ANTHONY J. GRUBBS

THE PLAYWRIGHT'S PERSPECTIVE

INNOVATIVE DRAMATURGY AND ITS POETICS IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN

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In memory of
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PREFACE

Innovation and conflict have always characterized early modern Spanish theater. The dramatic text, transformed and reincarnated with each interpretation onstage, was in a constant state of flux in the Golden Age. As a result of the influence of Aristotle's *Poetics* and the literary theory established during the Italian Renaissance, especially by Franciscus Robortellus's *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes* (1548),[1] which demonstrated how an Aristotelian approach to tragedy served as a similarly useful approach to comedy, most scholars in sixteenth-century Spain tended to contemplate dramatic theory in a more formal, theoretical, and rhetorical manner. In subsequent years, several theater practitioners began exploring the implications of performance and audience reception from a different perspective, liberating dramatic theory from the arguably uncompromising precepts that had previously dictated literary and theatrical practice. These playwrights stopped reflecting on past theory and concentrated on present theatrical practice, turning to audiences for cues as to their expectations, for example, whereas Alonso López Pinciano's *Philosophía Antigua Poética* (1596) grounded literary theory in Aristotle's *Poetics*, Félix Lope de Vega Carpio's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), based on his enormous success on the boards, upstaged his more classically oriented predecessor. Later attempts at reestablishing Aristotelian precepts were even less successful, as dramatic theorists and practitioners mostly ignored the *Tablas Poéticas* (1631) of Francisco Cascales, for example, in favor of dramatic forms modeled after Lope's *comedia*.

The relationship between Golden Age theater theory and practice, illustrated through the study of representative works by six playwrights, is the topic of this study. The impact of practice on

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1. See María José Vega's book *La formación de la teoría de la comedia: Francisco Robortello* for a comprehensive study of the formation of Robortello's theory of comedy, to which, she suggests, all European literature up to Romanticism–and arguably even modern literature–is indebted.

theory is as irrefutable as the impact of theory on practice. In fact, many prominent playwrights wrote treatises (re)affirming their decisions to stray from traditional norms and to create new dramatic art forms. Without exception these defenses were written after the playwright had enjoyed success and introduced his—and, in the case of Golden Age Spain, the theatrical world was overwhelmingly populated by men—particular pioneering contribution to the theater. By examining the ways which theatrical practice was influenced by performance and audience reception, their impact on shaping theatrical theory becomes clear, not only in the well known case of Lope's *Arte nuevo* but throughout sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain.

Of course, all playwrights continually face the challenge of creating original works for a dynamic and demanding public who must be kept at the forefront when writing a play, since they are the receptors of the message that is transmitted by means of the performance of the dramatic text. This realization, however, does not downplay the importance of the script, but elevates all three aspects: the text, performance, and reception, to equal ground. These factors have led me to concentrate on the connection between performance and reception in this study of early modern Spanish dramatic theory, and although performance and reception can be dealt with in a mutually exclusive manner, it is more feasible to look at them collectively with the dramatic text—as Pedro Calderón de la Barca suggests in his prologue to the *Autos*—in the attempt to reproduce the entire dramatic spectacle.

Scholarship dealing with early modern Spanish theater is vast and far reaching, to say the least, with a long history of varied and dynamic approaches.[2] In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the dramatic landscape shifted and new theories appeared, causing a heated and on-going dialogue between the supporters of innovation and the defenders of tradition. Emilio Cotarelo y Mori's *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud*

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2. Laura Bass's and Margaret Greer's *Approaches to Teaching Early Modern Spanish Drama* and Jonathan Thacker's *A Companion to Golden Age Theater* offer good starting points for an examination of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish theater as well as comprehensive bibliographies.

del teatro en España compiles a comprehensive collection of the dramatic treatises of the time and is the logical starting point for any study of early modern Spanish theater theory; Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo's *Historia de las ideas estéticas* is another indispensable reference. Federico Sánchez Escribano's and Alberto Porqueras Mayo's *Preceptiva dramatica española del Renacimiento y Barroco*, and, more recently, *La crítica ante el teatro barroco español* by María José Rodríguez Sánchez de León offer ample fragments of dramatic treatises dating from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, both Melveena McKendrick and Ignacio Arellano address Golden Age dramatic theory in their histories of early modern Spanish theater; in his *Historia del teatro español (Desde sus orígenes hasta 1900)*, Francisco Ruiz Ramón also gives a general overview of the dramatic trends of the time, and Marc Vitse's *Éléments pour une théorie du téâtre espagnol du XVII siècle* also proves invaluable. A lively dialogue still exists regarding the impact of the theory in early modern Spain, and the number of critical studies that treat the implications and importance of the dramatic treatises of Golden Age Spain is also enormous. Marvin Herrick discusses the influence of Terentian Comedy in Europe in *Comic Theory in the Sixteenth Century*, and Raymond Grismer's *The Influence of Plautus in Spain before Lope de Vega*, specifically discusses Plautus's comic legacy in the Iberian Peninsula. C. J. Metford further describes the often negative criticism that Spanish theater faced. Jesús Pérez-Magallón demonstrates how changing attitudes toward theatrical practices transformed theory in "Del *Arte nuevo* de Lope al arte 'reformado' de Bances: Algunas cuestiones de poética dramática." Other studies that deal with the treatises of the specific playwright-theorists will be discussed in the corresponding chapters.

Scholars have also concentrated on other factors besides the commentary of supporters and detractors of the theater. The theater-going public in Spain was varied and of different temperaments. Many commentators of the time described most audiences in less-than-flattering terms—arguably the most famous example is found in Lope's *Arte nuevo*, where he describes them as

rowdy and unruly—an understatement, to say the least.[3] Otis H. Green addresses this disdain in "On the Attitude toward the *Vulgo* in the Spanish *Siglo de Oro*" and other, more recent studies on the theater-going public include work by Jean Sentaurans, John Varey, Catherine Connor, and Jane Albrecht, to name a few. José Hesse's *Vida teatral en el Siglo de Oro* discusses the general theater scene both on and off stage. José María Díez Borque's extensive work encompasses the entire dramatic spectacle, dealing with both local and foreign spectators, the staging of the plays, and the actors' performances. Descriptions of the dramatic spaces, especially the *corrales de comedias,* have been put forward by Hugo Rennert, Varey, William Shoemaker, and, John Jay Allen, all of whose efforts and insights have resolved uncertainties common in the past about the staging and the actual construction of the *corrales*.[4] All of these factors in conjunction with modern-day performance and reception theory continue to offer new insight into challenges of composing, staging, and viewing theatrical works in early modern Spain.

While in the past most early modern Spanish theater scholarship was based primarily on close readings of the text, this changed toward the end of the twentieth century when Performance Studies became fundamental. The historical and social factors revealed by the texts were never forgotten, nor was their importance diminished, rather scholars began to focus on all aspects of the dramatic spectacle, including the staging of the text. Hispanists were challenged to look at modern-day adaptations of the plays and draw conclusions as to what they shared with the performances in early modern Spain. It was Louise and Peter Fothergill-Payne's *Prologue to Performance* that solidified the importance of performance within the context of Golden Age Spanish theater studies. This collection of essays recognized and initiated a dialogue that focused on the importance of performance

3. This negative attitude is well known because of Lope's comments in the *Arte nuevo*.

4. The website for the Association of Hispanic Classical Theater (www.comedias.org) is an invaluable resource for scholars and teachers alike. With regard to the *corrales*, the site includes some of John Jay Allen's inexhaustible work on the early modern performance spaces.

in response to what Isaac Benabu called a "lack of performance tradition" (23) in his essay "Interpreting the *Comedia* in the Absence of a Performance Tradition: Gutierre in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*," found in the same collection. Performance Studies continued to complement other theoretical approaches to early modern Spanish theater—but especially the *comedia*—as seen in such collections as Charles Ganelin's and Howard Mancing's *The Golden Age* Comedia: *Text, Theory, and Performance*, and Barbara Mujica's and Anita K. Stoll's *El texto puesto en escena*, to name two notable examples. Scholarship dealing with performance still abounds, as a glance at the *Bulletin of the Comediantes* reveals; also, the journal *Comedia Performance* is dedicated solely to the topic. Most recently, Susan Paun de García and Donald Larson have edited *The Comedia in English: Translation and Performance*, a collection of essays that deals with the translation, adaptation, and performance of the Spanish *comedia* for the modern stage.

The primary intention of this work is the application of performance and reception theory to a consideration of the innovations made by several playwrights whose work spans the Spanish Golden Age. Instead of concentrating solely on the tangible clues provided by the script, I focus on the more subjective aspects of its performance and subsequent audience response in order to emphasize that practice impacts theory just as theory influences practice. The first chapter of the study offers a historical overview of the events and trends that precipitated the bold innovations of dramatic theory and practice during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It also revisits some important contemporary critical responses to this changing dramatic landscape and synthesizes performance and reception theories as the primary theoretical bases of the study. I utilize research in the area of performance theory by writers such as Elin Diamond, Herbert Blau, Marvin Carlson and Amalia Gladhart, and I incorporate the work of Hans Robert Jauss on the aesthetics of reception as well as Eli Rozik's views on the spectator's vital role in the interpretation of a work. By using as a point of departure recent theoretical approaches based on audience response and performance theories, the shift of textual authority to the representation of the script and its subsequent reception is

emphasized, not only reiterating the vivacity of theater, but also broadening theater studies and further illustrating the interrelation between the dramatic spectacle, the message, its reception, and the resultant theory governing the theater of Golden Age Spain.

The remaining chapters of the study are divided chronologically and examine some of the technical innovations introduced by the following playwrights: Bartolomé de Torres Naharro, Juan de la Cueva, Félix Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, and Francisco Antonio de Bances Candamo, which stem from their sensitivity to the importance of performance and reception. In addition, each chapter examines the dramatic theory of each playwright based on their successes and failures on the boards, citing specific influences on the poet's dramaturgy, as well as his theoretical leanings, and the treatise itself. Furthermore, a representative play is explored from the perspective of performance and reception theories in order to demonstrate how, in each case, theatrical practice anticipated and affected dramatic theory. By using the works of Torres Naharro and Bances as bookends, this study encapsulates some major dramatic trends common to early modern Spanish theater, including the commercial, religious, and court traditions.[5] It also illustrates the steady progression and recognition of the importance of performance and reception throughout the Spanish Golden Age. While some playwrights took inspiration in the classics, they ultimately failed, leaving those that looked to the contemporary needs and desires of the public to reap the rewards of a more appealing dramatic spectacle. Finally, the incorporation of a variety of dramatic genres over an extended period demonstrates the universal nature of the study, establishing the fundamental role played by performance and reception not only when writing a play, but also when studying drama in general.

Chapter two explores the nascent and dynamic dramatic landscape of sixteenth-century Spain. On the cusp between the

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5. For an examination of the effects of performance and audience reception on the dramatic genre of the interlude, see my article "Major Change in 'Minor' Theater: Luis Quiñones de Benavente's Dramatization of Dramatic Theory and its Effects on the Interlude in Early Modern Spain."

Middle Ages and the Renaissance, several playwrights abandoned Spain for the more profitable—both economically and artistically speaking—lands of Italy where a dramatic tradition had been flourishing for years. This exposure to Italian theater styles and theories, as well as a more modern theater-going public, compelled playwrights to rethink and restructure dramatic trends in Spain, combining the innovation of Italian style with the simple wholesomeness of Spanish drama. This newly introduced theory emphasized the importance of maintaining decorum within the plays and mentioned the practical aspects of performance, suggestions garnered from the performances of their plays, which served as a guide for future generations of playwrights.

Torres Naharro not only introduced a new sensibility to the Spanish dramatic landscape with regard to staging and playwriting, but he also pioneered an interest in dramatic theory. These innovations gained traction as plays began to be produced not only within the milieu of religious, street, and courtly festivities but also within the commercial realm. This new dramatic context also signified the establishment of a new audience with different values and whose primary intent for visiting the theater was entertainment. By emphasizing and synthesizing imagination and imitation into the creative process of producing dramatic works, Torres Naharro created fictitious but believable storylines that opened up the possibility for new, original works. He contributed in transforming the face of playwriting, since many subsequent dramatic poets enhanced history, making a possibly unoriginal story more entertaining, while encoding a didactic message within the play. By embracing Italian dramatic trends, Torres Naharro not only began to establish the importance of theory, but also to introduce new models to the secular stage, an initiative that was quickly adopted and expanded upon by the Iberian dramatic poets.

By bridging a gap between the more classically inspired plays of the Renaissance and the more period-based *comedia,* Cueva, too, proved an important player in the evolution of Spanish theater. Both his theory and his dramatic work mapped out the transition: early in his career, he started writing both comedies and tragedies but stopped producing the latter form, since his audience did not enthusiastically accept its somber tone and subject matter, a clear illustration of Cueva's recognition that it was important to

consider the public's desires. Regarding his dramatic precepts, although his earlier treatises were primarily shaped by Renaissance traditions, Cueva proved to be a visionary regarding numerous aspects of the *comedia* that would soon emerge, and though his actual influence on the form will continue to be debated, the *Ejemplar poético* established his position as a contributor to the formation of the genre by his introduction of new techniques, keeping theater fresh and attractive to the public. He personified the change in the dramatic landscape at the turn of the sixteenth century, as he anticipated new trends while attempting to evoke the importance of old traditions. Having many of his plays staged in Seville, Cueva's career as a playwright reflected the successes enjoyed by few, but he also embodies the frustration of being overshadowed by the "Monstruo de Ingenios," Lope de Vega, whose literary production and success eclipsed all others.

In Chapter three, I concentrate on two *comedias,* and, by looking at the metatheatrical aspects of the two plays and their relation to their authors' dramatic treatises, it is clear that both Lope and Tirso understood the importance of performance and reception. Their treatment of both aspects of the theatrical spectacle illustrated their desire to present their ideas not only to the Spanish literary circles and academies, but also to the common theatergoer, whose grasp of such concepts may not have been as well developed. Audience reception acquired singular importance, since they sought the support of the public for the new style and innovations. True, both men judged differently the degree of public influence, but both agreed on and recognized the audience's impact on drama, and the reciprocal influence of the drama on the audience, forming a symbiosis in which each one benefits from the other.

Lope made a shrewd assessment of the desires regarding the theater-going public of early modern Spain: he realized that it was necessary to play to their needs and expectations. His work underlined the tension that arises from the processes of writing, performing, and interpreting a play. Though his *Arte nuevo* is full of irony, we must look at its target audience, the Madrid Academy, and consider that he would obviously play to their expectations and prejudices—yet another example of how reception affects production. Nevertheless, his plays reveal another story regarding

the catalyst for the creation of his dramatic poetry: he gave the public what they wanted; this is clearly demonstrated by his use of ballads and common, well-known stories that he adapted for the stage. By looking at *Lo fingido verdadero* as a dramatic manifestation of his theory, we see how Lope reached out to the democratized public, explaining and developing the concepts that drove his creation. Further proof lies in the fact that he really did not need to explain his motivations to anybody, but he did so by choice.

Similarly, Tirso's creation of a dramatic world in the *Cigarrales de Toledo* makes the reader more conscious of all the players in the creative process, allowing us to reflect on each member's role. The ideas of reception become clearer as various reactions are manifested in the characters and the invented audience of the *Cigarrales*—perhaps even offering a model of conduct that the reader should follow. Tirso does not celebrate the audience, and though never eager to empower the public with the decision-making involved in the playwriting process, clearly the bad reviews of *El vergonzoso en palacio* caused quite a reaction in the playwright. This criticism compelled him include the play in the *Cigarrales* along with a comprehensive defense of not only the work itself, but also of the *comedia* in general. It is impossible to deny the importance of reception and performance in a study of Tirso's drama because it is an integral consideration for not only the scholar, but also the playwright.

Corresponding with the dramatic trends of late seventeenth-century Spain, Chapter four deals with two theater forms that arguably overshadowed the popular *comedia*: the *auto sacramental* and the court play. These genres shared as a predominant characteristic the grandiose nature of the staged spectacle, underlining the entertainment value inherent to the forms, but the didactic nature of both theatrical styles cannot be forgotten. Although the audience was more specific and homogeneous than that typical of the *corrales*, and though their message was often distinct from that of the more popular *comedia*, both types of plays were still affected by performance in the desire to facilitate the reception of the work, which often meant making the abstract notion more tangible and comprehensible.

Calderón specifically mentioned that representation was instrumental to the understanding of the *auto sacramental* because the performative aspects were easily lost during a simple reading, a notion essentially true of all dramatic genres. Its performance offered a religious lesson in an accessible manner, making the allegory come to life as the audience members were able to visualize its meaning, contemplate their own situation, and make their own decisions about the correct path to follow. Ritual relies on performance and its representation allows the spectator to enjoy the work on a superficial level while absorbing the message—either consciously or not—on a deeper level. Most certainly, ritual and performance are positively linked and mutually affected by the other. Calderón and others understood this relationship and took advantage of the overt and explicit artifice on stage often presenting a sort of "shock and awe" spectacle, driving home the religious dogma.

Bances Candamo faced special circumstances and different challenges as the court dramatist of Charles II. His elaborate staging and intricate storylines targeted a specific audience whose demands were different from those of the democratic theater-going public of the *corrales*. Considering himself a teacher who offered guidance and counsel by means of his works, he paid special attention to his public and recognized that his plays depended greatly on the court's reception. Like his predecessors, Bances strictly followed the rules of decorum, since it was his goal to produce a perfectly decorous play that taught and reinforced courtly values. His adornment of history not only made the tales more palatable for the audience, but it also added emphasis to the intrinsic message of the work.

Clearly, the six dramatist-theorists were cognizant of and driven by the needs and desires of their audience, which in turn influenced their dramatic works; in like manner, their playwriting would have an impact on the dramatic theory that they wrote toward the end of their careers. We see in their treatises that each playwright is concerned with the issues of decorum and of pleasing the public. Performance also comes to the forefront as the early modern Spanish dramatist-theorist begins to take into account its practical aspects as well as its power to transmit a message; as Diana Taylor posits, performance distills a truer truth than life

(46), supporting the self-referential nature of theater in that it reflects the theatricality of real life. These dramatists justify their innovation in two ways: first, they assert that change is normal and that they are in fact following the logical progression of nature, which constantly changes as time passes; second, they state that they are appealing to their audience, and that their public insists on a vibrant and ever-changing theater. However, the theater also influenced the public differently as audience response became conditioned to the "new" techniques and the desire for novelty and familiarity became intertwined: the play needed to be recognizable within a common generic mold, but at the same time variations could add vigor and increase the satisfaction of the public.

In art, both the artist and the spectator actively collaborate, and much of the value of the work is in this reciprocal interaction. It is important to keep the audience both receptive and perceptive because the play is dead, using the terminology of Peter Brook, without interaction between the two parties. Indeed, as Rozik suggests, both director and spectator are equal partners in the creation of a work: the director's creative interpretation affects—and is affected by—the spectator's response. All forms of art are certainly personal and unique expressions of the artists who create them. Nonetheless, these six Golden Age writers remind us that theater is the most public and revealing of all the arts since an active and interactive audience is a dynamic requisite element of its conception, making the public a lively player of a fundamental role in the theater.

This study's originality lies in its approach to examining some of the innovations on the early modern Spanish stage by focusing solely on the playwrights who also wrote dramatic theory. This detail demonstrates and records a sensitivity to the performance and reception of the work that was shared by successful playwrights. I do not pretend to document and explain all of the innovations of these six playwrights, but rather to discuss the effects of strategies that characterized their dramatic works with the hopes of initiating further dialogue about the theater of Spain's Golden Age. By applying recent theoretical approaches within the historical context of the extant treatises and dramatic texts, this study offers further entrée into the entire process of the dramatic spectacle: composition, performance, and reception of a

play. Although I diverge from the popular and useful research on modern adaptations of classical Spanish theater, the goal of this study is the same: to bridge the past and the present in an attempt to better understand both eras.

CHAPTER 1: THE DYNAMIC LANDSCAPE OF EARLY MODERN SPANISH THEATER AND THEORY AS SEEN FROM A MODERN PERSPECTIVE

It is certain that theater, written in both Latin and the vernacular, existed in many European countries during the Middle Ages, but a firmly established Spanish tradition is an anomaly due to the paucity of extant dramatic and theoretical manuscripts dating between the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. This lack of tangible evidence can be attributed to numerous physical, social, and religious factors: the delicate nature of the folios on which treatises may have been written (Donovan 73), a prejudice against letters (Surtz 23), and the popularity of lyric poetry. Additionally, Moorish influence over all aspects of Spanish culture coupled with the constant struggle of the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula also provide unique factors that may have contributed to the seeming lack of theater.

I. A brief overview of the evolutionary trajectory of theater in early Spain up to 1700

The uncertain existence of Spanish medieval theater has continued to stimulate a polemic for Hispanists and dramatic historians alike. The earliest known manuscript of a Spanish dramatic work is *Auto de los Reyes Magos* (c. 1150), with the next extant manuscript, *Representación del nacimiento de Nuestro Señor* (c.1468) by Gómez Manrique, dating more than 300 years later. This could suggest that Spain lacked a dramatic tradition during the Middle Ages, a notion that many scholars are reluctant to admit. In fact, Ronald Surtz notes that previous Hispanists believed that Spain had enjoyed a liturgical dramatic tradition in both Latin and the vernacular that was analogous to the rest of Europe, and this scarcity of dramas is the result of the texts being destroyed or lost (15). This is a logical conclusion due to thriving theatrical traditions in neighboring regions such as France and Catalonia.

Other scholars challenge the existence of a Spanish liturgical dramatic tradition in Latin. In the landmark study, *The Liturgical Drama in Medieval Spain*, Richard Donovan investigated 135 manuscripts of liturgical plays from countries other than Spain and found no evidence of any native (Castilian) plays (51-57); there was evidence of a Catalonian tradition but Catalonia was not allied with Castile at the time. Donovan also examined other purported Spanish plays to find that they had originated in France, Catalonia, or Italy (57-63). He suggests three factors that contributed to the dearth of a Latin liturgical dramatic tradition in Spain: first, the use of the Latin liturgical drama was unknown in the Spanish Mozarabic mass, and with the introduction of the Roman-French rites in 1080, reformers viewed these dramatic representations as superfluous, choosing not to introduce them (69); second, the reforming monks were primarily from Cluny, and no liturgical plays have been found in their liturgical manuscripts (69); and finally, the delay of Castilian liturgical reform in comparison to the remainder of Europe, and the fact that a copy of *Auto de los Reyes Magos* does exist, suggest that a vernacular tradition was already in place and that a Latin tradition would have been unnecessary (70).

Surtz concurs, stating that liturgical drama in Latin was not necessary in Castile due to socio-religious factors. He cites a fifteenth-century Hieronymite monk, Fray Juan de Serrano, who saw his contemporaries manifesting their faith in battle against the Moors instead of attending mass:

> Es la gente (como todos saben) de su natural belicosa, y ocupada en continuas guerras con los Moros que viuen juntos con ellos, estua en esta parte como Barbara, desaficionada a esta blandura, y regalo diuno, tan importante para las almas […]. (21)

The Spanish considered the Reconquest a religious rite in itself, much like the earlier crusades. They felt no need, therefore, to confirm their religious beliefs either by attending mass or by seeing dramatic representations; it seems that fighting the Moors was enough to reaffirm their faith in Christianity. It was not until the conclusion of the Reconquest in 1492 that Juan del Encina and his contemporaries began to write and present their first religious

plays with some regularity, suggesting that the intrinsic need for spiritual reinforcement marched off the battlefield and set foot on the stage.

There exists concrete evidence of religious plays in the vernacular in Castile during the Middle Ages. One section of *Las siete partidas del Rey Don Alfonso el Sabio*, mandates that monks should not act in dramas of *escarnio* because of the irreverent nature of the plays. They were, however, permitted to perform in decorous plays that reinforced church doctrine (172).[7] The importance of this thirteenth-century treatise lies in the textual confirmation of a dramatic tradition and also in the acknowledgement of theater's influence over the audience.

Another example is the *auto sacramental*, an allegorical play originally performed in conjunction with the celebration of Corpus Christi, though later represented during other religious festivals, such as Easter. It is impossible to pinpoint the date of the first performance of an *auto* but they are documented as being performed in Spain during the fifteenth century.[8] The play was normally staged on a cart (*carro*) that was part of the religious procession, a dramatic representation itself due to the costuming and role-playing of the participants. As time passed, the *carros* became quite elaborate, consisting of various levels, extravagant decoration, and numerous stage properties; some productions called for such complex staging that numerous carts were used. The *auto* was a bold presentation of religious doctrine that wielded the power of performed allegory in concert with an awe-inspiring

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7. The doctrine reads: "Los clérigos...nin deber ser facedores de juegos por escarnio porque los vengan a ver las gentes como los facen,...Pero representaciones hi ha que pueden los clérigos facer, asi como de la nascencia de nuestro señor Iesu Cristo que demuestra como el ángel vino a los pastores et díxoles como era nacido, et otro si de su aparecimiento como le venieron los tres reyes adorar, et de la resurreccion que demuestra como fue crucificado et resurgió al tercer dia. Tales cosas como estas que mueven a los homes a facer bien et haber devocion en la fe facerlas pueden: et demas porque los homes hayan remembranza que segunt aquello fueron fechas de verdat; mas esto deben facer apuestamiente et con grant devocion et en las cibdades grandes do hobiere arzobispos o obispos..."

8. See Josep Romeu Figueras and Hermengildo Corbató for ample information about the evolution of the *auto sacramental* in Catalonia.

performance space, serving to convert or reaffirm the faith of the public.

Besides religious theater, other paratheatrical manifestations of religious doctrine were also vital to the early development of theater in Spain. The sermon, for example, demonstrated theatrical characteristics simultaneously with the delivery of its message. In "Drama in Sermons: Quotation, Performativity, and Conversion in a Middle English Sermon on the Prodigal Son in a *Tretise of Miraclis Pleyinge,*" Erick Kelemen affirms the dramatic nature of the sermon by highlighting the specific roles played by the preacher and the worshippers, noting that the ultimate goal was to convert the listener and sustain a belief (1). In addition to the obvious, Kelemen astutely mentions that the sermon and the drama also occupied the same stage (4), that is, that the performance of both events was presented in the church and presumably near or in front of the altar.[9] I would add that the likely need to rehearse a sermon further exemplifies its dramatic nature because such practice acknowledges a subsequent performance. Keleman continues by suggesting that the act of citation and quotation of characters in the Bible was actually a mimetic function (10), as the priest played the role of that person, and the act of giving a sermon was a form of speech act because the priest intended to convert the faithful. Though the study focuses on English medieval sermons, its relevance lies in illustrating how the sermon was a didactic instrument used by all religions to propagate faith.

Dramatic representations were not limited to the religious stage, as secular society also enjoyed various types of performances. Dialogued poetry was essentially dramatic as two interlocutors presumably read (i.e., performed) their assigned part of the poem. The troubadour tradition exhibited dramatic characteristics since the works were recited—or read aloud—to an audience. Street theater was also popular at the time. In fact, Bruce Burningham's book, *Radical Theatricality: Jongleuresque*

9. This is also true in Spain, although the performance of the *autos* was eventually moved out of the church because of space limitations; it was necessary to accommodate the growing public and provide an adequate performance space.

Performance on the Early Spanish Stage, argues that it was the popular performance tradition that helped to fill the gap and influence the theatrical conventions of early modern Spain. The fifteenth-century courtly festivals were also precursors to theater, displaying many dramatic characteristics: masquerade balls took on dramatic form as the participants arrived in disguise, while humorous one-act interludes, or *entremeses*, utilized actors and costuming, and tournaments brought together several theatrical aspects in magnificent spectacles. Alan Deyermond states that, starting around 1461, participants began to prepare and perform representations of historic battles during tournaments (367), which imply rehearsal, costuming, and role-playing. These examples, both religious and secular, ushered in a noticeable transformation in a nascent theatrical tradition

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, McKendrick suggests that most Spanish dramatists dabbled in two overlapping types of drama: the medieval-inspired one-act plays in the style of Juan del Encina's early works, and the humanistic plays made famous by Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (38-39). Normally, the church or municipal authorities commissioned the plays to celebrate religious holidays, but a secular variety, inspired by classical as well as mythological sources and usually patronized by nobles, also existed. These one-act works, didactic in nature, included singing and dancing, but provided little progression of the dramatic action. They were primitive and ritualistic in nature, reflecting their medieval roots. They consisted mostly of simple dialogues between rustic characters or biblical figures. They took advantage of the comic potential of language by interspersing wordplay and local dialects, especially Sayagués, a local dialect common to northeastern Spain.[10] Like the secular one-act plays, the multiple-act humanistic plays were didactic and drew inspiration from classical, Renaissance, and biblical sources. These were characterized by a more developed argument and intrigue was often a defining characteristic. Both models served as a strong

10. Charlotte Stern examines the veracity of the Sayagués and the characterization of the Sayago shepherd in her article "Sayago and Sayagués in Spanish History and Literature."

foundation for the behemoth that was to become the Spanish dramatic tradition.

Due to his influence and contributions to the popularity of the art form at the end of the fifteenth century, Encina (1469-1529) is often recognized as the father of Spanish theater. He wrote at least fourteen and perhaps fifteen eclogues modeled after those of Virgil, a form that was familiar and intelligible to his courtly audience. Encina's work displays a shift from religious to secular theater: medieval themes inspired his early works while the literary humanism of Rome influenced his later plays. Not only was Encina influenced by his visits to Italy, but Joseph E. Gillet suggests that he also was influenced by his contemporary—and rival—Bartolomé de Torres Naharro ("Torres and the Sixteenth Century" 466). A later, humanistic play, *Égloga de Plácida y Vitoriano* (1493) emulated Torres Naharro's style by presenting an introit related to the play and introducing more modern subject matter. Encina's experimental later works, however, were not as well received by the court as his enormously popular earlier plays, but now scholars recognize them as his best pieces. In addition to offering a dramatic model for subsequent playwrights to follow, Encina influenced later dramatic traditions by presenting a variety of characters from all social classes. He elevated the artistic level of the courtly and religious dramas, bringing life to a previously dull and stagnant genre. By tracking his progression as a playwright, one clearly sees how the drama was growing out of the Middle Ages into the Renaissance, and Encina's work serves as the basis for all Spanish theater that would follow. Encina's imitators became plentiful during the first half of the sixteenth century; they included Pedro Manuel de Urrea (a.k.a. Ximénez de Urrea), Fernán López de Yanguas, Sebastián Horozco, and Diego Sánchez de Badajoz, all of whom helped to develop a strong dramatic tradition in Spain by writing numerous plays.

Two other important dramatists at the turn of the fifteenth century are Lucas Fernández (1474-1542) and Gil Vicente (1465-1537?). Fernández's work was characterized by its display of powerful theatricality, especially in *Auto de la pasión*, a play that anticipated the *comedia de santo* (Suárez-Galbán 15) and was the first play to deal with the theme of religious conversion (Wilson and Moir 31). Fernández was also the first to introduce the role of

the *barba*, or comic old man, to Castilian theater in *Comedia de Bras-Gil y Berenguello* (Wilson and Moir 30). Vicente wrote for the royal court of Portugal and was arguably the most brilliant poet of the time. He wrote theater in Portuguese, Castilian, or a combination of both. Vicente's work gave a glimpse into the future, demonstrating the grandeur of the later Spanish theater. Like many of his contemporaries, Vicente dabbled with original themes and a novel use of language, as he wrote several types of comedy: rustic, moral, farcical, allegoric fantasy, and sentimental. McKendrick admires Vicente's genius, noting that he had great technical skills as a poet and dramatist (26) and wrote virtually *ex nihilo* (20), but she also suggests that his work lacked profound dramatic sensibility since he was tethered by the whims of his patron (26). His contributions included the dramatization of narrative materials (e.g., Tragicomedia de *don Duardos)* and the use of high lyric in a country setting, both of which previewed the *comedia nueva*.

One more dramatist guiding Spanish theater out of the Middle Ages was Torres Naharro (c.1485-1520), who wrote much of his work during his extended stay in Italy. Heavily influenced by the Italians' well-established theater and fixation on theory, Torres Naharro attempted to import Italian dramatic precepts to Spain. In addition, he showed a keen sense of the needs of the public and developed a relationship between the performance and the audience. He was a man before his time in that Spain was not ready for his modern dramatic stylings—the same holds true for Encina, whose later works were not well received by the Spanish public—evidenced by the fact that his plays were not performed there; nonetheless, he did gain exposure and his popularity in Spain was manifested by numerous printed editions of his complete works, the *Propalladia*, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.

The arrival of Italian popular theater to Spain and its welcoming public further provoked change in all theatrical aspects, both on and offstage. At first, the audiences were comprised largely of Spaniards who had lived in Italy, but as dramatic texts, adaptations, and translations arrived with more frequency, Italian style became more commonplace and the public itself diversified. The Italian playwrights were good dramatic craftsmen who had a