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Artistic Distance and the *Comedia*: Lessons from *Don Quijote*

MATTHEW D. STROUD

DON QUIJOTE IS A novel, perhaps even the first modern novel (Fuentes 15, Bloom 145). Practically from the date of its writing, however, it has been almost irresistibly viewed through the lens of theater—"Como casi es comedia la historia de don Quixote de la Mancha [...]" in the words of Avellaneda (fol. IIIr)—and a growing body of scholarship acknowledges the importance of theatricality to both the structure of the work and the way one interprets it. "Theatricality," as it turns out, is a very flexible term in many of these studies and the widely varying definitions of it have given rise to substantially different approaches to the topic. In its most literal sense, theatricality refers only to those elements one associates with the presentation of plays: theaters, scripts, actors, performances, and spectators. Among the most common episodes cited as evidence are, of course, *Las cortes de la muerte* (Ramos Escobar 677; Ricapito 326; Maestro 43, 46; Syverson-Stork 54-63) and Maese Pedro's puppet show (Haley 149-63; Burningham 181-96; Martín Morán 41-42). Many scholars have preferred to expand the definition of "theatricality" and approach the subject from an historical perspective: from biography—Cervantes as playwright (Syverson-Stork 73-115; González, Roca Mussons 420), and his rivalry with Lope de Vega and his opinions on the *comedia nueva* (Syverson-Stork 98; Maestro 46-47; Ricapito 325-26; Albrecht 9n)—to literary history—the recasting of similar plots in both narrative and theatrical genres by Cervantes and other authors[1] and evidence that *Don Quijote* was informed by the *com-*

1 Jurado Santos (442-49), Syverson-Stork (19). The most famous example of the appearance of the same plot in both narrative and dramatic formats is, of course, the Captive's Tale (Part 1, chapters 39-41), parts of which also appeared in both *El trato de*

media dell'arte,[2] the *mester de juglaría* (Burningham), or medieval and Renaissance festival theater and its use of masking, cross-dressing, the mock king and the trope of the world upside-down (Farness 107).

Expanding the reach of "theatricality" even further, others have included techniques that are indeed essential to or frequent in theater, but are not limited to drama alone and in fact are common in narrative genres. Examples of these usages, many of which are frankly metaphorical, are the description as theatrical of any use of "dialogue, external description, changes in scene, and spectacular treatment of events" (Reed 72); narrative techniques that are fast-paced, showy, and move "from climax to climax" (Farness 114); the application of dramatic terms such as *anagnorisis* to the moment of recognition on the part of a character (Martín Morán 36-37); the recasting of plot complications as "ad hoc theater" (Farness 106); the application of the terms "stage" and "staging" to narrative framing (Selig 28, 30) or the description of places, the movements of the characters, and the use of space (Syverson-Stork 53, 124; Martín Morán 30-34; Farness 108, 114); the appearance of characters who hide their real identities and appear in different costumes and masks and otherwise engage in role-playing (Reed 76; Martín Morán 30, 32, 37, 39-40; Maestro 47-49; Selig 28, 30; Syverson-Stork 21, 52; Farness 109-10) even while sometimes resisting the role assigned (Albrecht 4; Ramos Escobar 678); the creation of characters who, like those in the theater, seem to have no backstory, no biography, no memory (Roca Mussons 417) but who create for themselves new, and often changing, identities (Wasserman 126); the highlighting of the different positions that characters sometimes take with regard to the actions, from instigator—author, director, stage manager—to perpetrator—actor—to wit-

Argel and *Los baños de Argel*. Due to the lack of historical evidence, it appears that one cannot say for certain whether Cervantes chose to include in *Don Quijote* a plot he had already written as a play or whether he wrote the play based on the episode previously included in the novel. Luis Murillo hypothesizes an earlier, common source for both versions of this story in "El *Ur-Quijote*: Nueva hipótesis." On the other hand, the chronology is not so important from our point of view as readers today. For anyone who knows both versions, it is simply impossible to read the Captive's Tale in *Don Quijote* without having it call to mind *Los baños de Argel* and vice-versa.

2 Roca Mussons, Sito Alba. Sito Alba notes correctly, of course, that the *commedia dell'arte* in turn drew heavily on other sources: "Byzantine and Italian novels, traditional romances, Turkish incursions along the Spanish coasts, the capture of Costanza, etc." (4).

ness—spectator (Maestro 44, 47; Ricapito 326; Ramos Escobar 675); the incorporation of any kind of artifice or fictional ruse (Selig) and the inclusion of any kind of overt imitation (Ramos Escobar 672-74); and any reference to the entire realm of the carnivalesque (Farness, Ricapito 316). A few have even gone so far as to create new, hybrid genres and terms, such as Roca Mussons's "teatro de lectores" and "teatro narrativo" (418). The most expansive uses of "theatricality" encompass more intellectual and philosophical concepts, such as the blurring of boundaries: between "inside" and "outside," Renaissance and Baroque, reality and fiction, and appearance and illusion;[3] and metatheatrical notions that describe all human existence as role-playing, life itself as theater, and human experience as illusory.[4]

Although, as one can see, considerable critical attention has been devoted to a study of *Don Quijote* from the point of view of theatricality, much less attention has been paid to the lessons one learns regarding artistic distance in Cervantes's masterpiece—the complex, even

3 Maestro (43, 46); Martín Morán (31-32); Wasserman (128); Willey (909, 911-12, 930); Syverson-Stork (46). The verb "parecer" appears regularly and abundantly in *Don Quijote*. In the company of the Duke and Duchess, Quijote and Sancho go out after dark into the forest that *appears* to be full of lights and in which it *appears* that there are a number of battles taking place (793, 795). During the episode of the *barco encantado*, Quijote and Sancho dispute whether the water mills are a city or, in fact, just mills. Quijote resolves the argument by noting that even though they may *appear* to be water mills, it is really a city (753), thus collapsing the basic theatrical problem of how something may appear to be one thing to one person and something quite different to another. Of course, the *ejemplo por antonomasia* of the willingness to suspend disbelief, at least partially, is the barber's basin that to Quijote *appears* to be the *yelmo de Mambrino*. It is hard to imagine a more apt description of the relativity of truth in a theatrical environment than Quijote's declaration to Sancho: "eso que a ti te parece bacía de barbero, me parece a mí el yelmo de Mambrino, y a otro le parecerá otra cosa" (239).

4 Maestro (42); Reed (75); Willey (910, 918-19). Ricapito (318, 322-25) and Holmes (47-50, 53, 57-58, 62) provide as evidence of theatricality in *Don Quijote* the use of honor plots familiar to the *comedia*. Holmes even goes so far as to suggest that "the existence of a 'demand for jealousy' [is] itself inseparable from a 'demand for theater'" (62). While there is no doubt that the *comedia* made frequent and spectacular use of the honor plots, the fact that many of those plots themselves came from Italian *novelle* and other narrative genres would seem to undercut the assertion that the appearance of honor *per se* is conclusive evidence of theatricality in Cervantes's novel. It may be that Cervantes was playing with the use of honor plays that brought such enormous fame to Lope de Vega, but it may also be that all it proves is that both the novel and the *comedia* found such plots interesting and entertaining.

Byzantine, relationships among author, narrator, text, and reader—and how they might apply to our reading and seeing performances of the Spanish *comedia*. It is surely no accident that one of the most important articles that opened up the questions of artistic distancing and the roles of the various intermediaries was George Haley's study of Maese Pedro's Puppet Show. This famous episode from Part II is more than just another example of Quijote's failure to interpret reality correctly. It is an intensely literary exercise: a story from medieval ballads (the tale of Melisendra and Gaiferos) within a bit of theater (the puppet show itself) within another bit of theater (Ginés de Pasamonte's passing himself off as Maese Pedro) within another bit of theater (Alonso Quijano living out his fantasies as Don Quijote) within a narrative (which itself has several additional layers of artistic distancing).

Among the most problematic elements of *Don Quijote* is the nature of the narrator. According to the conventions of both history and narrative fiction, readers expect that an aware, honest narrator in whom they can place their trust will guide them through the text, but, of course, in *Don Quijote* the reader learns quickly that there is no single, authoritative, omniscient, trustworthy voice: "Si hay un personaje en las obras cervantinas más fingidor, teatral o sofista, que todos los demás juntos, ese personaje se llama *narrador*" (Maestro 47). Among the reasons for our lack of confidence in the narrative voice are the nature of the narrators themselves, the way they are described by other narrative voices (e.g., Cide Hamete as a lying Moor), and the proliferation of narrators and intermediaries. According to Haley, the multiple layers of narrators (the *yo*, the second author, the *morisco* translator, Cide Hamete, and others) and their narratives are only part of the distancing structure of Cervantes's novel (146-47). Another is the fact that "none of the intermediaries forgets the reader who follows him in the series" (148); in other words, there is a certain self-awareness on the part of each narrator of his or her role in the creative process from action to novel (as viewed from within the world of the text) or from author to reader (as viewed from outside the confines of the text). In addition, as Syverson-Stork has pointed out, the guiding narrative voice—regardless of the narrator in question—recedes at times into the background, essentially dis-

appearing, leaving the readers on their own (22-36).[5] Characterization thus depends more and more upon what the actors themselves say and do, what others say about them and how they interact with them, all of which are techniques more common to the theater (Syverson-Stork 108-111). Haley has called this kind of narrator in which one has little confidence a "dramatized narrator" (145), which, in the context of a discussion of "fictitious authors" can only mean a narrator who is not omniscient and not trustworthy, a narrator who participates in the action rather than maintaining a certain objective distance from it, a narrator who gives the characters the responsibility for exposition. This situation, so familiar in our reader of *Don Quijote*, is actually not so different from what we find in the *comedia*.

The most obvious correlation in the *comedia* to the untrustworthy narrator in *Don Quijote* is the lack of a narrator. As theater, the *comedia*, of course, has no single, designated narrator who, however imperfectly, at least gives the illusion of authority and objective detachment from the actions of the main characters. The entire text is essentially composed of nothing but dialogue in which characters speak without the mediating influence of a narrative voice: one is on one's own to put into context and interpret what is said (even when one reads a play, the *comedia* is notorious for its brief, unilluminating stage directions). This lack of an omniscient narrator does not mean, however, that the *comedia* has no intermediaries, or even any narrators. Almost every *comedia* contains narrative moments such as those in which characters, either for the benefit of other characters or just to remind an unruly audience where the plot stands at the moment, recapitulate what has happened so far. If the present is "the tense of all drama" (Haley 152), then these narratives, cast in past tenses, must be at least as narrative as they are theatrical, and perhaps more so.[6] On such occasions, the character recounting the story,

5 Burmingham disagrees with Syverson-Stork: "*Don Quixote* is at its most theatrical when its narrator, like Maese Pedro's young jongleuresque apprentice, moves front and center in order to draw attention to himself as a performative construct. For it is at this moment that Cervantes—the frustrated dramatist—achieves his greatest success as a 'scriptwriter'[...] (196)."

6 The narrative aspects of the *comedia* have not received as much attention as they should. For a study of seventeenth-century French theater, I recommend the excellent work of my colleague, Nina Ekstein, whose *Dramatic Narrative: Racine's Récits* offers interesting insights that are equally applicable to the *comedia*.

like Maese Pedro's assistant, takes on the additional role of "*intérprete, declarador, trujamán*" (Haley 151), providing a narrative interpretation of the theatrical action. Most of the time these recapitulations or narrations are non-ironic and unproblematic; telling and showing can be simultaneous (Haley 152) and congruent, but not always. Sometimes they are provided by the *graciosos*, who are not known for their reliability, or they present only one version of the plot. As is the case with the various intermediaries in *Don Quijote*, these narrative moments sometimes seem perfectly natural, as when one character brings another up to date (Ana fills us in on what has happened before the play begins in Sor Juana's *Los empeños de una casa* [13-112]); on other occasions, they are highly emotional or biased (the Duke of Ferrara in Lope's *El castigo sin venganza* goes over everything that has happened in an effort to justify to himself his course of action [2516-32] and then lies, first to Federico [2927-45] and then to the Marqués [2981-86]).

These narratives are absolutely essential to understanding the action of a play, but they do not diminish the importance of the lack of a single narrator. Without a trustworthy, omniscient voice, one can only comprehend what one sees or reads through negotiation among the various entities involved—the author, the director, the actor, the various characters, and the spectator—and there are many different strategies that place layers of artistic distance between the action and the audience. One of the distancing maneuvers that Haley studies in his comparison of the puppet show to the novel as a whole is the technique of directly addressing the reader (153). Pasamonte's assistant frequently exhorts his audience to pay attention to a particular plot element, a common feature of the recitations and dramatizations performed by *juglares* as well (Burningham 186, 187, 193), in which the narrator "is both part of the performance and part of the creative act and is also the ideal spectator" (Haley 154). This direct address to a literal or implied reader or spectator is not only incorporated into the novel (e.g., "si no lo has, ¡oh lector!, por pesadumbre y enojo" [187-88]) or used by one of the intermediaries to cast in doubt or draw attention to some feature of Cide Hamete's narrative (e.g., the warning from the translator through the second narrator that the entire Cueva de Montesinos episode is suspect, which leads back to directly addressing the reader: "Tú, letor, pues eres prudente, juzga lo que te pareciere" [713]). This technique of breaking

through the confines of the fictional universe created within the narrative is also quite familiar in the theater, where it is called "breaking the fourth wall." Characters at times interrupt the action of a scene to direct their words to the audience. *Graciosos* are particularly fond of making direct comments to the implied spectator or reader. Among the many examples that come to mind is Castaño's commentary to the ladies of the audience regarding his cross-dressing in Sor Juana's *Los empeños de una casa* ("Pues atención, mis señoras, / que es paso de la comedia" [3: 381-82]), as well as the conventional appeals for good will on the part of the *senado* in the closing speeches of innumerable *comedias*. Less obvious, but substantially similar, are soliloquies and asides. One might excuse soliloquies as a lone character's musing aloud about his or her predicament, but an aside can only be addressed to a listener who is presumed to be paying attention, an audience, in other words. If the explicit mention of a reader or viewer in *Don Quijote* can create a Brechtian *Verfremdungseffekt* in the *Quijote* (Haley 159), it certainly must do the same in the theater. Brecht was, after all, writing about the theater, and every time a character removes him or herself from the action on stage to engage with an implied receiver on the other side of the footlights or beyond the page, the effect cannot be other than to make us aware that we are watching a play, an artifice, a deception, a lie.

Another distancing maneuver is the presentation of a character with no name. For Haley (151), it is important to note that Maese Pedro's assistant has no name. Perhaps because narrative fiction has its roots in history, while theater has its origins in poetry, we are trained to accept on faith what an anonymous omniscient narrator tells us, but we are not so willing to accept as truthful what a theatrical character with no name says. The fact that an audience does not know the names and identities of the characters on stage, whether or not we can believe what they say or know what is really going on, is a common theatrical technique. One of the most famous examples of the use of anonymity occurs in the opening scene of *El burlador de Sevilla*. A naïve audience sees the curtain go up and, without any guidance from any authoritative source, sees an unknown woman shout for help because she has been betrayed and dishonored by an unknown man. Although almost all plays have to confront the fact, or at least the possibility, that the audience does not immediately know who the characters are or what is transpiring when the curtain rises, in this scene it highlights one of the themes of

the play: Don Juan looks upon his actions as essential manifestations of biology—he is "un hombre sin nombre" (15) and the two people in the dark palace are merely "Un hombre y una mujer" (23). This technique, like that of starting *in medias res*, may be used differently in narrative and theatrical genres, but the distancing effect is the same on both the reader and the spectator.

If the reliability of the narrator(s) is problematic, so too is the establishment of authorship. One of the most interesting, confusing, and even exhilarating aspects of *Don Quijote* is the uncertainty regarding the source of the novel. From the prologue, in which a voice, presumably that of Cervantes if we follow custom (but in this book that may not be the case), tells us that he is not the father but the step-father of his main character (19); to the uncertainty of the identity of the first narrator who not only remains unidentified but who willfully keeps information from us ("En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme," [35]); to the untrustworthy Cide Hamete Benengeli, who allegedly not only witnessed (and interpreted) all the actions he describes, including those that occurred when characters were alone (e.g., Quijote's madness in the Sierra Morena), but also translated them into Arabic; to the unnamed translator who rendered them back into Castilian (and therefore put even more distance between the text presented to the reader and the text that does not depart by even one atom from the truth [36]) to other implied authors such as the writer of "El curioso impertinente" and the playwright of Maese Pedro's puppet show (possibly Ginés de Pasamonte, but who can say for sure?), the reader is constantly put in the position of having to figure out who is the author and who is the narrator at any particular time, and how the text one is reading came into existence.

In reading *Don Quijote*, one is made acutely aware of all these issues dealing with the nature of the author, the implied author, and the narrator(s), but ultimately there is no dispute regarding the fact that "toda aquella máquina" (38) was created by Miguel de Cervantes. Studying the *comedia*, however, is like reading Benengeli's work from within the text: we dutifully cite authorship, but in an astonishing number of cases we really do not know who the author is. Although the elements that cast suspicion on the authorship of a *comedia* text are not incorporated so conspicuously within the plays themselves, those of

us who take matters of authorship and narrative structure for granted are frequently deceiving ourselves. Consider just a few issues regarding the plays we study and how they put us in a relationship to the text that is scarcely more trustworthy and authentic than that of the implied reader to the *Quijote*. Do we always really know, for example, who wrote a particular *comedia*? In some cases, we do indeed have holographic manuscripts (e.g., Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*); in other cases, there is a provenance, as they say in the art world (or a chain of custody, as they say in criminology), that gives us a great deal of confidence in ascribing a particular text to a particular author. Other factors such as literary style, correlations with other plays and with the biographies of authors, and the additional evidence provided by lists of texts and authors created in the seventeenth century, together with other historical evidence, can lead one to make educated guesses as to authorship, which is, in fact, what Morley and Bruerton did to such effect. Using the same kinds of tests of authenticity, of course, we know that the authorship of an alarming number of *comedias* is unprovable at best and uncertain or patently doubtful at worst. One only needs to consider (again) the example of *El burlador de Sevilla*, which is not just one of the most famous and frequently studied *comedias* but also one about which the question of authorship is in most dispute, to reach a conclusion that if such a high profile play can present grave problems regarding the identity of the author, how much more problematic must be the case of significant numbers of lesser-known plays?

Even if we set aside those plays whose authorship is manifestly cast in doubt and focus only on those cases in which there is general agreement as to authorship, the texts themselves present layers of artistic distance. For the most part studies of the *comedia* are based upon close readings of a dramatic text; only more recently, and much less frequently, are they based at all (and almost never exclusively) on a theatrical performance, either live or documented on video. Whether one bases one's remarks on reading a text or seeing a performance, it seems essential to ask, which text and which performance? And on what does one base one's faith in either one? The putative text in *Don Quijote* is highly questionable: most of it is a translation of a version presumably written by an alleged liar, fragmented into several manuscripts. The second narrator is pleased, surprised, and somewhat appalled in Chapter 9 of Part I to discover in a Toledo market the continuation of the story in the form

of Cide Hamete's Arabic version that was worth almost nothing—literally, since the second author paid almost nothing for it (94; see also Holmes [59]). There is considerable evidence that some *comedia* texts were treated not much better. The texts that exist, those texts to which many of us have dedicated our professional lives, may not always have been handled quite so badly, but it is clear that, regardless of how closely they adhere to the original or how far they have strayed, they were usually not treated as objects worthy of veneration or even preservation. We know, for example, that it was common practice for the author of a *comedia* to sell his work *in toto* to an *autor de comedias*, who could then alter it as much as he wished. Later, when it came time to print the texts, sometimes decades after the original writing, it was inevitable that additional changes, either intentional or accidental, interposed another layer of distancing interference between us and what the author wrote. (A cursory look at the critical apparatus of any scholarly edition displays the multiple versions of a text.) Usually these changes are relatively minor, but sometimes they are not, yet they always should put us on guard that we are even farther from being able to state with certainty what Lope or Calderón or Ana Caro actually wrote. Of course, this becomes even more important when one undertakes the study of a number of plays by the same author, because the chance that at least one of those play texts is riddled with errors and changes multiplies rapidly.

In a recently published article, subtitled *Don Quijote in the Age of Digital Reproduction*, I asked not just *what* constitutes the text but *where* one might find the "authentic" text: the manuscript? The *princeps* edition? The modern scholarly edition? A digital edition (in which case the questions expand to include the physical location of the ones and zeroes that make up such a text that resides on a server somewhere but may be viewed simultaneously by countless readers across the world simultaneously)? All of these questions also apply to *comedia* texts written, published, transcribed, edited, reduced to binary format, and displayed on a computer screen. To make matters more complicated, of course, the *written* texts, regardless of their format, were specifically not produced to be archived or studied, or necessarily even read, but were intended to serve as scripts for actors to use on the stage.[7] From that point of

7 Not unrelated, of course, is the fact that Cervantes's plays and *entremeses*, or at least many of them, were "'nunca representados,' and the prologue to the published

view, no published version of a theatrical text is ever as authentic as a performance of a play, and no play in performance is ever identical to a published script (cf. Martín Morán 38). Theater directors throughout history, like the original *autores de comedia*, have felt little compunction about cutting lines, shifting scenes, and making otherwise major changes to the original text.[8] And no two performances are ever exactly the same because, intentionally or not, actors change words, forget lines, and change their manner of delivery.

This age-old conflict between drama and theater is also reflected in the difference between reading a text and seeing a performance. As was noted earlier, most *comedia* criticism is based upon close readings; the experiences of readers (who can, at their leisure, trace the use of themes and words from scene to scene, or frequently imagine what a scene would look like even though another reader might conjure up an entirely different image) are very different from those of members of an audience watching a play in real time; seeing others play various roles creates a different reaction in the receiver than reading about the same characters and actions and having to recreate the scenes in one's own imagination. When one watches someone else playing a role and doing a credible job of it, and when one participates in the social experience of being a member of an audience (Farness 113), there is something internal that clicks that makes one *want* to believe what one sees. The performance itself, in both *Don Quijote* and the *comedia*, makes viewers believe what they otherwise would know to be false; performance becomes belief (Roca Mussons 428). Cervantes himself in *Don Quijote* noted that audiences are willing to suspend disbelief when they watch a play: "¿No se representan por ahí, casi de ordinario, mil comedias llenas de mil impropiedades y disparates, y, con todo eso, corren felicísimamente su carrera, y se escuchan no sólo con aplauso, sino con admiración y todo?" (733). That does not mean, however, that we must follow suit and merely accept that *comedias* present actions that are somehow more "truthful" than they really are. Surely, they contain some grain of truth regarding the human condition that allows us to recognize and

edition of them was addressed to 'lector mío'" (Reed 74). This crosses the boundaries between reader and spectator, between text that is read and text that is performed.

8 For a study of the types of changes made by directors of modern stagings of the *comedia*, see my article, "The Director's Cut: Baroque Aesthetics and Modern Stagings of the *Comedia*."

relate to what is happening on stage—like the *Quijote*, they aspire "to a higher kind of entertainment aimed at instructing the reader as well as delighting him" (Haley 163)—but it is simply too much to ask one to accept, for example, that the use of plots involving wife murder meant that Spaniards somehow approved of honor killings.[9] For the most part, to appropriate another of Haley's assertions, we read and attend performances of the *comedia* "for what they are, outlandish and sometimes beautiful lies, fiction rather than history" (Haley 164). Due to its three-dimensionality, its performance in real time, and the interplay between the actors and the audience, the theater is more self-conscious about the relations between history and fiction, appearance and reality, life and literature, than a novel ever can be (see Willey 927).

If one takes the differences between reading a text and watching a play one step further, one cannot fail to notice that the spectator has more direct influence over what happens on stage in a theatrical performance than a reader of a printed text ever could. Naturally, all authors want to please their implied reader, whether that person is a patron, a trusted friend, or a paying consumer. But spectators at a live performance actually change the performance in a way that a reader simply cannot change the printed text. Fortunately, most performances do not end the way Maese Pedro's did, with a member of the audience not just interrupting the action, but destroying the stage (Haley 155). Still, as every director and actor knows, one must allow for audience response—an actor must wait for laughter or applause to die down—and the presence and demeanor of an audience changes what happens on stage in ways both subtle and not so subtle. A bored or distracted audience can cause a performance to lose its timing and its integrity (and metaphorically "lose the audience") just as a supportive and engaged audience can spur actors on to even greater performances.

Burningham (194-95) bores deeper into Haley's study of the Maese

9 The list of scholars who assumed a direct connection between stage society and Spanish history regarding honor killings is quite long, and includes such distinguished figures as Américo Castro (7-8, 29-30, 55-61, 119, 142, 217) and Ramón Menéndez Pidal (148-50). For a more complete bibliography on the historical authenticity of wife-murder *comedias*, see my *Fatal Union*. The notion that the *comedia* accurately reflected contemporary Spanish culture was by no means limited to this one plot element alone, of course. José María Díez Borque wrote an entire volume on the "sociology" of the *comedia*.

Pedro episode, and asserts that the phrase used by Cervantes as a transition to the next chapter, "el que le oyere o viere" (728), a locution that is often described, even by Haley, as equivalent to "hear *and* see" (150), actually lays out quite starkly the difference between reading a text (the narrative experience) and seeing a performance (the theatrical experience). If we expand on Burningham's insight just a bit, we can see that many of the subject positions in theater either blur the line between reader and spectator (and narrative and theater), or occupy different positions either at different times or simultaneously. The role of the reader may not be the same as the role of the spectator, but many people both read a text and see a performance of it, and not just knowledgeable members of the audience. Actors are also readers, as are directors, stage managers, costumers, and others whose job it is to cross the divide between text and performance.[10] For Burningham, storytelling expands into theater to such a degree that it includes not just the characters, but the novel and the readers as well (193). It may not always be as manifest, but the same process is not unfamiliar to the *comedia*. As John J. Allen has noted with regard to Maese Pedro puppet show, what do "nosotros" and its derivative forms mean when a character in a play utters them (332)? Consider these lines from *El condenado por desconfiado*: "y a veces nos acordamos / de lo mucho que dejamos / por lo poco que tenemos" (114-16). Considering that Pedrisco is not actually talking directly to another character, and given the religious and philosophical nature of the statement, one can only conclude that we spectators and readers are clearly part of the "nos." Our inclusion into the same "nosotros" in which a character participates cannot help but affect our appreciation of the play as an object to be studied.

10 The blurring of boundaries when one mentions that actors are also readers is complicated even further in the case of *Don Quijote*. It has now become commonplace to assert that "Don Quijote" is a role being played by an actor (Van Doren [92], Ramos Escobar [671], Roca Mussons [428], Maestro [49], Wasserman [126-27]) whose name may be Alonso Quijano or one of the other variations mentioned, and who was inspired (driven mad?) by what he has read. Here we have a protagonist of a novel, clearly a narrative subject, who, in addition to the other roles he plays, such as that of *hidalgo*, is first and foremost a *reader* and who, because of his inability to discern history from fiction, becomes an actor who takes on a role as a knight errant, who assigns roles to others, whose frequently stated goal is to become the subject of a narrative, and who even offers us a rendition of his own narrative (42). In other words, he is a narrative protagonist, an actor, an author, a director, a reader, and a spectator.

Finally, what happens to the theater as a discrete object of study when the characters on stage witness bits of theater and, in essence, are converted, as are many characters in *Don Quijote,* into spectators themselves? Maestro has indicated that this technique, in which a character becomes a spectator as well as an agent, inevitably causes one to reflect on the relationship between fact and fiction (44). Over and over in *Don Quijote* the line between character, spectator, and reader is crossed, blurred, or erased, thus bringing into relief not just the role of the spectator in artistic distancing, but the differences in the roles played by the reader of the dramatic text, the character on stage who also functions as a spectator, and the spectator in the audience (and here we will not even go into the differences between watching a play in a theater and watching a film or videotape version). Indeed, such is the power of the theater to draw one into its fiction that so many characters who witness Quijote's role-playing—the innkeeper, Dorotea, Sansón Carrasco, Alonso Moreno[11]—go along with Don Quijote's theater on the fly (Ramos Escobar 672-73) and themselves take on the roles of actor, playwright, director, and spectator. From the point of view of the reader, sometimes the perspective aligns with that of the characters in the novel who are also witnessing what is going on, as with the episodes of Maese Pedro; sometimes the reader is offered a text that more closely resembles a theatrical text complete with stage directions, as in the episode with Clavileño (Ruta 706); and sometimes the reader is distanced even further, placed in the position of the reader of a novel that happens to have theatrical elements, as with the Bodas de Camacho (Ruta 706-708; Selig 31-32). Characters in the *comedia* also take on different roles at different times—assuming different identities, staging elaborate deceptions, watching other characters perform their roles—all of which lend the *comedia* its familiar aspects of metatheater.

Let us conclude with a rather startling lexical leap offered by Mark Van Doren, a shift in terminology that is quite germane to how we

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11 Selig (29, 33) focuses on Quijote's stay in Barcelona not only as an example of how others cast Quijote into humiliating roles in order to mock him, but also as important in setting up the final collision between role-playing and reality with the arrival of Sansón Carrasco dressed as the Caballero de la Blanca Luna and Quijote's ultimate return to the world of reality: "artifice (the reception, the entry, the ceremonies) is disjunctured by history, the events of history, and history, so to speak, outside and beyond the text" (Selig 29).

understand the *comedia*. One of the major points of his study is the theatrical nature of the *Don Quijote*: the role-playing, the metatheatrical casting of life as a stage. At one point, however, in his discussion of Sancho's *ínsula*, Van Doren no longer uses rather benign terms like "stage" or "actor"; Sancho's island, he says, is a "great hoax" (121) and Don Quijote and Sancho's stay at the palace of the Duke and Duchess is marked by "hoaxes within hoaxes" (122). One could easily apply the term to the entire novel: there is no Cide Hamete, no translator, no Alonso Quijano, no Don Quijote. There is the novel, of course, but if we choose to accept that it represents anything other than fiction, then we have fallen for the hoax. This is a lesson that can and should be applied to our reading of the *comedias*: they are inventions, deceptions, hoaxes for those who are perhaps too willing to suspend disbelief, to use Coleridge's famous phrase. To return one final time to Haley's exegesis of the Maese Pedro's puppet show, we, like Don Quijote, are being asked to believe what we see transpire before our eyes, not what we hear: Maese Pedro himself advises his audience, "*operibus credite, et non verbis*" (728). Especially in a theater, we really have no basis on which to base our faith in what we see, and if we take what happens in the *comedia* as a manifestation of truth or reality, we are not so different from Don Quijote. These processes of *distanciamiento* cannot help but have their effect upon how readers and viewers approach the objects of their attention, especially those of us coming to the *comedias* centuries after their creation and from utterly different cultural perspectives. We may see ourselves in the actions of the characters because the plots are skillfully crafted to appear to be reality. Lope's use of the word *verosímil* in his "Arte nuevo" (285), however, refers to actions on stage that might possibly be true, actions that are "true-like"—the "honor code," the treatment of women, the cross-dressing, and everything else we find interesting and even relevant—but in fact they are not true at all. Although the mechanisms of artistic distancing in the *comedia* are not always as evident as those in *Don Quijote*, we must approach these plays as *lectores discretos y prudentes*, to paraphrase Cervantes (21), readers unwilling to fall for the hoax, aware of the artistic distance inherent in reading the text or seeing a performance, and able to resist the allure of taking fiction as reality.

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