope drew from a rich store of literary and performative traditions. He derived material from religious sources, including biblical, theological, and hagiographic accounts—a practice continued by his successors, in particular Tirso and Calderón, who would carry religious theater to its zenith in Spain. Lope also sought inspiration in popular proverbs, refrains, ballads (romances+), and chronicles. Although he was not the only playwright to mine these sources, it was he who best integrated theme and form to produce engaging plays. Many of his works were inspired by popular wisdom, for example, the notion that love can level the playing field, equalizing rich and poor, aristocrat and beggar. He often depicted popular customs and scenes from everyday life. He also drew inspiration from historical events such as national triumphs and episodes from classical and world history. Francisco Ruiz Ramón writes that with Lope, "El teatro se convierte en un verdadero cosmos, en una Summa temática de la literatura universal y la vida española" (Historia 128). By choosing topics familiar to his audiences, Lope was able to connect with spectators and engage them in the action onstage.

In order to please popular audiences, Lope eliminated theatrical conventions he found useless and adopted others that made productions compact and accessible. For example, he rejected the three unities of time, place, and action, inherited from classical theater. The unity of time stipulated that the action take place within a twenty-four-hour period. The unity of place meant that the action should occur in one setting. The unity of action signified that the plot should be cohesive and without subplots or extraneous complications. In his Poetics Aristotle attached special significance to action. The other two unities did not assume equal prominence until the Renaissance, when Italian theorists invented the so-called triad of unities. Although not all Spanish playwrights insisted on the three unities, some who had classical formation were adamant about adhesion to this convention, as were several of the most influential French dramatists of the day. Others emphasized one of the unities over the others. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw an explosion of polemics on the subject.

Lope broke with all three unities simultaneously. Many of his plays take place in a variety of settings. In Fuenteovejuna, for example, the action takes place on the road, in the palace, in the town square, and at the Comendador's house. As explained in the Introduction to the play, elaborate...
characters are members of the high aristocracy, but they are not counts or dukes. In contrast, the low aristocracy; they use the titles comedia. The protagonists, often with a wedding. The main characters do possess psychological depth, and their actions support the action. Yet, as we will see in our examination of individual plays, many comedias characters do possess psychological depth, and their complexity is evident not only in their actions but also in their soliloquies.

Lope insisted that theater should imitate reality: “imitar las acciones de los hombres / y pintar de aquel siglo las costumbres” (Arte nuevo 52–53). To that end, he mixed humor and tragedy in the same work, since laughter and tears commingle in life. Although in his time, the word comedia referred to any theatrical performance, when assigning titles to his plays, Lope differentiated comedias from tragedia and tragicomedia. A comedias is not necessarily a “comedy” in the modern sense, that is, it is not necessarily a funny play, although some comedias are very funny indeed. Rather, it is a play in which the central problem is resolved to the satisfaction of the protagonists, often with a wedding. The main characters in a comedias are typically members of the low aristocracy; they use the titles don and doña, but they are not counts or dukes. In contrast, a tragedia typically ends with a death, and the main characters are members of the high aristocracy, although they interact with members of the lower classes. The tragicomedia combines elements of both genres, sometimes mixing rollicking humor with a heartbreaking dénouement. As we shall see in the Introduction to El caballero de Olmedo, some plays are not easily categorized. Although Lope called many of his works tragocomedias, modern critics are not always in agreement over whether certain plays are tragedias or tragicomedias. In spite of the distinction Lope made among types of dramatic presentation, the term comedias continues to be used in its generic sense to refer to an early modern three-act play.

Rather than a lofty style, Lope recommended natural-sounding language—“un arte de comedias os escriba / que al estilo del vulgo se reciba” (Arte nuevo 9–10)—although toward the end of his career he adopted many of the baroque refinements he had previously disparaged. Just as different social classes interact in life, so do they intermingle on the Lopean stage. Traditional poetic decorum required that the speech of each character reflect his or her social position. For example, country folk in Fuenteovejuna and La Serrana de la Vera speak a stylized dialect (huego instead of fuego; agüelo instead of abuelo) that suggests rusticity. However, sometimes a plot necessitates a break with poetic decorum, as when the Comendador expresses thoughts incompatible with his nobility. In this case the character’s crudeness reflects a rupture in the social order that must be rectified. In Fuenteovejuna, Lope demonstrates the inner nobility of Laurencia, the peasant heroine, by having her recite a sonnet, a verse form usually reserved for the upper classes. Lope depicts a hierarchical society in which each individual has his or her proper place. When a character does not comply with the requirements of his station—for example, the Comendador in Fuenteovejuna who abuses the townspeople—he shatters the social harmony and provokes a reaction, thereby initiating the dramatic conflict.

Certain archetypal characters appear repeatedly in Lope’s plays and those of his followers, albeit with variants. The King can be a symbol of justice and authority, as in Fuenteovejuna and El caballero de Olmedo; an ambivalent adjudicator, both righteous and cruel, as in El médico de su honra; or an example of intellectual arrogance, as in La vida es sueño. The young King—el rey-galán—can also be an example of lasciviousness and injustice, as in Le-
The poderoso, in the form of a prince, duke, captain, comendador, or some other high-ranking noble, is often a destructive force. In Lope’s *Castigo sin venganza*, the Duke of Ferrara is a womanizer who takes a spouse only to satisfy the demands of his subjects, who insist he produce a legitimate heir. When he suspects his bastard son of having an affair with his young wife, he annihilates them despite his love for both. In *La Serrana de la Vera*, a captain seduces a beautiful, strong-willed girl only to abandon her, thereby unleashing a bloodbath. Sometimes, as in *Castigo sin venganza*, the poderoso undergoes a conversion and repents of his misdeeds, but it is usually too late to prevent the tragedy his earlier irresponsible behavior has provoked.

The caballero, another archetypal figure, can take countless forms on the early modern stage: father, husband, brother, lover (galán). While the first three can be of any age and varying characteristics, the lover-galán is usually young, handsome, brave, idealistic, and above all, in love. Typically the caballero is concerned with honor above all else, although sometimes the galán jeopardizes his lady’s reputation by courting her publically and provoking gossip. Fathers, husbands, and brothers watch over the women for whom they are responsible with such zeal that they provoke a crisis. In Calderón’s tragedy *El médico de su honra*, the obsession with honor causes Don Gutierre, the husband, to spy on his innocent wife and gather circumstantial evidence of her guilt until he feels compelled to murder her. In *La dama duende*, a comedy, the honor obsession is potentially just as lethal. However, as we see in the Introduction to this play, available on the yalebooks.com/mujica website, in comedies catastrophe is avoided by a propitious marriage at the end.

A distinguishing characteristic of Lopean theater is the predominance of strong female characters. Damas or heroic peasant women often display shrewdness or remarkable bravery. In Calderón’s *La dama duende* Ángela manipulates appearances to outsmart her honor-obsessed brothers, while in *Fuenteovejuna* Laurencia leads a revolt against the cruel Comendador. In both Calderón’s *La vida es sueño* and Ana Caro’s *Valor, agravio y mujer* female protagonists travel far from home dressed as men to avenge their honor. In fact, this phenomenon occurs so often on the early modern stage that the mujer vestida de hombre is considered a comedia archetype. Yet, in the final scenes of the play, these audacious heroines typically adopt conventional roles (wife, nun). The marriage or clausura of the female protagonist does not always solve the problem posed by the play; it is more a sign to the audience that order has been restored (at least, superficially) and the play is over. Those female protagonists who do not conform to traditional roles in the end—for example, Gila in *La Serrana de la Vera*—typically come to a terrible end. Although Lope was certainly not a feminist in the modern sense, he usually depicted women in a positive light and displayed considerable understanding of feminine psychology.

In contrast to the galán and the dama, the gracioso (or graciosos)—also known as the figura de donaire—is a down-to-earth character devoid of idealism. If the galán is capable of performing great feats of bravery in honor of his beloved, the graciioso, often the galán’s servant, is cowardly and materialistic. Rather than love, he is concerned with where the next meal is coming from. Sometimes he serves as the galán’s alter ego, articulating thoughts a nobleman could never utter. In Lope’s plays, the graciosos-criado is an extension of the galán, loyally working to advance his master’s interests even as he grumbles about bad pay and worse living conditions. The graciioso is usually jovial and funny; he is, in fact, a primary source of humor in the comedia. Galán and graciioso represent two opposites of the human condition, but they are interdependent and often inseparable. Sometimes the graciioso is in love with the dama’s maid servant and the protagonist of the subplot. Although there are relatively few authentic graciosas in the comedia, in Lope’s *Santa Teresa de Jesús*, Petrona fulfills that function.

In the plays of Tirso and Calderón, the graciioso evolves into a more complex character. Sometimes he expresses opinions contrary to those of his master, even becoming a voice of censure. In Tirso’s *El burlador de Sevilla*, Catalinón repeatedly warns the licentious Don Juan that his womanizing jeopardizes his salvation. In *El médico de su honra*
Coquin quietly defies his master and strives to save his mistress’s life. Sometimes the gracioso articulates a moral or religious message. By providing a Christian perspective that stresses compassion and forgiveness, the gracioso highlights the ruthlessness of the honor code. He not only draws attention to his master’s defects, but also to those of the entire society.

The villano is a particularly Spanish archetype that appears in many plays by Lope and his successors. Villano in this context means “rustic” (an inhabitant of a villa, or village), not “villain.” The celebration of peasant life is a tradition inherited from classical writing. Poets such as Horace and Virgil idealized country living. In the early sixteenth century the Spanish chronicler and moralist Antonio de Guevara (1480–1545) wrote Menosprecio de corte y alabanza de aldea (Valladolid, 1539), a tongue-in-cheek tribute to the purity of the country and condemnation of the corruption of the city. Later Fray Luis de León (1528–91) praised the wholesomeness and calm of rural life in his poem “La vida retirada.” Another factor in the glorification of the country was the belief that Spanish peasants had not been “contaminated” by the presence of Jews and Moors, who lived primarily in urban areas.

The plot of the “peasant plays” usually revolves around a nobleman’s attempted abuse of a local woman. Thacker notes that the peasant plays “can be described as honour plays too, in the sense that they set up a fascinating conflict between two types of honour: the natural birth-right of the noble and the virtue and local prestige of the peasant” (Companion 149). The heroes of comedias such as Fuentenovejuna or Calderón’s El alcalde de Zalamea are never poor peasants, but rather rich landholders, whose old Christian lineage endows them with a great sense of personal dignity. The integrity with which Lope endows the villano has led some critics to comment on the democratic nature of the Spanish theater. Although this point is debatable, it is true that Lope defends the inner nobility of the peasant. The prominence of the labrador rico distinguishes Spanish theater from other European dramatic traditions.

LOPE’S CONTEMPORARIES

Hundreds of dramatists produced works during Lope’s time, contributing to the invigoration of the Spanish stage. Héctor Urzáiz Tortajada lists over 1,100 names in his Catálogo de autores teatrales del siglo XVII. While most of these playwrights have been forgotten, the sheer numbers attest to the public’s interest in theater in the early seventeenth century.

Not all playwrights of the period adopted Lope’s new-style comedia, known as the comedia nueva.+ Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616), best known for his masterpiece Don Quijote, wrote four-act neoclassical plays in the 1580s, before the full impact of Lope’s influence was felt. Although Cervantes was rather proud of these plays, modern critics have largely ignored them. In 1615 Cervantes published Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses in Madrid, breaking with the custom of releasing plays in partes,+ that is, collections of twelve. Normally dramatists sold their plays to directors for the stage, publishing them only after they were performed. The plays in this collection were never performed during Cervantes’s lifetime, and Thacker suggests that by publishing his works in this way, Cervantes was in fact admitting failure (Companion 57).

Although Cervantes’s collection contained considerable variety and wit, by the time Ocho comedias went to press, tastes had changed. Lope’s comedia nueva had captured the public’s fancy, and Cervantes’s plays did not find an audience. Recently, however, theater groups have shown interest in some of these plays. Pedro de Urdemalas was performed in September, 2004, in Stratford-upon-Avon at the annual Shakespeare Festival, and Cervantes’s entremeses,+ jocular one-act plays meant to be performed between the acts of longer plays, are favorites among small professional, community, and university theater groups.

Juan de la Cueva (1550?–1610?), a near contemporary of Cervantes, was born in Seville, one of Spain’s most culturally active cities, where Lope de Rueda and Ganassa had performed. Seville not only had a rich tradition of professional and street theater, but also of university theater. Juan de la Cueva was actively involved in the city’s intense intellectual life until 1574, when he went to Mexico. Upon his return, he began a period of creative activity, writing poems and plays. In 1606 he published his Ejemplar poético, a book containing three parts—one on literary theory, one on Spanish poetry (its origins and methods), and one on drama. The section on drama reveals the author’s conflict between two distinct schools. On the one hand, he allies himself theoretically with the imitators of the
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classics. On the other, he recognizes the superiority of Lope's *comedia nueva*, which was favored by the public. Without mentioning Lope, de la Cueva describes himself as an innovator who recognized the need to break with classical models and defends the concept of a new Spanish theater designed to please a general audience.

Perhaps Juan de la Cueva's most significant contribution is his blending of inherited traditions with new trends. Unlike the Senecan model widely used in Spain at the time, de la Cueva's tragedies contain humorous passages and characters from diverse social classes. In his plays the distinction between tragedy and comedy depends more on content than on plot. The tragedies are inspired by historical events or legends, while the comedies are based on contemporary themes. His blending of epic and realistic elements and his use of diverse Italian and Spanish meters in one work reflect tendencies popularized by Lope, but unlike Lope, de la Cueva did not limit his dramas to three acts. Sensationalistic, with grotesque, violent, or perverse characters, his plays tend to be off-putting for modern audiences. He incorporates oratorical and rhetorical techniques into his dialogue—speech practices that were taken very seriously in the Renaissance, but usually strike modern spectators as affected or melodramatic. His best known play is *La comedia del Infamador*, which may have been inspired by the legend of the Roman matron Lucrecia, who committed suicide after being raped. In it the author includes human, mythological, and allegorical characters.

The generation that came after Lope produced a number of accomplished playwrights who deserve mention here. These writers followed Lope's three-act model and for the most part his suggestions regarding meter. They used the same stock characters as he (the galán, the gracioso, and so forth), but within that mold created works of considerable originality. Guillén de Castro y Bellvis (1569–1631) was from Valencia, another city with a rich literary tradition. An aristocrat and a military man, he devoted twenty years of his life to serving in the King's army. Castro was perhaps the greatest dramatic interpreter of the Spanish heroic Middle Ages. He wrote two works based on the legend of the Cid, which he undoubtedly knew from romances that were popular at the time. In *Las ma-

*Seneca* (q–65 AD) was a Roman philosopher, dramatist, and statesman. He wrote nine tragic dramas in verse derived from Greek legends. Spain's national hero, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, also known as El Cid, his best-known work, he depicts the national hero, Don Rodrigo, as a young man: his victories over the Moors, his defense of Castile, and his relationship with his future wife, Doña Jimena. As in Lope's plays, honor is a central issue. Jimena's father slaps Diego Laínez, Don Rodrigo's father, which obligates El Cid to kill him in order to restore the family honor. At first Jimena demands vengeance, but after Don Rodrigo proves his worth in battle against the Moors, the lovers are reconciled. Critics have called attention to the lack of humor in Castro's plays. His characters are passionate, but solemn, rigid, and honor-obsessed. By modern standards, his plays seem melodramatic and sensationalistic.

Antonio Mira de Amescua (1574–1644) is one of the most renowned Andalusian playwrights of the period. An impatient and dour priest, Mira held that the purpose of the *comedia* was to teach moral and political virtue. He wrote many kinds of plays but is best known for his comedias de santos, or hagiographic plays. *El esclavo del demonio*, his most famous play, is more a *comedia de bandidos* than de santos, however. Based on the story of San Gil of Portugal, it depicts the protagonist's life of crime after he succumbed to desire in the arms of Lisarda, a rebellious young woman who refuses to accept the husband her father has chosen for her. Thinking he is predestined for hell, Gil despairs. He and Lisarda become bandits and terrorize travelers along the roads; once Lisarda even attacks her father, Marcelo. After many complications, they both repent. Like several of Mira's other plays, *El esclavo del demonio* is chaotic and cluttered with subplots. It has nineteen characters, making it difficult for the reader or spectator to keep track of the action. Calderón de la Barca later reworked the plot, simplifying the structure and creating one of his greatest masterpieces, *La devoción de la cruz*. In spite of its flaws, *El esclavo del demonio* occupies a significant place in Spanish theater history, as it is the first *comedia* to deal with the theological issue of predestination.

Although the plays of Juan de la Cueva, Guillén de Castro, and Mira de Amescua are rarely performed today, three other playwrights of this generation have met with favor among modern audiences: Luis Vélez de Guevara, Tirso de Molina, and Juan Ruiz de Alarcón. Luis Vélez de Guevara from Greek legends, Spain's national hero, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, based on the life of a saint.
(1579–1644), like Mira de Amescua, was from Andalusia and found patronage in the courts of Philip III and Philip IV. Although his best-known play, La Serrana de la Vera, takes its name from an earlier work by Lope, Vélez was also influenced by Luis de Góngora, whose florid style Lope disparaged. Much of Vélez’s theatrical output was performed for aristocratic audiences. El caballero del sol, for example, was mounted with great spectacle in the Duke of Lerma’s gardens in 1619. La Serrana de la Vera, on the other hand, was written for the corral stage.

Tirso de Molina (1571–1648) introduced to Western culture one of the most memorable characters of all time: the brazen womanizer Don Juan Tenorio. He also produced several urban comedies set in contemporary Spain as well as plays set in palaces, many of them fresh, witty works in spite of his use of familiar prescriptions such as disguises, mistaken identities, transvestism, and generational conflict. He has been celebrated for his psychological perception and his strong female characters. Tirso also wrote a number of theological plays that deal with the complexities of grace and salvation, including El burlador de Sevilla and El condenado por desconfiado. Both Vélez de Guevara and Tirso are examined in more depth in the introductions to their works.

The plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón (1581–1639), the last major playwright of Lope’s generation, continue to be performed in the Spanish-speaking world and the United States. Ruiz de Alarcón was born in Mexico but went to Spain at about age twenty. After practicing law in Spain and Mexico, he obtained a government post in Spain. Although he claimed illustrious lineage, Lope was actually the son of an embroiderer. In contrast, Calderón came from a noble family, albeit not from the highest stratum of society, and he received an education proper to his rank at Spain’s best academic institutions. After attending the Jesuit Colegio Imperial, he went on to study law at the universities of Salamanca and Alcalá. His family connections and talent gained him an entrée into elite circles at an early age. In 1623, two years after the young King Philip IV ascended to the throne, Calderón began writing plays for the court, where theater was a favorite pastime. In 1634 one of his autos was performed at the celebration of the monarch’s new palace, the Buen Retiro, and in 1635 he became director of palace performances. Calderón’s superior schooling and his aristocratic audiences necessarily shaped his dramatic output. While Lope wrote for a general public, Calderón wrote for kings and dukes.

From the late 1620s through the 1630s Calderón produced some of his greatest works, among them La vida es sueño. In the 1640s things went badly for the Spanish theater, however. In 1640 Catalonia and Portugal (then part of Spain) rose up against the Spanish crown and the following year unrest burst forth in Andalusia. In 1643 the French invaded Flanders, then under Spanish control, and Philip’s forces suffered a humiliating defeat at Rocroi. That same year, the Count-Duke Olivares, the King’s confidant and adviser, fell from power. From 1644 until 1649 all theaters were closed, firstly because of the death of the Queen and then because of the death of Prince Baltasar Carlos, heir to the throne. Calderón became a Franciscan friar.
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and was named chaplain at Toledo Cathedral and then the King’s chaplain of honor. He abandoned the corral, writing principally autos sacramentales for Corpus Christi celebrations and mythological plays that were mounted in grandiose productions at the Buen Retiro.

Although Calderón preserved the structure of the comedia nueva, he introduced significant stylistic and thematic modifications. He kept Lope’s stock characters, but imbued them with new psychological depth and subtlety. Although he produced a great variety of plays, issues of free will and individual responsibility are consistent themes, even in comedies ostensibly divorced from theological and philosophical concerns. For example, in La dama duende, a seemingly straightforward comedy, Doña Ángela struggles to exercise a degree of freedom even as the demands of honor impose harsh restraints. Although it is certainly possible to enjoy this lively, humorous play without delving into its philosophical implications, the underlying similarities between Ángela’s striving for self-actualization and that of the protagonists of more “serious” plays is nevertheless striking. In Calderón’s honor tragedies, the male character who feels forced by social codes to defend his blemished reputation by murdering his wife engages in excruciating interior deliberations, weighing love against duty, apparent guilt against possible innocence. The honor hero’s meticulously crafted soliloquies, which are steeped in legal terminology and constructed on warped logic, expose the pernicious ways in which human beings justify the unjustifiable.

At the core of Calderón’s plays is a coherent ideology based on Catholic dogma, which the author would have acquired during his early years with the Jesuits and at the university. This does not mean that Calderón was simply a mouthpiece for the dictates of the Church, however. In the late sixteenth century the Spanish theologian Bartolomé de Medina (1527–81) and later a number of Jesuits advanced the principles of probabilism, an area of moral theology concerned with making decisions in the face of uncertainty. It is clear that Calderón was familiar with these developments. In his plays he explores the ambiguities people face when making moral choices. His characters often seem oblivious to Christian teaching, more concerned with their own wants and society’s demands than with ethical behavior. Fundamental to Calderón’s vision is the notion that the world is chaotic, deceptive, and unpredictable. The individual, hampered with imperfect understanding and perception, can never be absolutely certain of the truth. Confronted with ambiguous or contradictory signs, human beings must nevertheless act, for every person is endowed with free will. In all of his plays—comedies, tragedies, or the philosophical, theological, and mythological dramas—Calderón explores these complexities. At the same time he creates characters that are convincing, moving, and sometimes disturbingly familiar.

Calderón’s position as court dramatist exposed him to the literary currents in vogue among the cultured elite. The baroque style, characterized by ornamentation, strong images, cerebralism, and sensuality, was gaining predominance. In painting and sculpture, curved lines and vivid colors abounded. In literature, wordplay, obscure allusions, difficult metaphors, and hyperbole were prevalent. Baroque writers favored the neologism (a word used with a new or antiquated meaning), hyperbaton (grammatical inversion), and the odd or fantastic allegory. They amassed synonyms and metaphors. Rather than the moderation and symmetry of the Renaissance, they sought to create a sense of dizzying excess.

In Spain, Luis de Góngora (1561–1627) was considered the quintessential baroque poet. His ornate and obscure style, known as gongorismo or culteranismo, appealed to a select group of humanists and writers. Many of his contemporaries (Cervantes, Lope, Quevedo) despised his excessive rhetorical flourishes. Nevertheless, his influence is manifest in some of their works. Culteranismo uses a superabundance of decorative and sensorial elements to create an impression of either extreme beauty or extreme ugliness. It seeks splendor in the distorted, deformed, or grotesque. It shocks the reader with daring double-entendres, startling images, and unexpected turns. The objectives of culteranismo are principally esthetic. It communicates with readers affectively as well as intellectually, giving them a sense of the luxurious richness of language and the infinite possibilities of the universe. Yet at its core lies a profound pessimism, since the extraordinary beauty generated by the poet is purely ornamental, and therefore meaningless.

While culteranismo operates primarily on the affect, conceptismo, associated with Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645), works on the intellect. Conceptismo consists in the cultivation of wit through
the use of wordplay and literary conceits (+ conceptos)—that is, images or metaphors that bring together apparently dissimilar things or ideas. Conceptismo exploits the paradox, the apparent contradiction, the term with multiple meanings. On the one hand it seeks concision—that is, to pack the most possible meaning into the fewest possible words. On the other, it accumulates images and symbols, all with manifold connotations. Like culturaismo, conceptismo encompasses an inherent pessimism. It demonstrates that words do not necessarily mean what one thinks. Things are never what they seem. Appearances can be manipulated. The world is not to be trusted.

The pessimism that permeates the Spanish baroque stems in part from the sense that Spain, a century earlier the most powerful nation in Europe, was slipping into decline. Philip II’s endless wars had bankrupted the country. Recent military defeats and administrative corruption under Philip III and Philip IV were exasperating responsible intellectuals. While in the rest of Europe scientists such as Copernicus, Kepler, Tycho Brahe, and Galileo were making new discoveries, Spain remained on the sidelines. In Protestant Europe new attitudes toward the value of work and commerce were creating industriousness and prosperity. Spain, as primary defender of the Catholic faith, was tied to orthodox dogma, making it difficult for these new ideas to take hold. Writers and artists were charged with promoting Catholicism, and any departure from standard doctrine was forbidden. Rather than to scientific investigation or business, Spain’s creative energy was being poured into artistic elaboration.

However, Spanish baroque writers were certainly not devoid of ideas. On the contrary, the seventeenth century produced some of Spain’s greatest thinkers, writers, and artists. The Counter Reformation was rich in philosophical inquiry and social criticism. Through their works writers censured political corruption, social hypocrisy, materialism, and greed. Without abandoning themes inherited from the Renaissance (human psychology, love, classical culture), they examined their world with a critical eye. Their attacks could be biting and cruel. However, because of draconian censorship, they took care not to express their frustration directly. Instead, they used baroque literary techniques—

allusion, metaphor, wordplay—to attack with subtlety. It has been said that censorship encourages great literary art because it forces writers to express themselves in sly and clever ways.

Calderón is the epitome of the baroque playwright. One of the most significant differences between the theater of Lope’s generation and that of Calderón’s is language. An educated man writing for educated audiences, Calderón created some of the most complex and challenging dramatic verse in Spanish. His linguistic and rhetorical intricacies are not gratuitous, but an integral component of his vision. His baroque pessimism is conveyed through the depiction of human beings trapped in a world of mirrors and shadows, human beings who feel thwarted in their attempts to distinguish reality from appearance and so create “realities” out of words in their struggle for certainty. Astray in a godless society whose twisted values shape their decisions, they often misstep. Calderón not only shows us these characters, but makes us feel their existential anguish. Through a dizzying avalanche of images, metaphors, allusions, synonyms, and decorative flourishes, he throws us off balance and into a state of confusion. When finding themselves at an impasse, Calderón’s characters typically exclaim, “¡Qué confusión!” Through words whose beauty entices, but whose meanings are elusive, Calderón makes us feel that confusion.

Another significant difference between Lope’s theater and Calderón’s is the space in which the plays were performed. The second half of the seventeenth century saw a decline in the corrals. Ambitious playwrights looked increasingly to the Court for patronage, especially after Philip IV had the palace of the Buen Retiro constructed in the 1630s. The King loved spectacles and entertainments, and during carnival season tournaments, pageants, masques, bullfights, and plays abounded. At first amateur plays were performed by courtiers, but soon professionals were producing comedias de tramoyas, that is, plays in which stage devices were used extensively. Tramoyas were also used in the corral theater, but those at court were more sophisticated. Some court spectacles were extraordinarily extravagant.

Cosimo Lotti, a famous Italian stage designer, arrived in Madrid in 1626, and after the Buen Retiro was built, he mounted productions in the entertainment similar to opera, in which masked performers represented mythological or allegorical characters.

14. The Spanish Armada was defeated in 1588. 15. a dramatic
many dramatic spaces found in the palace. Plays were even performed in the interior patio of the Queen's suite. Jonathan Brown and John Elliott describe several elaborate productions of mythological comedias de tramoya by Calderón (Palace 214–15). Unlike Lope's comedías, which required little scenery or props, these plays required multiple sets. Soon Italianate perspective scenery was introduced. Complex scene changes were possible for court dramas, but these could be very expensive. While corral performances were usually in the afternoon, use of artificial light made night performances possible in the palace.

Outdoor performances were held at the artificial lake in the Buen Retiro park. At first these retained some of the traditions of the pageant, but by the end of the 1630s they were fully-blown plays. The public was allowed to attend some of these performances, often free of charge, which made them extremely popular. In 1638 a fully equipped theater called the Coliseo was built. Stage machinery designed to create aerial effects made it possible for angels or mythological gods to fly through the sky, while painted backcloths provided scenery. The general layout resembled that of the corrales, and the public could enter for a fee. Brown and Elliott write that "in the opening season great efforts were made to simulate for the amusement of the king and queen the kind of atmosphere to be found in the public theaters. There were catcalls, whistles and fighting, and—to add a little excitement to the scene—at one of the inaugural performances in February 1640 live mice were released in the cazuela . . . on the floor of the theater—"a spectacle more pleasing than decent, as a contemporary newsletter observed" (217). In spite of these efforts to recreate the corral environment, court theaters were very different. In the corral, gradas filled with exuberant common folks were usually located around the three sides of the stage. These spectators had a good view of the performance no matter where they sat. However, in the Coliseo the stage was a proscenium with scenery painted in perspective. As Margaret Greer and John Varey point out, in such a setup the visual line is of primary importance and the only perfect view is that of the king and queen, who are seated in a special box directly in front of the stage (Teatro palaciego 77).

The court theaters attracted the best actors and musicians, which meant that the quality of performances improved. However, the most stunning change in the theater experience was that the focus was not only on words, but also on spectacle. In contrast with Lope, Calderón provides stage directions, not only for his mythological plays but for his other plays as well. "For his comedias and dramas too, Calderón is more careful to ensure that the full visual possibilities of a given scene are exploited and that the space in which the play unravels is meaningful, even symbolic" (Thacker, Companion 115). Often his stage directions make reference to paintings. Characters are sometimes described as appearing "como lo pintan." Calderón was knowledgeable about painting and even wrote a treatise on the subject. The visual, spectacular quality of Calderón's plays, his use of shocking or disturbing scenes (for example, the image of the bloodied Mencia in El médico de su honra), his sometimes detailed stage directions, and his use of stage devices to astonish and thrill the audience distinguish him as a new kind of playwright.

One other characteristic distinguishes Calderón and his imitators: the practice of rewriting existing plays, sometimes in collaboration with other playwrights. Albert Sloman has examined the refundiciones, or revised versions, of this generation of dramatists. Often their objective seemed to be to restructure and simplify plots, imposing unity of action. In Calderón's refundición of Mira's play, for example, the number of characters is reduced and extraneous story lines are eliminated.

THE COMEDIA IN PERFORMANCE: TEXT AND PLAYTEXT

The selections found in this book are not plays. They are words on a page. Plays require actors who bring words to life and who engage audiences. Usually they require some sort of dramatic space, props, costumes, lighting, and sound effects. In order to turn a text into a playtext—a script that actors can use as a point of departure—we must think in terms of performance. In the process of developing a play, a playtext emerges. Directors make cuts and modifications and add notes indicating movement, pauses, gestures, and tempo. They might add a cough, a grunt, a chuckle, or a whine. They might cut text or even eliminate or add a character. In the 2008 English-language production of Calderón's

Note that in Lope's plays, shocking scenes such as the murder of the Comendador and torture of the villagers in Fuenteovejuna take place offstage.
No hay burlas con el amor at the Devine Theater at Georgetown University, the father, Don Pedro, became a mother, Doña Patricia, and the gracioso Moscatel became a personal assistant named Moscatela. Changes are made during rehearsals, as the director and cast determine that certain ways of playing scenes work better than others. Directors and sometimes actors themselves mark up the text of a play to reflect these modifications.

Like today's directors, early modern autores often modified the playwright's text in the production process. In fact, the written texts of early modern plays were highly unstable. In the few cases in which we do have access to marked scripts—for example, the one for La Serrana de la Vera discussed in the Introduction to the play—it is clear that radical changes were made in rehearsal. Modern directors who have adapted comedias sometimes argue that the texts that have come down to us were fluid, that is, subject to constant modification, and that we are not being true to the spirit of early modern theater if we insist on rigid adherence to the written text.

The texts of plays were written not for the general public, although some were published in partes, but for directors and actors who knew the meanings of performance codes. Generally actors did not receive a complete copy of the playwright's manuscript, but only the parts they had to commit to memory. Stage directions were to tell the actors when to perform an action. An experienced actor needed little explanation. He would know, for example, that “Saca la daga” meant that he was to show a dagger at that point in the script, while a direction referring to an emotion such as “Se enoja” could well mean that he would have to initiate the manifestation of anger before the point in the script where it was noted in order to prepare the audience for the explosion of rage that was to occur at the indicated moment. Martin Frantzbach notes that the paucity of written directions for actors was deliberate “para dejar sitio a la improvisación” (16–17). Although several scholars (Benabu, Díez Borque) have commented on the scarcity of stage directions in comedia texts, since the 1970s many marked playtexts have been unearthed. These contain marginal notes about blocking, gesture, body position, manipulation of the voice, groupings of actors, properties, and stage machinery. Such marginalia did not necessarily represent the intent of the playwright, but rather the choices of the director (Rodríguez Cuadros 170).

Unlike actors, prompters received complete copies of the text on which they made marginal notes. Theater companies produced at least three prompter's copies, which could be printed or in manuscript. A complicated act might require four or five prompter's copies. Susan Paun de García explains that “markings were made by and for the primer apuntador, the escenógrafo or maquinista, or . . . the author himself. These marking were handwritten, and included both textual variants and staging indications (sets, furnishings, entrances and exits, stage movements, intonations)” (“Between Page and Stage” 53). Sometimes these markings made their way into later printed editions as stage directions. Prompter's copies have provided modern scholars with valuable information about early modern play production and acting techniques.

Printed editions of plays are not an entirely reliable source of what viewers saw for another reason as well. The texts that have come down to us are often one of several versions. Sometimes the version that is the most familiar to us does not represent the author's original concept or the script that was most frequently performed. Dramatic texts were not only altered by directors, they were often reproduced by careless copyists and then mutilated by editors or printers. Sometimes this was done deliberately, as when an editor sought to improve a text or make it more intelligible. In other cases editors added material because the copy was illegible or parts of a page were missing. Sometimes they misread the manuscript or made mechanical errors. New editions of these texts might keep these alterations, or later editors might introduce new errors when they reset the type, thereby creating what McKendrick calls an “editorial nightmare for textual scholars attempting to establish the relationship between all the various versions in the hope of producing a definitive text” (Theatre 261).

Besides words and actors, a play requires spectators. Although we have learned quite a bit about early modern playgoers (who they were, what they paid for tickets, who sat where in the theater), we are just beginning to understand how they responded to the plays they saw—in other words, how they experienced theater. Today modern scholars using spectator response theory+ are attempting to penetrate the collective mind of the early...
modern playgoing public and understand its emotional and intellectual reaction to the comedias it saw. Some scholars, such as Antonio Maravall, have seen Spanish theater, especially after Lope, as a propaganda vehicle in the campaign to maintain and buttress the existing hierarchical social structure and Catholic ideology. Maravall sees comedias playwrights as mouthpieces for the monarchy and the Church. He assumes a monolithic audience composed of spectators who shared a common ideology and received the playwright’s message uniformly. However, recent studies have shown that although audiences of any particular time and place may share a certain frame of reference, each spectator experiences a performance in a unique way.

The theater experience embraces many variables. To begin with, not all performances of a play’s run are identical. Actors, like other people, have ups and down. One day an actor’s voice may be off or he may forget his lines. Another day he may be in top form. Some days the audience may be particularly receptive and laugh at all the graciosos antics, thereby encouraging him to give them his best. Other days the audience may be dull. Given this reality of theater, no two audiences see the exact same performance, even when the play, the set, and the actors are the same. Therefore, no two performances react in exactly the same way. Furthermore, at any particular performance, individuals of different sexes, ages, backgrounds, and perspectives are present. How a spectator responds depends on countless factors: how handsome she finds the galán, how she is feeling that day, where she is sitting in the audience, her social class, her age, how her husband treats her, her political allegiances, what part of the stage she is focusing on, and whether she is paying close attention or is distracted. Even though all Spaniards were supposed to be at least nominally Catholic, abundant documentation attests to the enormous variety of approaches to spirituality, morality, and theology in seventeenth-century Spain. How a spectator responded to a play such as La devoción de la cruz would depend on countless factors.

Catherine Connor-Swietlicki insists that in order to understand how an early modern public might respond to a particular play, we must take into account the wide variety of sociocultural perspectives of spectators. Comedias are polysemous+: they carry many (sometimes contradictory) meanings. They are also heteroglossic+: they contain a diversity of voices, styles, and points of view. Which ones a spectator responds to and how he or she responds depend on the individual’s unique sensitivities (Connor-Swietlicki, “Hacia una teoría”; “Preceptistas y Beyond”). More recently Connor-Swietlicki has used studies in human cognition to explore reactions to staged activity. She notes that recent neurological discoveries proving the interdependence of mind and body “have very pragmatic applications for staging and researching comedias” (“Creative Cognition” 67). Together with the information we have on the makeup of theater audiences and the descriptions of theaters, costumes, sets, movement, and so forth, Connor-Swietlicki’s findings on the neurology of perception may provide us with important clues about how early modern spectators responded to what they saw on the stage. Accounts of plays by early modern spectators are a more direct source of information on audience reaction than the speculation of scholars. One example is a description by two Florentine diplomats of a spectacular production of Calderón’s El mayor encanto amor, staged on the estanque grande (artificial lake) and its island at the Buen Retiro in 1635.18

Although much information is available about comedias performance and spectator response in the seventeenth century, a great deal of work still needs to be done. Evangelina Rodríguez Cuadros has recently discovered treasure troves of information on actors and acting technique. John Varey and Jane Albrecht have contributed much valuable information on audiences, and Catherine Connor-Swietlicki has taken performance studies in new directions with her research on spectator response. Yet many questions remain about how plays were mounted and received.

Another important field of investigation is the comedias on the modern stage. Although for decades Spaniards neglected their rich national theatrical heritage, the situation changed in 1986 when Adolfo Marsillach founded the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico (CNTC), the production unit of the Instituto Nacional de las Artes Escénicas y la Música, an organ of the Ministry of Culture. Marsillach’s objective was to recuperate and disseminate Spanish theater, making it accessible to Spanish audiences, not in the form of inert museum
pieces, but as lively, comprehensible works that reflect the contemporary Spaniard's own political and social reality. Although some of the CNTC's productions have been highly controversial, the troupe has gained enormous recognition and has performed the classics in numerous venues.

Every year scores of comedias are performed in theaters in Spain, Latin America, the United States, and other countries. Shakespeare festivals in Canada and England have included comedias, and in 2009 the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of El perro del hortelano (The Dog in the Manger) played at the Shakespeare Theater in Washington, D.C. Laurence Boswell, now associate director of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, says that earlier in his career, while he was directing at the Gate Theatre, a small venue above a pub in Notting Hill, he made the decision (deemed "daring" by the press) to stage two seasons of comedias, including works by Lope, Tirso, and Calderón. Seven were British premieres. The Gate won an Olivier Award for special achievement, thanks to Boswell's innovations. Later he mounted several more comedias at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

In addition, theater groups are bringing new plays based on early modern topics to the public. One example is the Double Edge Theater production of The UnPossessed, based on Don Quijote, which played to full houses at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., in 2008. Today comedia studies is a dynamic and exciting field offering myriad investigative opportunities for a new generation of scholars.

VERSIFICATION

The poetry of a comedia was so important to early modern spectators that they sometimes spoke of “hearing” rather than “seeing” a play. Lope defined the function of each metric form, and although his guidelines did not constitute hard and fast rules, he and his followers did respect them much of the time. For the modern reader, an understanding of versification is essential. Each verse form is defined by the number of syllables in a line and the number of lines in a stanza. In order to count the syllables, one must be aware of the common devices listed below.

Sinéresis (syneresis) — the contraction into one syllable of two adjacent strong vowels (a, e, o) within a word when neither vowel carries the stress. The two vowels are pronounced as a diphthong when they otherwise would be pronounced as two separate syllables.

Es gran premio a mi lealtad.

Sinalefa (synalepha) — the contraction into one syllable of two adjacent vowels in different words.

¿Sabe el maestre que estoy en la villa?
Es muchacho, no te asombre.

Diéresis (dieresis) — the separation into separate syllables of vowels in a single word that ordinarily form a diphthong.

al justiciero, crueu.

Hiato (hiatus) — the separation into separate syllables of vowels in adjacent words that would ordinarily form a diphthong.

Mira lo que haces.
Vete.

Note that the final “e” of “que” and the initial “a” of “haces” do not join into one syllable. Also note that the final two syllables of the eighth-syllable line are spoken by a different character and printed on the line below.

Commonly Used Verse Forms

Romance — ballad; traditional eight-syllable lines; even-numbered verses rhyme in assonance. The romance may be of any length and is commonly used for narrations.

Gran maestre, don Rodrigo Tellez Girón, que a tan alto lugar os trajo el valor de aquel vuestro padre claro, que, de ocho años, en vos renunció su maestrazgo. . .
Lope de Vega, Fuenteovejuna

Redondillas — stanzas of four lines that rhyme in consonance in the pattern abba. The redondilla is generally used for lively conversation.

DONA ÁNGELA.
Vuélveme a dar Isabel esas tocas, ¡pena esquiva!, vuelve a amortajarme viva,

19. See Michael Posner, “From Page to Stage.” 20. one of Britain’s most prestigious theater awards.
ya que mi suerte crue
do quiere así.

ISABEL.

Toma presto,
porque si tu hermano viene,
y alguna sospecha tiene
no la confirme con esto,
de hallarte de esta manera,
que hoy en Palacio te vio.

DOÑA ÁNGELA.

Válgame el cielo, que yo
entre dos paredes muera,
donde apenas el sol sabe
quién soy, pues la pena mía
en el término del día
ni se contiene, ni cabe;

Calderón, *La dama duende*

**Décimas** — stanzas of ten lines, rhyming in consonance. The pattern is **abba ac cddc**. The *décima* is composed of two redondillas connected by two additional verses. The first connecting line rhymes with the last line of the first redondilla and the the second connecting line rhymes with the first line of the second redondilla. The *décima* is usually used for complaints.

Déme los pies vuestra alteza,
si puedo de tanto sol
tocar, ¡oh rayo español!,
la majestad y grandeza.
Con alegría y tristeza
hoy a vuestras plantas llego,
y mi aliento, lince y ciego,
entre asombros y desmayos,
es águila a tantos rayos,
mariposa a tanto fuego;

tristeza de la caída
que puso con triste efecto
a Castilla en tanto aprieto;
y alegría de la vida
que vuelve restituida
a su pompa, a su belleza,
cuando en gusto vuestra alteza
trueca ya la pena mía.

¿Quién vio triste la alegría?
¿Quién vio alegre la tristeza?

Calderón, *El médico de su honra*
Quintillas — stanzas of five lines that rhyme in consonance in different patterns: ababa; abab; abaab; aabab; aabba.

En el valle a Inés le dejé riendo.
Si la ves, Andrés, dile cuál me ves por ella muriendo.
Lope de Vega, *El caballero de Olmedo*

Octava reales — stanzas of eight hendecasyllables (11-syllable lines) that rhyme ABABABCC. The *octava real* is often used for serious or ceremonial speeches.

ESTEBAN.
Así tenga salud, como parece, que no se saque más agora el pósito.
El año apunto mal, y lo tiempo crece, y es mejor que el sustento esté en depósito, aunque lo contradicen más de trece.

REGIDOR.
Y siempre he sido, al fin, de este propósito, en gobernar en paz esta república.

ESTEBAN.

Hagamos de ellos a Fernán Gómez súplica.
Lope de Vega, *Fuenteovejuna*

Silvas — poetic composition composed of an unlimited number of heptameters (7-syllable lines) and hendecasyllables (11-syllable lines) in any combination. The lines can be arranged in varying rhyme schemes, but are always in consonance. Four possible patterns are aAbBcCd-DeE . . . ; aAbbc . . . ; aABBccdDeE . . . ; all 11-syllable lines.

Hipogrifo violento
que corriste parejas con el viento,
¿dónde, rayo sin llama,
pájaro sin matiz, pez sin escama,
y bruto sin instinto natural, al confuso laberinto
de estas desnudas penas

te desbocas, arrastras y despeñas?

Calderón, *La vida es sueño*

**A NOTE ABOUT LANGUAGE**
The spelling in this anthology has been modernized in cases in which the modernization does not alter Don Quijote's fantasy. Double Edge production of the *The UnPOSSESSED.*
the sound: hierba for yerba, for example. Contractions such as destos and dellos have been changed to de estos, de ellos. However, the reader will find some archaic forms that require explanation. A few examples follow:

agora, for ahora
agüelo, for abuelo
ansi, for así
aquesta, aqueste, for esta, este
efeto, for efecto; perfeto, for perfecto, etc.
infelice, for infeliz
la mar, la color, for el mar, el color
mesmo, for mismo; perfición, for perfección
proprio, for propio

The reader will also find archaic grammatical constructions:

antiquated verb forms: hiciérades, quisistes, vido (for vi)
assimilation (rl changes to ll): servilos, for servirlos; visitalla, for visitarla

enclitics (pronouns attached to verbs in situations in which in modern Spanish they are separated): “Mataré la luz yo.” “Seguiré.”
future subjunctive (an archaic form that has been replaced with the past subjunctive): hiciere, for hiciera
la used as indirect object: Dila que venda.
metathesis, or transposition, of consonants: reñida, for reñida
rustic forms: volvé, for volvird; huerda, for auera
use of dieres is (diacritical mark over the first vowel of a diphthong to indicate that the vowels must be pronounced separately): criado, viuda

The student should also be aware of two common theatrical terms, sale and entra. Sale means that the actor comes onstage. In English, “enter” is used. Entra means that the actor enters into the backstage area. In other words, he exits the stage.