

THE *ARTE NUEVO* FROM THE AUTHORITY OF ANCIENT ART:
THE DISCUSSION OF DRAMATIC GENRES

Joan Oleza (Universitat de València)

THE POETIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE COMEDIA NUEVA

In the early 17th century, after almost two decades of stage practice, the revolution of the *comedia nueva* is consolidated. Its supporters often have a euphoric attitude, that of living in a time of cultural splendor, of which theatre provides the best example. Years later, Tirso de Molina, by comparing modern and old comedies, has no qualms about asserting the superiority of the modern ones:

A mi parecer [...] el lugar que merecen las que ahora se representan en nuestra España, comparadas con las antiguas, les hace conocidas ventajas aunque vayan contra el instituto primero de sus inventores (*Cigarrales de Toledo*, 1621).

The foundations of this consciousness of the splendor of the new theatre are not numerous, but they are extremely innovative, to such extent that they anticipate throughout nearly eighty years the arguments with which Charles Perrault will start the *dispute des anciens et des modernes* at the French Academy, and throughout two long centuries the proclamation of independence of the classical canons of romantic drama by Victor Hugo, in his famous *Préface* of *Cromwell* (1827). In the following lines, we will focus on the principles that affect the system of dramatic genres, ignoring others, such as freedom from the rules of unity of action, of time or of place, as they are not relevant here.

1.- Times change and bring innovations, therefore new times provide new models and canons, and there is no reason why the old ones should prevail over the new ones. The highlight of this argumentation is the writing, by Lope de Vega, of a treaty for new times, declaring his intentions from the title itself: *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609). But no one went so far in developing this idea as Alfonso Sánchez,

the author of the manifesto paradoxically written in Latin and in defense of Lope de Vega entitled *Expostulatio Spongiae* (1618), which proclaims a principle that will only fully settle in the 19th century, together with Romanticism, that declares “las obras de los poetas expresan la naturaleza, las costumbres y el ingenio del siglo en que se escribieron”¹. Not only do they respond to the passage of time, but they also express it. Sánchez supports this statement with another one, no less anticipatory of Modernity: the poet whom the people have given the sceptre and reigns in full right and sovereignty over the poets is above the law, and if the kings adopt laws because they are then the source of law, the king poet has also the privilege to dictate these laws to the other poets².

2. - Consequent to the principle mentioned above is the attitude of emancipation from classical authority represented by the ancient preceptists, as well as by the modern neo-aristotelian Italians and Spaniards. This attitude is known to be polemic in texts such as the *Apologético de las comedias españolas* (1616) by Ricardo del Turia or *Los cigarrales de Toledo* (1621) by Tirso. But often the polemical attitude becomes pure irreverence, contemptuous mockery. Lope himself participates in this derisive attitude by confessing that “ya le perdimos el respeto” to Aristotle, or by declaring that “cuando he de escribir una Comedia, / encierro los preceptos con seis llaves; / saco a Terencio y Plauto de mi estudio, / para que no me den voces”³. Again, in this respect, Alfonso Sánchez takes forward the idea, arguing that Lope, creator of the new art, “haya podido formular preceptos con la misma autoridad que Horacio” and that he can disregard classical comedies “puesto que tú solo has dado a nuestro siglo mejores comedias que todas las de Menandro y Aristófanes.”⁴

3. - The *comedia nueva* bases its legitimacy not on classical canons but on the primacy of public taste, and not on the most erudite and expert audience, but on the taste of the crowd that are able to sustain the success with their own money and support. Nobody dared to declare it openly until Lope did in *Arte Nuevo* (1609), which he defines as a treaty “al estilo del vulgo”. Lope writes with mischievous irony:

Escribo por el arte que inventaron

¹Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 206.

²Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 206.

³Lope de Vega, *El Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*, vv. 40-43.

⁴Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 206.

los que el vulgar aplauso pretendieron,
 porque, como las paga el vulgo, es justo
 hablarle en necio para darle gusto” (v. 45-49).

Years later other voices would add up to explain this new form of aesthetic legitimacy, based on the aesthetic values of the market, that is, on the aesthetic sovereignty of mainstream audiences, such as the one of Ricardo del Turia in the *Apologético de las comedias españolas* (1616): “y es que los que escriben es a fin de satisfacer el gusto para quien escriben”, and it would be absurd to stop looking for the applause of that public “por seguir las leyes de los pasados”⁵. It may be necessary, nowadays, to resort to the indignant reaction against this new form of artistic legitimacy of highly trained and prestigious writers in order to understand its revolutionary character. Cervantes, for instance, expressed through the words of the Canónigo, in chapter XLVIII of the first part of *Quijote* (1605), the most formidable and reasoned attack against the *comedia nueva*, and one of his strongest arguments is directed against “los autores que las componen y los actores que las representan”, who, knowing that the comedies “son conocidos disparates y cosas que no llevan ni pies ni cabeza [...] dicen que así han de ser, porque así las quiere el vulgo [...] y que a ellos les está mejor ganar de comer con los muchos, que no opinión con los pocos”. The Canónigo does not attack poets for their ignorance, he attacks the poetic principle of their market dependence:

Y no tienen la culpa desto los poetas que las componen, porque algunos hay dellos que conocen muy bien en lo que yerran, y saben extremadamente lo que deben hacer; pero como las comedias se han hecho mercadería vendible, dicen, y dicen verdad, que los representantes no se las comprarían si no fuesen de aquel jaez; y así el poeta procura acomodarse con lo que el representante que le ha de pagar su obra pide⁶.

4 - The new legitimacy assigns a new dignity to the dramatic poet, not based on his study of the classics and their rules and texts, a new legitimacy that replies to the discredit that the classicists sought to extend to the new dramatic poets, relying on their alleged ignorance and lack of study. In his *Plaza universal de todas ciencias y artes* (1615), Suárez de Figueroa let the following statement drop: “Así se atreven a escribir

⁵Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, pp. 178-179.

⁶Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, pp. 132-135.

farsas los que apenas saben leer”⁷. The first apology of the dignity of the playwright is not due to one of the new poets, but to one of his predecessors, the unknown author of *La comedia de Sepúlveda*, published in 1597 but written much earlier, in whose *Prologue* Becerra argues that “es cosa de grande habilidad y calidad” to make comedies and that “se concede poderlas hacer a muy pocos entendimientos”⁸. But it will take waiting for Ricardo del Turia (1616), who calls Lope prince of the new poets, for Guillén de Castro (1618), who collects the nickname applied to Lope as “monstruo de la naturaleza”, without a doubt a positive reply to the classicists who accused the comedia nueva of being “monstrous”, for Tirso de Molina (1621) who raises him to the condition of founder of the new school and his teacher, for Alfonso Sánchez (1618), who assigns him the status of king of poets, with the same authority as Horace in dictating laws, and with better plays than those of the ancients. Lope himself never dared to so much. Among other things, because all his work is racked with a guilty conscience for being a poet paid by the crowd, known more as a playwright and less as an author of epic poems, he who would have wanted to be the great poet of the Spanish monarchy and its court⁹, and did not know or could not fully accept himself as the first modern poet consecrated by the market and emancipated professionally by his spectators. However, at the time of highest identification with his dramatic work, represented by *El Arte nuevo* (1609), Lope does not hesitate to proclaim his independence from the classical precepts and models, by declaring that he was writing for the multitude, seeking their applause and money. It is true that throughout the poem he plays with the ironic ambiguity of suggesting that he has done nothing but continue what was already happening in Spain, that his disloyalty to the classics makes him a barbarian, and that by adjusting to the tastes of his foolish public, he has no choice but to demean himself speaking to them in a foolish way, but the fact remains that, at the end of his poem, he gives up ambiguity and he defends himself defiantly, although he is called ignorant in France and Italy. Therefore, he concludes his manifesto with some splendid verses:

Sustento en fin lo que escribí, y conozco
 que, aunque fueran mejor de otra manera,
 no tuvieran el gusto que han tenido;
 porque a veces lo que es contra lo justo

⁷Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 175.

⁸Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 110.

⁹ See Ferrer, 2005; and García Reidy, 2009.

por la misma razón deleita el gusto (vv. 362-76).

5. - A comedy addressed to everyone. The audience of the open-air theatres in large cities was a diverse audience, both culturally and socially, where the most numerous sectors were formed by seated viewers, in gradas and on bancos, coming from the urban middle classes (knights, merchants, servants of the court or of the great noble houses, masters of the guilds, hidalgos...), by the mosqueteros or standing spectators, coming from the popular classes (officials and apprentices of the guilds, soldiers, servants of very different types, day labourers, floating population...), and by women, grouped in la cazuela, of indeterminate but in any case of non-aristocratic status; minority groups, but extremely influential, were the aristocrats, court officials and great nobles of the aposentos, or clerics and men of letters of the desvanes and upper galleries. It is therefore the first heterogeneous community of cultural consumers in the history of literature, and playwrights of the *comedia nueva* are aware that one of the most innovative aspects of the formula they work with is their ability to communicate with everybody, although distinct messages may be perceived, according to the capacity of reception of the various public sectors. Guillén de Castro expresses this synthetically in *El curioso impertinente* (1618) through the words of a Duke: the aim of comedies is to ensure “que las oiga un pueblo entero, / dando al sabio y al grosero / que reír y que gustar”¹⁰. Tirso will do it in a much more varied way in *El vergonzoso en palacio* (1621).

6. - A poetics based on the creative principle of nature. In el *Arte Nuevo* Lope justifies the mixture of comedy and tragedy that the *comedia nueva* practices, with the following argument: “Que aquesta variedad deleita mucho. / Buen ejemplo nos da naturaleza / que por tal variedad tiene belleza” (vv. 1778-1180). Margaret Newels, in her review of the preceptives of the time, comments on these verses: “Here's an entirely new argument in defense of the theater of the time”¹¹. And this argument made a deep impression on the poetic opinion to the point that Lope was identified as the poet of nature, even as the “monstruo de la naturaleza”. Nobody expanded this idea more forcefully than Alfonso Sánchez in the *Expostulatio Spongiae* (1618), where he lays the foundations of a thesis enunciated centuries later by Menéndez Pelayo (1883-1891), in which *comedia* did not break with the poetics of Aristotle, but made a different

¹⁰Sánchez Escribano, and Porqueras Mayo, 204.

¹¹Newels, 1974, p. 143.

interpretation, a reading based not on the precepts of tragedy or of comedy, but on the principle of mimesis, the imitation of nature¹². Alfonso Sanchez argues:

La naturaleza da leyes, no las recibe [...] Si es cierto, como dejó escrito Aristóteles, que el arte imita a la naturaleza, el mayor artífice será el que más se acerque a la naturaleza misma. [En la comedia] tenemos arte, tenemos preceptos que nos obligan, y el precepto principal es imitar a la naturaleza, porque las obras de los poetas expresan la naturaleza, las costumbres y el ingenio del siglo en que se escribieron [...] Ya que la naturaleza aborrece lo antiguo y se va detrás de lo nuevo, sigamos a la naturaleza para no quedarnos atrás [...] Lo que Lope ejecuta lo piden hoy la naturaleza, las costumbres, los ingenios; luego él escribe conforme al arte, porque sigue a la naturaleza [...] Parece que la naturaleza misma se expresa por la boca de nuestro poeta¹³.

7. - A fundamental principle: the tragicomic. Undoubtedly the first term of the poetics of the *comedia nueva* is the one Lope orders in *El Arte nuevo*:

Lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado,
y Terencio con Séneca – aunque sea
como otro Minotauro de Pasife –
harán grave una parte, otra ridícula (vv. 174-177).

But this precept was implemented by Lope from the very founding moments of the *comedia nueva*, and especially in the genre that helped him break with classicist proposals and those of the court theater, the *palatine comedy*. And as early as 1581 Andrés Rey de Artieda boasted of having written a tragedy, entitled *Los amantes*, not on elevated subjects, but on a subject of love and with neither kings nor princes as protagonists but with a gentleman and a lady, and Juan de la Cueva, in 1588, in the *Coro febeo de romances historiales* observed: “el Trágico y el Cómico, / es uno ya, y una cuenta”. Newels provides a fragment of the poem entitled *A Thalia* in which the playwright of Seville claims the invention as his own:

Y de mí vio el mundo

¹²Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de las ideas estéticas*, vol. III, chapter X.

¹³Sánchez Escribano and Porcheras Mayo, 1972, pp. 205-207. See now, for the edition and meaning of the Alfonso Sánchez's text, Tubau, 2009

en cómico estilo trágico
 lo que no fue de ningún tiempo
 visto ni de otro usado,
 sino de mí y por mí
 conocido, y de mí dado
 por invención propia mía¹⁴.

The issue had reached so much resonance in Europe, especially on account of the controversy of Guarini and De Nores¹⁵ on the concept of tragicomedy, defended by Guarini for his play *Il pastor Fido*, and attacked as being monstrous by De Nores, that the Spanish preceptists did not hesitate to echo, and the first one was Pinciano, in his *Philosophia antiqua poética*, of 1589, where he distinguishes a middle ground between tragedy and comedy that already has some classical precedents: the *Anfitrión*, by Plautus, called *tragicomedy* by his author, and the *togatas* and *trabeatas* comedies, “de gente patricia y grave”, “que no son puras comedies y que tienen olor de lo trágico”. In general, Pinciano, very attentive to the practice of the *comedia* which flourished in Spain, is open to the concept, which he does not reject, but neither particularly recommends. But what mostly characterizes his attitude is a thorough reconsideration of the differences accumulated by the Medieval rhetoric and the Renaissance poetics that served to distinguish between tragedy and comedy, reviewing them one by one and contrasting difficulties and negative examples in order to discredit all of them except the one that transforms comedy in a vehicle for laughter and tragedy in a vehicle for pity and fear: “Veis todas estas diferencias y que todas son inciertas, sino son aquellas que tocan en ridículo y gustoso y donoso, por solo el cual se diferencia la comedia de la tragedia”¹⁶. The firm boundary between the two classical genres became, therefore, very blurred, or replaced by a no man’s land of mixed phenomena. After *Arte nuevo*, the defense of the tragicomic becomes a recurring motif of the playwrights of the *comedia nueva*. None of them perhaps as explicit as Ricardo del Turia in his *Apologético de las comedias españolas*:

Bien pudiera yo responder con algún fundamento [...] con decir que ninguna comedia de cuantas se representan en España lo es, sino

¹⁴Newels, 1974, p. 137.

¹⁵Newels, 1974, p. 140.

¹⁶Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, pp. 101-102.

tragicomedia, que es un mixto formado de lo cómico y lo trágico [...] en lo mixto las partes pierden su forma y hacen una tercer materia muy diferente.

And this was not invented by the Spanish, for this mixture is present in the ancient theatre, and then we have the more recent example of “la tragicomedia que el laureado poeta Guarino hizo del pastor Fido”¹⁷.

8. - The mixture as a value. The attitude of insubordination against the inherited categories, and the decision to combine and mix them extends to the entire poetics of the *comedia nueva*, to the point of becoming a value of the new dramatic system, not only a specific precept. The mixture of social and action ranks was the one that most supported this value, and consequently the most controversial, and not that of fatal or happy endings, as one might think. Especially that of serious characters, mainly kings and princes, considered to be characteristic of tragedy, in fables intended to provoke laughter, and in a smaller degree that of common, particular characters, especially citizen knights and honest farmers, in fables of serious development and denouement. In the *Ejemplar poético* (1606), Juan de la Cueva anticipated himself in attributing the innovation to himself:

A mí me culpan de que fui el primero
que reyes y deidades di al tablado
de las comedies traspassando el fuero¹⁸.

Lope transforms the subject-matter into the foundation of the mixture between the tragic and the comic and into the core element of his defiance against classical precepts: “Elíjase el sujeto [de la comedia] y no se mire - / perdonen los preceptos – si es de Reyes”, and he even allows himself to advise this mixture against the opinion of the “prudente / Filipo, Rey de España y señor nuestro”, who did not like at all seeing “la autoridad real [...] andar fingida entre la humilde plebe” (vv. 157-175). Consequently, Lope entitles tragicomedies those plays which present war-heroic or political-diplomatic events from the time of the Spanish Habsburgs, which involve the kings and princes or their great nobles and captains, such as *Carlos Quinto en Francia*, *La Santa Liga*, *El asalto de Mastroque*, *El Arauco domado*, or *La nueva victoria del Marqués de Santa Cruz*.

¹⁷Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, pp. 176-180.

¹⁸Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 143.

Another mixture that the *comedia nueva* will gladly impose will be that of pretence and truth, as expressed in its title by the famous tragicomedy of *Lo fingido verdadero*, by Lope de Vega. The principle of differentiation of the plays according to their adherence to one of these categories had been established, in the origins of Renaissance theatre, by Torres Naharro's *Propalladia* (1517), to distinguish two major types of comedies, the *a noticia* comedies or of real subject-matter, and the *a fantasia* comedies, or of imaginary subject-matter. And it operated as something natural in the minds of many of the poets and scholars of the time, as seen in this fragment from *El cisne de Apolo* (1602), by L. A. de Carvallo: the comedies are performed "representando la historia o ficción", or in this other fragment from the *Quijote* of 1605, that speaks of the comedies "que ahora se usan, así las imaginadas como las de historia"¹⁹. Cascales, in his *Tablas poéticas* (1617), raises it from a natural status to a preceptive status by theorizing it. However, the doctrine of Cascales would be wholly inadequate to the *comedia nueva*, which is suitable to the most daring mixtures of fiction and history in the same play: comedies such as *La niña de plata*, with an entirely fictional main action but developed by historical figures such as the prince *Enrique de Trastámara* (future king Enrique II, and co-protagonist of the play) and the king Pedro I de Castilla, and dramas such as *Carlos V en Francia*, which portrays the Emperor in relation to historical events, and in whose action do not interfere mere episodes but a whole fable, amatory on one hand and military on the other, that disputes the axis of the plot, are but two examples of many that could be cited, and that would not fit under any circumstance in the neo-Aristotelian doctrine of Cascales. Tirso de Molina wrote it beautifully, in a famous passage of the *Cigarrales* that protests against this doctrine: "¡Como si la licencia de Apolo se estrechase a la recolección histórica y no pudiese fabricar, sobre cimientos de personas verdaderas, arquitecturas de ingenio fingidas!"²⁰.

The transgression of the strict separation of the fictional and the historical goes hand in hand with the questioning that history is the subject-matter characteristic of tragedy, while fiction is characteristic of comedy. Even Lope de Vega himself, when he tries in *el Arte nuevo* to show to the academicians that he is familiar with the classic precepts, he emphasizes the principle: "Por argumento la Tragedia tiene / la historia, y la Comedia el fingimiento" (vv. 111-112). But this principle had gone through a crisis

¹⁹Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 117 and p. 132.

²⁰Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 208.

precisely in Renaissance Italy, especially in the work and in the doctrine of Giraldo Cinthio, as known from the time of Ganassa and the tournées of the Italian companies throughout Spain, performing among others his tragedy *Orbecche*²¹. M. Newels summarizes the issue: “El Pinciano y [Jusepe A. González de] Salas, igual que Giraldo Cinthio, hacen caso omiso de la regla, según la cual la materia de la tragedia debe ser histórica, y la de la comedia, ficticia”²². Lope, in *El castigo sin venganza*, entitled by him tragedy, gave a good example of this fictional use of tragedy, as he did in his palatine – imaginary – dramas, entitled many of them as tragicomedies.

Likewise the principle of correspondence between a love plot and comedy, as preceptists adopt, is infringed. According to Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo, in his *Poética de Aristóteles traducida de latín* (1623), “Debe ser la fábula cómica agradable y ridiculosa y amorosa”²³, and Bances Candamo, in the last preceptive of the 17th century, *Teatro de los teatros de los pasados y presentes siglos* (aprox. 1690) opposes frontally only two types of comedies, by their subject-matter: “Dividirémoslas sólo en dos clases: amatorias o historiales, porque las de santos son historiales también”²⁴. Against the violation of this principle, precisely in the comedies of saints, Suárez de Figueroa protests in *El pasajero* (1617): “El uso, antes abuso, admite en las comedias de santidad algunos episodios de amores, menos honestos de lo que fuera razón”²⁵, and the reader, used to consult the texts related to the *Controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España*²⁶ knows very well that this argument, the mixture of a love plot with the sacred character of the biblical comedies, of the New Testament comedies or of the hagiographical comedies was one of the key arguments used by moralists in their efforts to prohibit performances. And if the love plot is important in religious dramas, the profane dramas could not be explained without that subject-matter, associated or not with conflicts of honour. Love dramas are many of Lope’s best tragedies and tragicomedies: *El caballero de Olmedo*, *Los Prados de León*, *El mayordomo de la Duquesa de Amalfi*, *El castigo sin venganza*, *El remedio en la desdicha*, *Peribáñez y el*

²¹In this respect, the book of Ojeda Calvo, 2007.

²²Newels, 1974, p. 79.

²³Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 231.

²⁴Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 347.

²⁵Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 190.

comendador de Ocaña, El perseguido, La locura por la honra, La fuerza lastimosa... and many others.

As recalled by M. Newels, no other difference between tragedy and comedy was so successful from late antiquity to the Renaissance as the unfortunate and calamitous ending of the tragedy, compared to the happy ending of the comedy: “Esta teoría se basaba en el Libro III de Diomedes, pero fue luego formulada como requisito absoluto por autores como Celio Rodigino [...] y como Gregorio Giraldo, Francisco Nausea, Florido Labino, Alejandro Carerio e incluso Julio César Escalígero y, en ciertos momentos, también Jasón Denores”²⁷. But once recovered Aristotle’s *Poética* the new positions of the Renaissance preceptists will insist that the main difference between tragedy and comedy is not based on the endings but on what is essential to them, the object of imitation or mimesis: mimesis of “a noble and eminent action” in tragedy, mimesis of a laughable action in comedy²⁸. Within this framework Giraldo Cinthio proposed in Italy his happy ending tragedies, *de lieto fine*, and Pinciano, who knows the proposal of Giraldo, discredits the endings as fundamental distinctive difference. Pinciano asks: “¿De manera que el fin alegre o triste no diferencia y no distingue a la tragedia o comedia?”. Fadrique replies to this question, after considering several examples of Antiquity, which already presented *simple tragedies* with happy endings and *double tragedies* with happy ending for some protagonists and with unfortunate ending for others: “en el añudamiento y perturbación de la cual fábula está la diferencia esencial e importante, dicha tantas veces, de lo ridículo y espantoso y miserable [...] Esta sola es la diferencia esencial; que el fin ser alegre o triste, no lo es”²⁹. Even though Lope seems, with some exceptions, to reserve the title of tragedy for plays which have denouements that present unfortunate deaths (*La bella Aurora, El Duque de Viseo, El castigo sin venganza...*), there are many plays with a tragic or highly dramatic subject-matter that conclude with a happy ending (*El perseguido, Peribáñez, La fuerza lastimosa...*), with an unfortunate ending attenuated by some sort of compensation (*El marqués de Mantua, El casamiento en la muerte, Fuenteovejuna, El mejor alcalde, el Rey...*), or contrasted by comic elements (*Adonis y Venus, Los comendadores de Córdoba...*).

²⁶Cotarelo y Mori, 1904.

²⁷Newels, 1974, pp. 78-79.

²⁸Aristóteles, *Poética*, fragments 1448 and 1449, in González, 1977.

²⁹Sánchez Escribano and Porcheras Mayo, 1972, pp. 100-101.

No wonder, therefore, that *comedia* admits deaths and pitiful misfortunes in its fabula, as acknowledged by Pinciano: “Con todo cuanto me decís, dijo el Pinciano, veo yo que lloran los actores mismos en las comedias, y aun algunos oyentes, y veo también muertes en algunas dellas”. Fadrique, then, explains that there may be tragic elements in the *comedia* provided they are not destined to provoke horror and sympathy but laughter: “y así las muertes trágicas son lastimosas, mas las de la *comedia*, si alguna hay, son de gusto y pasatiempo, porque en ellas mueren personas que sobran en el mundo, como es una vieja cizañadora, un viejo avaro, un rufián o una alcahueta”³⁰. Lope could have concluded these reflections with practical cases that sometimes go far beyond what the preceptists anticipate, in their audacity and shamelessness, as in the case of *Las ferias de Madrid*, where we will witness the comic assassination of a husband by his father-in-law, for the benefit of the adultery of his daughter, or of *El amor desatinado*, which will present the rape of a lady, mistress of the King, as a laughable matter.

2. GENRE SYSTEM IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE OF THE *COMEDIA NUEVA*: A DUAL SYSTEM.

When Lope de Vega’s theatrical proposal imposed itself in the battlefield for the control of the public spectacle between different aesthetic and, at the same time, scenic choices that characterizes the last two decades of the 16th century, a word also imposed itself, *comedia*, which served to designate all kinds of playswritten according to the standards of the new school. This is the meaning of *comedia* that printers used with absolute majority in their printed volumes (*comedia famosa* is the most common subtitle that goes with the specific title of each play), irrespective of the tragic or comic character of the plays. And this is the meaning that it reaches in the most important treaty of the new school, the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (1609), by Lope de Vega, the same that acknowledge both the apologists of the *comedia nueva* and the neo-Aristorelian theorists, often hostile and other times tolerant, although disdainful in relation to the new way of writing plays.

Nevertheless, at present, this denomination of *comedia* is particularly uncomfortable for critical language, because of its continuous overlap with the meaning of *comedy* as a genre opposed to *tragedy*. Also among the contemporaries the sliding

³⁰Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, pp. 99-100.

from one meaning to another in the shade of the same word is as common as it is irremediable, as shown in *Arte nuevo* itself.

In order to disambiguate my own speech, requirement of all scientific language, I have used since 1981 the word *drama*, because, apart from being a known word at the time, as already defined by Covarrubias, though little used³¹, it can bring together the two predominantly “serious” or grave genres, *tragedy* and *tragicomedy*, so often distinguished from each other as confused or mixed by the very preceptists and contemporary playwrights, but constantly opposed to *comedy*³². *Drama* thus refers to the theatrical genre which regroups the more serious rather than laughable options of the *comedia nueva* system, the options that are not primarily comic, which to a greater extent, in short, merge the tragic and the comic.

We owe to E. Morby the most systematic modern effort of understanding the internal differences of genre in the work of Lope de Vega, who, in most cases considered *comedia* as a concept that included all kinds of plays of his time, subtitled a few plays with the label *tragedy* and others with the label *tragicomedy*, in at least 42 cases, which Morby estimated to be an eighth part of Lope’s production. Obviously, by distinguishing this way between them he discredited his own conception, and made use again of classical concepts. Morby's essay³³, not always as coherent as systematic in his argumentation, reaches a series of conclusions which are of interest to me to emphasize here:

1. - There is a considerable amount of arbitrariness in the use of generic concepts in the work of Lope.

2. - Despite this dose of arbitrariness, one can observe an “imperfect order”, or internal logic, in Lope’s denominations: the term *comedia* served to highlight the specificity of its formula as opposed to the classical and neoclassical tradition, but this

³¹Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*. See, for the concept of “drama”, in the context of the treatises on poetics of the time, the quoted essay of M. Newels, 1974, especially chapters III, V and VI.

³²This happens in *Tablas poéticas* (1617) by Cascales, in which the character Pieriois interested in *tragicomedies*, and Castalio, the author's spokesman, denies any possible connection with the *comedies*, not even with the *double comedies*. If they relate to something, he admits, it is with the *double tragedies*, even though they are, as *hermaphrodites*, bad *tragedias* and even though “tienen muy poco de sujeto trágico con que se ha de mover a misericordia y miedo” (Sánchez Escribano and Porqueras Mayo, 1972, p. 197).

³³Morby, 1943.

comedia did not quite get to fully mask the orientation of each play to one of the two main categories, *tragedy* and *comedy*.

3. - Within the option for *tragedy*, there is a clear affinity between *tragedy-tragedy* (despite its deviation from the classical standards) and *tragicomedy*, as they share the same basis, which differentiates them from the *comedies* understood in their narrow concept. In order to explain this basis Morby refers to Spingarn's 6 major differential features between *tragedy* and *comedy* (1905)³⁴, out of which the most important in his view is the one that refers to the subject matter - historical in *tragedies* and *tragicomedies*, and fictional in *comedies*.

4. - Lope seems to distinguish between the *tragedies* and the *tragicomedies* with a certain regularity depending mostly on the denouement, unfortunate and full of deaths in the *tragedy*, happy in the *tragicomedies*.

At the end of his work, by somehow contradicting all his previous argumentation, Morby is inclined to admit that Lope's revolution led inevitably to the destruction of the chemically pure formula of *tragedy*, introducing in it many non-tragic elements to the point that the term *tragicomedy* would have been more suitable for his plays, but this word did not triumph³⁵. In fact, according to Morby, Spanish playwrights lost interest of the aspiration to purity, and opposed the principle of "nature" with its mixtures and its freedom to that of "art" with its distinctions and its order, put forward by the Italian. While Italian and Spanish preceptists were struggling with the

³⁴Spingarn, 1925. In fact, the differences that Spingarn points out had been inventoried by the medieval poetics and collected by Renaissance writers. Having few variants of presentation these are the ones that Alonso López Pinciano analyses, one by one, in his *Philosophia antigua poética* (1596).

³⁵M. Newels explains that the term *tragicomedy* "estaba desacreditado [...] a raíz de las discusiones que había suscitado en Italia y que habían encontrado eco también en España. Se había hecho el intento de definir la *comedia* española como *tragicomedia*, pero la *tragicomedia* italiana, por ejemplo, no correspondía con la española – ni tampoco con el llamado *drame libre* francés". The antipathy of preceptists towards the term *tragicomedy*, even though Plautus had used it in his *Anfitrión*, is clearly visible in *Tablas poéticas* (1617) by Francisco Cascales, in which Castalio ends up threatening his interlocutor of getting seriously angry if he used the term *tragicomedy* again, instead of the *double tragedy*, which he suggests (Sánchez Escribano, and Porqueras Mayo, 200). To reach agreement on the concept of tragicomedy between the various critical traditions is difficult even today. While in Spain, for instance, the term is linked to the deconstruction of the classical precepts on the modern *drama* (see Victor Hugo's *Préface to Cromwell*, in which he proclaims *drama* as the new genre of modernity, compared to the classical *tragedy* or *comedy*, and takes as fundament Lope's *Arte nuevo*), in Italy the term is linked to the proposal of G. B. Guarini and is opposed to Giraldi Cinthio's *tragedy de lieto fine*, and in England the concept carries an essentially neoclassical poetics, as M. T. Herrick tells us, *Tragicomedy. Its Origins and Development in Italy, France and England* (Urbana, Univ. of Illinois Press, 1955). According to Newels, 125: "En Italia y en Francia denotaba sencillamente un género más, que venía a ocupar su lugar al lado de la *tragedia* y la *comedia*, mientras que en España se trataba de definir el nuevo drama en general."

classification, delimitation and depuration of genres, Spanish playwrights opted for abandoning the categories.

From Morby's approach I assume, for my own conception, the highest affinity between *tragedies* and the ones that Lope called *tragicomedies*, whatever Lope's reasons to distinguish between them were, I consider them to be neither accurate nor systematically applied in his work as a whole. This proposal fits well with what the playwrights of the *comedia nueva* defend unanimously, as already explained: the mixture of "the tragic and the comic" as a structuring principle of the *comedia nueva*. A principle whose implementation violates all the differences between *comedy* and *tragedy* set again and again by preceptists, developing serious conflicts between low or common characters (*Fuenteovejuna*, *Peribáñez*), or involving elevated characters such as kings and princes in daily affairs (*El caballero de Illescas*), if not ridiculous (*El amor desatinado*); insofar as he raises tragic conflicts (power struggle, fall of royal or ministerial favour, defense of honour ...) in a comical way (in the so-called *palatine comedies*, as in the case of *Los donaires de Matico*, which stages a popular revolt against the sovereign), or comical conflicts (love and other private conflicts) in a tragic way (as in *El caballero de Olmedo*); insofar as one may adorn plots of high dramatic tension with ridiculous episodes (the denouement of the *tragedy* of *Los comendadores de Córdoba*) or vice versa (in *El lacayo fingido*: the plot of the story of the invisible cloth, typical of a *comedy* in the most classical meaning, or of an *entremés* in Spanish style, is combined with the kidnapping of a lady of the palace by the King, who tries to take sexual advantage of her in a despotic and clandestine way); insofar as it freely oscillates between history and fiction, either in *tragedies* or *tragicomedies* (often fictional, as in the case of *palatine dramas*, like *El perseguido* or *La fuerza lastimosa*), or in *comedies* (the historical ones are not missing, such as *La niña de plata*), or insofar as it feels entitled to solve indistinctly its endings, in a comic or tragic way, no matter how serious the plot is (the unequal love between a noble and a commoner ends in *tragedy* in *El mayordomo de la duquesa de Amalfi* and in *comedy* in *El perro del hortelano*).

But once admitted this hybridity of basis, this heterodoxy of principle, the *comedia nueva* diversifies its functions in alternative directions, it either explores the playing possibilities and the limits social life can be subjected to ("es en vano / poner a los gustos leyes"), or it tries to awake the appropriate teachings to the good regiment of

citizens (“los tiempos no guardan ley, / la fortuna es desvarío”). The first direction opens a realm of imagination and intrigues, of unleashed desire, and it constitutes what we mean by *comedias* (tragicomic) of the *comedia nueva*. The second is the very territory of exemplarity, of controversy, of indoctrination, and also of the questioning of the human condition, and it corresponds to the *tragedies* (tragicomic) and the *tragicomedies* (tragicomic) of the *comedia nueva*. I will be referring to this second group as *drama*. If all of them are *tragicomedies*, some opt for the comic while some others do so for the dramatic³⁶.

In one of my articles in 1981 I expressed my belief that ultimately the plurality of options explored by the early Lope de Vega could be structured in a dual system, of only two macrogenres, from the functional point of view³⁷ but also from the point of view of the model of the spectacle³⁸, the comedies and the dramas:

Both genres are alternative not only with respect to the dramatic proposal they implement but also, and especially, in their attitude towards the public they invite. The drama revolves around a determined will of ideological impact, it is a spectacle of great pomp which creates exemplary conflicts and indoctrinating ways of solution. Drama is entrusted, in the division of labour imposed by the Baroque theatrical institution, with the transcendent mission, the proselytizing, the denunciation and the panegyric [...] Comedy, by contrast, is entrusted with a mainly ludic mission. *Comedy* is the land of the game, characterized by an often ingenious or amoral frivolity and even cynical, or at least unorthodox. *Comedy* is open to chance (which can lead to all the slips), to imagination, to the unsuspected potential of the intrigue. The comedy is also the realm of the mask, of hidden identities, of secret loves, of transvestisms, of face covers and of nocturnalities.

³⁶D’Artois, 2009b, inquires into tragedies and tragicomedies, from a new point of view, that of the patterns of reading, especially in two of the *Partes de comedias* by Lope de Vega, XVI and XX. In line with her, both of these kinds of play share a unique editorial function. In concentrating tragedies and tragicomedies in those volumes, Lope should fashion an image of self-according to a courtly standard of poetry, that of the “tragic greatness”, in a phase of his life in which he deals with a court self-promotion strategy.

³⁷I mean by “functional” the modalization, or mise-en-mode, comical or serious, imposed by the author on the dramatic conflict and the effect he wants to provoke on the viewer with this modalization. The quoted article: Oleza, 1981, pp. 153-223.

³⁸For the model of alternative spectacle that both genres convey, see the cited study: Oleza, 1981, pp. 154-157.

Both genres were configuring the dual, dialectic basis, on which the *comedia nueva* is founded. On one hand there are, as considered by Morby, the *tragedies* and the ones that Lope expressly called *tragicomedies*, although with an unequal weight, for the latter are considerably more frequent than the former. In Lope's theatrical production, even of the early Lope, the most avant-garde, there are still *tragedies*, and very relevant ones, such as *El casamiento en la muerte*, *El marqués de Mantua*, *La locura por la honra* (none of them called *tragedy* by Lope) or *El castigo sin venganza* (this one called *tragedy*), but most of the tragic contents in his work have a tragicomic formula. In principle the *tragicomedy*, if we take into consideration Lope's *Arte nuevo* or other contemporary testimonies, is a mixture of *comedy* and *tragedy*, potentially equal. However, from its very origins, established by Fernando de Rojas, the Spanish *tragicomedy* was *tragedy* with comedic episodes or characters. In the Renaissance, Torres Naharro developed a formula of *comedy*, which, by replying to that of Rojas, needed the tragic risk to cast a momentary shadow over an essentially comic world: in *Seraphina*, in *Ymeneo*, in *Calamita*, or in *Aquilana*, death ends up threatening the fate of the protagonists, but in all these plays the tragic risk is summoned in order to dissolve it and the triumphant gesture of the *comedy* is upheld precisely in the neutralization of the *tragedy*. The Spanish *comedy* was essentially *comedy* with shades of *tragedy* during the whole Renaissance period, to retake with Tárrega and Lope the gesture of Rojas, the *tragedy* with *comedy* laughs. Lope's *tragicomedy* is not an equipollent hybrid, it does not play at the same time and equally in the field of *comedy* and of *tragedy*. Pure *tragedy* was the antagonist of Renaissance *comedy*, especially at the end of the century. The Baroque *tragicomedy* finds its antagonist, however, in the pure *comedy*. Thus, the expectations of the audience are distributed unevenly in each century: between *tragedy* and *comedy* in the 16th century, between *tragicomedy* and *comedy* in the 17th century. This means that *tragicomedy* occupies much of the space and the functions that the precepts destined to *tragedy*, and only a fraction of those reserved to *comedy*. The *tragicomedy* displaced the need of *tragedy* due to assuming to a large extent its role concerning the public, due to its strong assimilation of a pompous morphology and an exemplary strategy, but for this very reason it did not displace the need for *comedy*. The *tragicomedy* constituted itself in the end as the modern form of *tragedy*. A form, it must be said, that allowed the existence of other forms, although it did so at the cost of reducing the demand of those other forms among the public in exceptionally adverse occasions and circumstances. *Tragedy* remains therefore in the dramatic system of the

comedia nueva of the time of Lope de Vega, as the extreme possibility of seriousness, its purest and at the same time most minority expression, while *comedy* covers both the extreme possibility of the laughable, its purest and at the same time most minority expression, (is the case of *comedias novelescas*: ordinary characters, fictional subjects, particular conflicts) and the most hybrid expressions: the *urban comedies*, with particular conflicts and middle-class characters, but with historical or contemporary spatial and temporal background, on the one hand; the *palatine comedies*, with laughable plots and imaginary stories, but among serious characters and with often dramatic conflicts, on the other³⁹.

3. THE UNFOLDING OF THE GENRE SYSTEM: A BATTERY OF SPECTACLES AND GENERIC PROTOTYPES.

Both drama and comedy, the two macrogenres of stage practice in the time of Lope, manifested themselves through a great variety of generic prototypes. It is not that dramatic poets and commentators were interested in explaining these different options, given the essentially pragmatic and anti-normative condition of their poetics. Few distinctions are made at the time, and they rarely go beyond the most basic distinctions: amatory or historical comedies, feigned or true comedies, comedies *de cuerpo* (of spectacular staging) or of wit, comedies of saints, of shepherds, comedies *de capa y espada*...⁴⁰ Nevertheless the differences between the comedies give rise to a whole battery of different dramatic and spectacular options. These differences are in subject matter (e.g.: historical or amatory), in story (with its beginning, its *ñudo*, its *soltura* or denouement), in episodes (which unfold the *fabula*, and especially those linked to the secondary plot), in purpose (the intended effect on the spectator: laughter, moral lesson,

³⁹Arellano, 2011a, stresses also on the *comedia nueva* dual basis, joining up on the one hand tragedies and tragicomedies, without essential differences that could be observed between them, and comedies on the other hand. Nevertheless, I can't agree neither with his devaluation of tragicomic *mixture* in the dramatic system of the *comedia*, nor his minimizing of dramatic elements into the comic plays and of those comics into tragic or tragicomic ones. That approach takes away from the *comedia nueva* almost its entire potency of historical innovation, and makes incomprehensible, lack of understanding, the breaking of the *comedia nueva* with the classicist pattern, becoming assimilated to it. Anyhow, the Calderón's times would better adapt than those of Lope to an restorer point of view like that exposed by Arellano.

⁴⁰The most consistent attempts to shed light on the diverse set of genres of *comedy* are late. It is worth mentioning those of Pellicer de Tovar, *Idea de la comedia en Castilla. Preceptos del teatro de España y arte del estilo cómico*; Salas Barbadillo, *Coronas del Parnaso y platos de las Musas*; and especially at the end of the century, and undoubtedly the most complete systematization, although not the best informed historically, that of Bances Candamo, *Theatro de los teatros de los pasados y presentes siglos* (aprox. 1690), which fits much better Calderon's time than Lope's. See on the genres typology by Bances Candamo, Arellano, 2011b.

tragic catharsis), in the rank of the characters (kings, nobles, knights, villains ...), in setting (near or remote, verisimilar or fantastic, stylized or realistic), in stagecraft (comedies of spectacular staging or comedies of wit, with domestic setting and poor staging), in costumes and *atrezzo* (Pinciano recalls that a distinction was made between comedies of “chapines” and comedies of “zuecos”) and should have been easily identifiable⁴¹ – despite the constantly repeated subtitle *comedia famosa* that headed the posters of the performances - by the Baroque spectators, who like the modern spectators distinguished the type of spectacle they wanted to see and distinguished it with at least the same interest with which they distinguished between different companies or between various poets. Plays entitled *La dama boba* or *Los donaires de Matico* could not be mistaken beforehand for plays entitled *El casamiento en la muerte* or *El mejor alcalde el Rey*, or for others such as *Carlos Quinto en Francia* or *La historia de Tobías*, just as a spectator who was an expert in *romancero*, and up-to-date with the life and works of poets like Lope de Vega could not mistake his *Belardo furioso* for his *Adonis y Venus*, and even less the latter for *La campana de Aragón* or *El último godo*: the title itself often conveyed a declaration of intentions. But in many others, it was the very experience of the spectator, well nourished by the frequency of his visits to open-air theatres, which distinguished from the beginning the subject-matter (high or low, feigned or historical, pastoral or urban, *morisco* or of foreign history...), the quality of the characters, the setting of action, and the tone of the story (comic or dramatic). The first scenes, if not the first lines, situated the spectator in a horizon of generic expectations: he knew where things were going to.⁴²

3.1. Varieties of *comedy*

In its fight against the classical theatrical proposal, where *tragedy* had primacy, the *comedia nueva* held up the *comedy* as an avant-garde flag, in its first stage, which was already a radical reply to the neo-Aristotelian standard that considered *tragedy* a

⁴¹Lope, in *El Arte Nuevo* recalls the different types of *comedy* in Ancient times and says that back then “también eran, como agora, varias” (v.116-118).

⁴²This does not mean that the genres we establish from this moment on were characterized and assimilated genres at that time. Our proposal is hypothetical-deductive and it is based on a very sharp contrast with the texts (approximately 400, analysed in the Artelope Database, <http://artelope.uv.es>), and on a modern categorization. We do not try to describe things as they were (for there were no explicitly characterized genres, beyond those mentioned), but to develop a theoretical model capable of providing an explanation of how things happened, and especially explain the systematic differences between groups of plays, differences we can characterize rigorously and coherently. See footnote 57.

superior genre to comedy, even superior to the epic. In the case of *comedies*, the more general principle of differentiation is the one that distinguishes the universe of unreality or of verisimilitude where the action is set, as already acknowledged by contemporaries.

The so-called *palatine* comedies are placed in a setting of unreality, whose space and time coordinates are treated as radically imaginary (whether they are or are not, as some are located in nearby European countries, like France or England, and in some exceptional cases even within some region of the kingdom itself), and whose action allows the audacity of the fantastic. These plays have the court as the dominant social universe, with its sovereigns, its nobles and their high offices, and as central core an episode of concealment of identity, either by not being aware of it, or by strategic decision. The hiding of identity comes from a destabilization of the right order (social and moral) and it will be revealed - only after the intricate sequence of adventures of the concealed identity - with the restoration of that order. These comedies therefore tackle with insolence, and sometimes with unusual doses of audacity, corruption and crimes of power, unlawful ambitions and desires of tyrants, adulterous passions of kings and nobles. The mask allows the protagonist, - voluntarily or involuntarily - to explore *another* identity, and with it, *another* reality, *another* social status (that of the “capigorrón” student, of the pilgrim, of the rustic shepherd, of the wild man, of the villain, of the lackey ...). This kind of immersion in the dark side of social life facilitates for these comedies the exploration of social inequalities and their conflicts, the vision of the court as a place essentially corrupt and the monarch as an everyday character deprived of grandeur and many times of dignity.

The *palatine* comedies operate as the main shock force in breaking the *comedia nueva* with respect to both the scholarly and the courtly stage practice, whose theatrical conventions - in the case of the former - and whose rites of celebration - in the case of the latter - attacked frontally and with a considerable transgressive energy. It used characters of the highest rank, such as kings and princes, either for love and domestic affairs, often ridiculous, or for heroic and terrible affairs (wars, popular revolts, ruthless fights for the throne, risings and fallings of fortune), but also destined to provoke laughter in the audience, it ended in a joyful way, and it placed them in imaginary settings, against their natural habitat, according to the precepts, that were none other than history. That is, it practically violated all the instructions of classical precepts, the whole coherent argumentation destined to rigidly distinguish between *tragedy* and

comedy, and this type of comedies gave rise to a more indignant response. Perhaps no other comedies received such an outrageous echo as *Los donaires de Matico*, which quite irritated Cervantes, but neither *Las burlas de amor*, *Ursón y Valentín*, *El príncipe inocente*, nor *El rey por semejanza* (if it is Lope's) have anything to envy in terms of boldness of imagination, moral audacity, and aesthetic or ideological irreverence.

In this genre, and putting an end to the first stage of his work, at the very frontier of 1599, Lope gives us a little masterpiece: *El lacayo fingido*. Throughout his career Lope wrote about ninety plays of this kind, but approximately twenty five had already been written during the first stage. Among his maturity plays the critics have emphasized the importance of *El perro del hortelano* and *El villano en su rincón*.

Compared to the palatine comedies, at the opposite pole, there are the urban comedies, the most representative of an everyday setting, partly learned from the Italian *comedy* and “novella” and partly from the Spanish tradition that started with *La Celestina* and Torres Naharro (especially with *Ymeneá*, being in its turn an adaptation of *La Celestina*), and whose formula the Valencian playwrights (Tárrega, Aguilar, Guillén de Castro) had started modeling in the 80s and the 90s. Lope's comedies place the audience in a recognizable urban geography, when not familiar (Madrid, Toledo, Valencia, Sevilla...), and between the manners of a gentleman urban middle class, whose adventures always revolve around conflicts, fantasies and misunderstandings of amorous seduction. It is the most classical genre that the *comedia nueva* brings into play, as it adapts well to the conditions established by the neoclassicist preceptists: the aim of provoking laughter in the audience, the medium rank of its characters, its love and domestic affairs, its beginning between anxieties and setbacks in contrast to its happy ending, or its subject based most often on invented cases. This is also the most constant genre of Lope's production, as from the first to the last stage the comedies that represent it are always among the most numerous groups, although their conflicts and their most characteristic features change quite a lot from one stage to another⁴³. Lope wrote about a hundred such comedies, at least a quarter of his production. The early Lope wrote elaborated plays such as *Los locos de Valencia*, *El maestro de danzar*, *El*

⁴³I. Arellano, “El modelo temprano de la comedia urbana de Lope de Vega” (1996), collected in I. Arellano, *Convención y recepción. Estudios sobre el teatro del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid, Gredos, 1999), studied the process of conformation of the urban *comedy* in the early Lope and its evolution towards what will constitute, once fully established, one of the major genres of Spanish classical theater: the *cloak and sword comedy*, *la comedia de capa y espada*.

mesón de la corte, or *La francesilla* and, at the end of this period, a masterpiece: *La viuda valenciana*. Among the plays of the posterior Lope we should recall *El acero de Madrid*, *La dama boba*, *La discreta enamorada*, *El arenal de Sevilla*, *Los melindres de Belisa* or *La Niña de plata*. The plays written during Lope's senectitude stage constitute the largest group, seven, many of them having a remarkable literary quality, such as *La moza decántaro*, *Por la puente*, *Juana*, *La noche de San Juan* or *Las bizarrías de Belisa*.

But the early Lope set out his strategy of options with minority support in the flanks, much less practiced than the others, and in imaginary universes, typical of palatine comedies, he placed the literaturized and ingenious *pastorals*, so characteristic of the Renaissance palatine stage practice as now recycled to the format of the representation in an open-air theatre - and with considerable enthusiasm - for the early Lope, in harmony with his poetry of that time, expert in pastoral *romances*. Most of the pastoral comedies (a total of 6) are from this period: *El verdadero amante*, *La pastoral de Jacinto*, *Belardo el furioso*, *Los amores de Albano*... although the best play of this genre, *La Arcadia*, is posterior, and only much later he applied the genre, very mixed as it was, to the experimentation of a courtly spectacle of highly complex staging, *La selva sin amor*, the first Spanish opera sung entirely.

Furthermore in the field of imaginary fables, of literary descent, we should add to the battery of comic genres one that has been very wrongly defined so far by critics, the comedies *novelescas*. If we qualify these comedies as such, we do not do it, as in the case of Menéndez Pelayo, because the plot origins in a *novel*, as this origin may give rise to plays belonging to very diverse genres, from *tragedies* with a historical background such as *El mayordomo de la duquesa de Amalfi* or with an imaginary background, such as *El perseguido* or *El castigo sin venganza*, to cloak and sword comedies such as *La ilustre fregona* or *El alcalde mayor*. We understand by a *novelesca* comedy a play that develops a story of adventures and "peripecias" in exotic environments or in environments that are hardly recognizable by the viewer's experience, which implies Lope's assimilation of plot schemes already used by the Spanish actors – authors (Lope de Rueda, Alonso de la Vega ...) and the erudite *comedy* of Italian style. Due to their imaginative nature they relate to *palatine* comedies, but due to the status of their protagonists, gentlemen, merchants, teachers and middle-class citizens and due to the often urban environment, they border on urban comedies of

contemporary manners. These comedies are rarely found in pure form, since the formula seems more inclined to bring its own elements (adventure, travel, sometimes the social status of the characters) to other kinds of plays. Among Lope's most characteristic plays are *Castelvines y Monteses*, *El halcón de Federico*, *El leal criado*, *Jorge Toledano* or *La doncella Teodor*.

On the opposite flank, that of the settings of verisimilitude, Lope takes his exploration of the contemporary manners further, through what I called elsewhere *picaresque*⁴⁴ comedies, few in number, to tell the truth, and almost all of them early, but very aggressive, very plot free, also very funny: *El caballero del milagro*, *El rufián Castrucho*, *El caballero de Illescas*, *La ingratitud vengada*, o *El anzueto de Fenisa*, probably the most popular play of this genre, express well its characteristics. These comedies, with their exploration of the underworld (soldiers, pimps, matchmakers, courtesans ...) are heterodox descendants of the inferior types of *comedy* distinguished by Donato and, after him, by the classical precepts, the *atellanas* and *tabernarias* comedies, that is, those whose characters had a lower rank (consequently opposed to the *togata*, with its patrician and urban characters), whose legacy will benefit, since the time of Lope de Rueda, more pasos and entremeses than comedies.

3.2. Varieties of drama

We will use again the category truth / pretence, as we did with comedy, to articulate the panorama of drama, because as we have already explained, it is the most rooted in the aesthetic consciousness of the time. Here, the representation of the truth belongs naturally to history. Therefore, on one hand there are imaginary, minority dramas, and on the other, historical dramas, clearly representing the majority.

3.2.1. The imaginary dramas

The imaginary dramas can be easily classified into two sectors, depending on whether the subject on which the fable works comes from a specific literary tradition, well codified, that the public would know to a greater or lesser degree. If not, we would have dramas of free invention and on the other hand, dramas of literaturized subjects.

⁴⁴Oleza, 1981, pp. 178-182

From this set of imaginary dramas the ones which weigh the most in the system are those of free invention, almost all of them being palatine dramas, defined by the symbiosis of a universe of free invention and courtly status (just like palatine comedies) and a highly dramatic conflict, of exemplary nature (*morata*), as opposed to the comedies of this type. In these dramas we may observe the legacy of one of the most characteristic subgenres of those which came from Italy, via Giraldi Cinthio, promoted by Valencian playwrights (starting with Virués and ending with the “Nocturnos”, Tárrega, Aguilar, Beneyto and Guillén de Castro), and put into practice by the early Lope in plays such as *El perseguido*, *Laura perseguida*, *El favor agradecido* or *La fuerzalastimosa*. After 1600 the number of these dramas increased substantially, it seems as if Lope reactivated the dramatic formula he had learned in the Valencian playwrights, more interested now in pouring in a dramatic way what he previously poured mostly in a comic way: the conflicts of the struggle for royal favour, of the inequality of social condition and status, of the offenses to honour, of blood insults and revenges, of the moral disorders of power, typical of these works. Some of these plays are *El mayordomo de la Duquesa de Amalfi*, *La locura por la honra*, *Los muertos vivos*, *El juez en su causa*, *La firmeza en la desdicha*, *La discordia en los casados* or *El animal de Hungría*. In the late Lope the theme of the court is also very present, and now he seems to clearly opt for a more dramatic conflict, rather than for a comical one. As dramas are concerned, we are left with remarkable plays, such as *Porfiando vence amor*, *La boba para los otros y discreta para sí*, and the masterpiece of the genre, *El castigo sin venganza*.

There are few mythological dramas of Greco-Roman subjects (a total of 10) and they all belong to Lope’s maturity stage. Sometimes they are related to commissions from the royal palace. Thus, during the first stage, *Adonis y Venus*, which is the only play of this kind, is a commission of the court. The mythological subject was clearly of courtly tradition, but Lope remodels it in this first play through a hybridizing, popularizing stage treatment, full of audacity and with complex pageant scenery. Lope will not return to this type of drama until the second decade of the 17th century when he writes *La fábula de Perseo* or *El premio de la hermosura*, both destined to courtly representation. He will later write *El laberinto de Creta*, *Las mujeres sin hombres*, *El marido más firme*, *Las justas de Tebas y reina de las Amazonas* or *La bella aurora*. Two more commissions from the royal palace correspond to the full maturity stage: *El*

vellocino de oro and *El amor enamorado*. From the beginning to the end this genre is at the very periphery of the stage practice of the *comedia nueva*, in a frontier territory with the stage practice of the court.

The subject of chivalry was also of great courtly tradition, but the *Romancero* and chivalry books had enabled its appropriation by the popular tastes, so its presence among the proposals of the *comedia nueva* in its first stage is not uncommon. The early Lope experiments with these chivalry dramas, marked by unreality and heroic excess, an epic fable, that launches a “modern mythology”, a set of heroes which had popularized *Orlando furioso* and the *romances* of the Carolingian cycle, and a populist literary treatment, with its exciting action, its superlative settings and spectacular effects, in plays like *Los celos de Rodamonte* or *Los palacios de Galiana*. *El Marqués de Mantua*, perhaps the most sober and restrained play, also the most tragic, is undoubtedly the masterpiece of the genre. Its last samples are placed at the frontier of 1600: *Los palacios de Galiana*, *Las pobrezas de Reinaldos*, *Angélica en el Catay* or *La mocedad de Roldán*. After this frontier there is nothing left but the return on one occasion, to the courtly sources: *El premio de la hermosura* is a strong incursion of the mature Lope in the court commissioned the atricality, and was brilliantly represented in Lerma in 1614 in front of the whole court.

3.2.2. The historical dramas

Probably the most profound change experienced in the trajectory of the Fénix starting from 1600 is the transfer of the majority of his dramaturgy, with arms and luggage, to the field of history. The *historial comedies*, as they were denominated back then, constitute by far the largest group in the production of the years that follow. Lope did not discover then the historical drama, as his earliest works include plays such as *Los hechos de Garcilaso de la Vega y moro Tarfe*, and during the first stage there is a certain experimentation in different directions of the historical drama. However, starting from 1600, taking a real quantitative-qualitative leap, the occasional experimentation opens to a massive exploitation of the possibilities of the genre, and three main directions are imposed, those of the religious dramas, of the profane dramas of private events and of the dramas of famous events in the history of Spain.

Altogether these plays account for nearly half of Lope’s dramatic production, estimated in broad terms at around 400 works. There are some forty religious dramas

and approximately one hundred and thirty profane historical dramas, taking into account both the dramas of private events (73) and the dramas of public famous events (56).

3.2.3. The religious dramas

Although the genre was very popular in the founding years of the *comedia nueva*, as shown by the codices in the Gondomar collection⁴⁵, the early Lope rarely practised it: *San Segundo de Avila* and *El alcaide de Madrid* are the only two essays of reliable authorship that we conserve dating for sure from that time. Starting from 1600, however, they come to constitute one of the most popular genres. The most numerous group of the whole genre is that of the dramas of the lives of saints and pious legends (some thirty plays), followed by plays based on stories from the Old Testament (between 4 and 9), and, with a testimonial character, those of the New Testament (1-4), and the few plays of contemporary religious subject matter (2).

Among the dramas of the lives of the saints there are numerous plays that are midway of the hagiography or of the pious legend and of the historical drama itself, plays such as *La divina vencedora*, *El niño inocente de Laguardia*, *Los guanches de Tenerife*, *El caballero del Sacramento*... The dimension of the profane subject that incorporates itself into the plot of these plays is also very generous, to the extent that in many occasions its religious character takes second place. These may not be Lope's best plays, although one of them is highly relevant, *Lo fingido verdadero*, and others are of notable quality, such as *El capellán de la virgen*, *Barlaán y Josafat*, *La gran columna fogosa*, *El divino africano*, *El niño inocente de Laguardia*, *San Isidro Labrador* or *La buena guarda*.

The dramas that tackle subjects from the Old Testament are a small crop of between four certain plays and nine possible ones, all written during Lope's stage of maturity, except the early *La corona derribada y Vara de Moisés* and the late *La creación del mundo y primera culpa del hombre*, both of doubtful authorship. Consequently, the Old Testament could not easily reach open-air theatres: this is largely due to the fact that *the comedia nueva* is born when the studies, the translations and the editions of the Bible die, once the Council of Trento redirected all the freedom that humanists had deployed on the battlefield of the Holy Scriptures to a strict and repressive order. If we compare plays like *El robo de Dina*, *La hermosa Ester*, *La*

⁴⁵Badía Herrera, 2007.

historia de Tobías, or *Los trabajos de Jacob*, these being the most representative plays of the genre, with the historic ones, given the fact that they are all historical, we will be surprised to find out that the biblical dramas are much more accurate to their sources, this accuracy being comparable only to that of the historic dramas of contemporary and recent events. It would not be surprising that this accuracy had much or everything to do with the post-tridentine environment regarding the Holy Scriptures, and this environment may also explain the significantly higher imaginative moderation of the first generation of playwrights with respect to the second. Lope, Tirso, Mira de Amescua or Felipe Godínez are much more respectful to the biblical text than Calderón, Rojas Zorrilla or Moreto, who often use it as a mere pretext. The rigor posterior to the Council of Trento faded with the passage of time, gradually subtracting from the repressive principle what it gave in a realistic policy to the doctrinaire and propagandistic principle.

3.2.4. The profane historical dramas

The Lope who launches to dramatize Spanish history has to be placed in the double context marked, on one hand, by the controversies over the legitimacy of the comedies, in which theatre supporters argue in its defense its usefulness in teaching history, and that of the emergence of a post-humanist, national, historical consciousness, spectacularly promoted by the historians of the time from Ocampo to Mariana. Nothing more significant, for these purposes, than the claims of Lope himself as royal chronicler, which appear alluded to very early in plays like *Ursón y Valentín* or *El rufián Castrucho*, belonging to the first stage, and that will accompany him to the end of his days, when he will still vindicate, already disillusioned, his merits for the commissioned work.

By contrast, as what used to be a spectacle is transformed into writings, and as the *Partes* of Lope's comedies are being printed, abound his meditations on theatre and history. In the dedication of *La campana de Aragón*⁴⁶ one may read a sort of first aphorism of this meditation:

“La fuerza de la historia representada es tanto mayor que la leída, cuanta diferencia se advierte de la verdad a la pintura y del original al retrato; porque en un cuadro están las figuras mudas, y en una sola acción las personas, y en la *comedia*

⁴⁶In the *Decimoctava parte de las comedias de Lope de Vega Carpio...* (Madrid, 1623).

hablando y discurrendo y en diversos afectos por instantes cuales son los sucesos, guerras, paces, consejos, diferentes estados de la fortuna, mudanzas, prosperidades, declinaciones de reinos y períodos de imperios y monarquías grandes”⁴⁷.

The second precept that emanates from Lope’s meditation on the historical drama has to do with its ability to celebrate the fame of the events and the people who conquered it: “Nadie podrá negar que las famosas hazañas o sentencias, referidas al vivo con sus personas, no sean de grande efecto para renovar la fama desde los teatros a la memoria de las gentes donde los libros lo hacen con menor fuerza y más dificultad y espacio”.⁴⁸

The third precept defends the utility of history for the management of the present. In his response to Don Francisco de Aragón’s commission of writing the *Historial alfonsina*, Lope suggests accompanying the second part of the *comedy* by praise that would concern “la utilidad de las comedias historiadas”⁴⁹. It is the Ciceronian topic of history as “Magistra Vitae” that the humanists strongly emphasized. From Machiavelli or from Hernando del Pulgar to Luís Vives, Fox Morcillo, Fray Jerónimo de San José, el Padre Mariana, or Montaigne they all agree on this, but there is probably no other gloss as ingenious and beautiful as that of Saavedra Fajardo:

Gran maestro de príncipes es el tiempo. Hospitales son los siglos pasados, donde la política hace anatomía de los cadáveres de las repúblicas y monarquías que florecieron, para curar mejor las presentes. Cartas son de marear en que con ajenas borrascas o prósperas navegaciones están reconocidas las riberas, fondeados los golfos, descubiertas las secas, advertidos los escollos y señalados los rumbos de reinar...⁵⁰

⁴⁷The strength of the story represented is greater than the read, just as truth differs from the painting and the original from the portrait; in a painting are the mute figures, and people in one action only, but in the comedy people are talking and discoursing with various affections on events, wars, peace, advices, different states of fortune, changes, prosperities, falls of kingdoms and periods of empires and great monarchies.

⁴⁸Same dedication, in the *Decimaoctava parte*...

⁴⁹No one can deny that the famous exploits or judgments, told out loud by the people who lived it, is not of great effect to renew the fame from the theatres to the memory of those people, where books do so with less force and more difficulty and space.

⁵⁰The documentation of this nobiliary commission was collected and published by Teresa Ferrer, *Nobleza y espectáculo teatral* (Valencia, Uned and Universities of Sevilla and Valencia, 1993). Translation: Grand Master of princes is time. The past centuries are hospitals, where politics makes anatomy of the bodies of the republics and monarchies that flourished, to heal better present. The centuries are maps in which are,

3.2.5. The dramas of public famous events

The dramas of famous events, of public character, bring to Lope's work approximately 55-60 plays of certain, probable or even doubtful authorship. Among them, those relating to the history of the peninsular kingdoms and its imperial expansion represent the overwhelming majority. They reach their maximum potential in the system of Lope's maturity stage, starting from 1600. The first characterizing decision regarding the researcher is its differentiation from the dramas of private events. The heroes of both types of dramas can be public or private, defined as those lacking a public life dimension, but whether public or private, their deeds, the ones represented in the drama, can have predominantly public or private origins, circumstances and effects. The researcher will have to make this decision, and it is not always as easy as in the case of *El postrer godo de España*, where it is obvious that a particular act, such as Cava's rape by Don Rodrigo has public consequences that transcend private interests, while in *Los Comendadores de Córdoba* the assassination of his own wife by a public character, the *Veinticuatro de Córdoba*, is still the solution to a private conflict. In the case of a historical-legendary hero he will difficultly act on the basis of a purely private issue, but it may happen, as in the case of Bernardo del Carpio, in *El casamiento en la muerte*, to act in his public dimension of hero of Roncesvalles, and in his private dimension of illegitimate child, and then the researcher will have to weigh in as to whether the nature of the main events, in their origin, in their circumstances and in their consequences, is primarily public or private. The danger of not making the decision, and of not distinguishing between the two genres, is more grave than that of making a mistake, since it would impede capturing with all their peculiarity some of the most representative subgenres of Spanish historical drama, such as the private drama of honour and, even more original on the European stage, the drama of peasant honour, or it would impede understanding that many of the historical dramas are not born of a historical conflict but of the conflict of the individual and his rights in his society and his environment, with their laws and customs, with their terms and requirements, or it would make it difficult to apprehend that these dramas of private events are also historical, as much of the critical bibliography proves it by ignoring them.

by storms or prosperous voyages, recognized the banks, measured the depth of the gulfs, discovered the dry, warned the pitfalls and indicated the directions of government...

Nevertheless, when the emphasis on the public occasionally combines with the emphasis on the historical-legendary, the great propagandistic and tendentious Baroque dramas are born, such as Guillén de Castro's *Las mocedades del Cid*, or Lope's *El casamiento en la muerte*.

The aim of a great part of the drama of famous public events is not so much to tell what "really" happened, but rather to celebrate it. The selected events can be as varied as the ages, the territories or the nature of the cases of interest, but they are dominated by the character of a famous, remarkable, strange, worthy, miraculous, surprising, rare, never-before-seen event that demands to be celebrated, beyond any intention of limiting a reign, a war, a revolution, a segment of history as a whole, and of narrating it to all its extension. In the Middle Ages Lope celebrates the same heroes that the Canónigo recommended Don Quijote to read in history books, distributing them by regions: Fernán González in Castilla, el Cid in Valencia, el Gran Capitán in Andalucía, Diego García de Paredes in Extremadura, Garcilaso de la Vega in Toledo... they constitute the new national mythology. In modern times subject, Lope prefers facts to lives, and specific events (*El Brasil restituído*) to the great conflicts that marked Spanish history (the Communities, the European religious wars, the conflicts with France or England...). Thus, the vast majority of Lope's historical dramas may be classified as dramas of famous events that transform dramatization not so much into a history lesson, but into a dramatic celebration of already known, famous events, where there is a merge between the culture and the sensibility of the playwright and his audience.

Lope usually distributes history and fable in separate doses: "Adviértase que en esta *comedia* los amores de Don Diego son fabulosos y sólo para adornarla, como se ve el ejemplo en tantos poetas de la antigüedad [...] Con este advertimiento se pueden leer sus amores como fábula, y las hazañas de Céspedes como verdadera historia de un caballero que honró tanto su nación, cuanto admiró las extrañas"⁵¹. Diego Marín tried to demonstrate the connection that existed in Lope's theatre between the historical subject and the secondary plot. In his view, Lope used secondary plot only in certain historical-legendary comedies, whether their subject was human or divine, and whether they were called *tragedies* and *tragicomedies* or not. This made him establish two major

⁵¹ "Al lector", dedication of *El valiente Céspedes*, in *Parte veinte de las comedias de Lope de Vega Carpio...*(Madrid, 1625).

categories in his production: the plays with a secondary plot, opposed or parallel to the main one, that are of historical nature; the plays of free invention, that integrate the subordinate actions into one complex plot⁵².

Among the dramas of famous public events there are two minority groups, the first, that of the Dramas of Antiquity, includes only four plays of reliable authorship: *Roma abrasada*, *El honrado hermano*, *Las grandezas de Alejandro* and *El esclavo de Roma*; two other plays are of probable (*Contra valor no hay desdicha*) or of doubtful authorship (*La mayor hazaña de Alejandro Magno*). It is therefore a testimonial group, point which is very significant for Lope's emancipation from the classical poetics, that since the Italian Renaissance had made ancient history the privileged subject of *tragedy*.

The second group of dramas, that of European history, is also incorporated in Lope's production around 1600, and leads to a minority but significant group of 14 dramas, to which we should add, in order to value Lope's cosmopolitan interest, dramas and comedies belonging to other genres (palatine, historical of private events, hagiographical...), of European, African, or Asian settings. A single play of quite early certainty, *La imperial de Otón*, opens the way for two other dramas that stage intrigues of succession and of fight for the throne in the Medieval Germanic Empire (*El rey sin reino*) or in the back then remote, but contemporary Russia (*El Gran Duque de Moscovia*). The Germanic Empire is the most frequented focus (in addition to the above, see *El cerco de Viena* and *El valiente Céspedes*), together with the independent Portugal (*La lealtad en el agravio*, *La Fortuna adversa del infante don Fernando de Portugal* and the two parts of *El príncipe perfecto*). The interest extends to the Italy of the 15th century, with *El genovés liberal* and *La contienda de García de Paredes*, to the Flanders of *La nueva victoria de Don Gonzalo de Córdoba*, or to the Mediterranean as setting of the war against the Turks: *La pérdida honrosa* or *Los caballeros de San Juan*.

One peculiar play, which covers much of Europe, from Cuenca to Saint Quentin, is *Julián Romero*. Just like this one, a great part (6) of the plays mentioned above are linked to the European wars waged by the successive Spanish monarchies in the Germanic Empire, in Flanders, in Italy or the Mediterranean. The Europe of these dramas is less medieval (4 plays) than modern: four plays are set in the late 15th century, during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, three during the reign of the

⁵² Diego Marín, *La intriga secundaria en el teatro de Lope de Vega* (De Andrea, Méjico, 1958).

Emperor, one during the reign of Felipe II-Felipe III (although nothing has to do with them: *El gran duque de Moscovia*), and finally another during the reign of Felipe IV (*La nueva victoria de Don Gonzalo de Córdoba*).

Among the largest group of the genre, the dramas of famous events in Spanish history, the extent of accuracy to the sources and the narrated events varies considerably with the temporal distance from the present. The more distant, the more legendary; the more contemporary, the more chronistic; thus is defined a whole range of positions between the voluntarily mythologizing endeavor and the tightly historicist treatment. Therefore, provisionally, as the research has yet to make many concrete steps to reach a sufficient characterization of the vision of Spanish history that Lope had, four ages could be mentioned - like the four ages of man, so often referred to by Lope - in our history, based however not so much on objective differences as on diversified historical treatments, which Lope shares with the critics and especially with Ocampo (with the Ocampo editor of *Crónica General*) and with Mariana. The first age is the one of the mythical origins of Spain and it extends to the penultimate Godo King, passing through Roman domination. There are few dramas of this type, *La amistad pagada*, *Bamba*, *El postrer godo de España*, although there are religious dramas that correspond to this époque: *Lo fingido verdadero*, *El capellán de la virgen...* The second age ranges from the loss of Spain to the ancient kings of Asturias-León, the counts of Castilla and Barcelona... to the end of the first millennium, in short. The predominant treatment is epic or legendary, depending on the case, and Lope extracts it from chronicles and the old *romancero*, where the breath of the ancient *gestas* survives. These are at least seven of his plays: *Las famosas asturianas*, set in León; *Las doncellas de Simancas*, located in King Mauregato's Asturias; the two dramas dedicated to Bernardo del Carpio, *El casamiento en la muerte* and *Las mocedades de Bernardo del Carpio*, these two works, as well as *El Conde Fernán González* and *El bastardo Mudarra* being milestones of the Castilian epic, and *El testimonio vengado*, set in the time of Sancho el Mayor of Navarre, also Count of Castilla, the last Count. The third age is that of the peninsular medieval kingdoms, between the 11th century and the end of the 15th century, this being the age that Lope most frequented, at least in a dozen of plays. His vision here is that of the Chronicle. In Castilla y León, Fernando I is *El primer Rey de Castilla*; the reign of Alfonso VI inspires *El hijo por engaño*, *La varona castellana*, and *Las hazañas del Cid*; that of Alfonso VIII, *Las paces de los reyes y judía de Toledo*; that of Fernando III, *Dos*

bandoleras y fundación de la Santa hermandad; that of Fernando IV, *La inocente sangre*; that of Pedro I, *El infanzón de Illescas* and *Los Ramírez de Arellano*; that of Enrique III, *Los novios de Hornachuelos*. In Navarra, *El príncipe despeñado* corresponds to the reign of Sancho II, in the first half of the 11th century and *La campana de Aragón* and *La reina Doña María* are located in the 11th and 13th centuries of the Crown of Aragón.

The fourth and last age is the present time, unified in the playwright's sensibility from the Catholic Monarchs to the contemporary Felipes II, III and IV. Lope now becomes a historian of the immediate past. In his work of adaptation of the historical material that the Count of Ribagorza gives him for a commissioned play, provisionally entitled *La historial Alfonsina*, one may catch Lope in his workshop, and whom we see is a Lope who stays true to the basic historical events and who struggles to embellish them with "cosas de gusto". The era of the Catholic Monarchs fascinated Lope, who dedicated many dramas to them, some of these dramas being genealogical, such as *El blasón de los Chaves de Villalba*, others of colonization and conquest, such as *Los guanches de Tenerife* or *El nuevo mundo descubierto por Cristóbal Colón*, others are comedies of historical setting such as *El caballero de Illescas*, others are religious dramas, like *El niño inocente de Laguardia*, others are dramas of private events such as *Fuenteovejuna*, others have a European setting, as seen before, and many more are *moriscos* dramas, of the War of Granada, such as *Pedro Carbonero, el cordobés valeroso*. Among the strict dramas of public famous events of the history of Spain, *El mejor mozo de España* makes infante Fernando his protagonist, and during his reign plays such as *Las cuentas del Gran Capitán* or *El piadoso aragonés* are located; he dedicates *Carlos V en Francia* to the time of the Emperor, although this époque also has a European dimension. When Lope reaches the time he lives in, of which there is yet no consciousness of its historicity, his vision becomes more political, more connected to public events, more circumstantiated and attentive to the chain of causes and consequences⁵³. *Los españoles en Flandes*, *La Santa Liga*, *El bautismo del príncipe de Marruecos* and *El asalto de Matrique* correspond to the reign of Felipe II; *La nueva victoria del marqués de Santa Cruz* to the reign of Felipe III; *La nueva victoria de Don Gonzalo de Córdoba*, whose setting is more European than Spanish, to the reign of Felipe IV.

⁵³ Usandizaga, 2010.

In any case, and in almost all circumstances, the dramas of public famous events transmit to their audience a feeling of historical self-satisfaction. The grandeur of the present is justified starting from the grandeur of the past: the mythical heroes, the epic heroes, the politicians or the soldiers identify themselves with the country and they exalt each other.

There are, apart from these groups characterized more by the chronology of their action, rather than by their status of strict genres, other singular thematic groups, neither genres nor subgenres, which should be kept delimited in order to be able to understand their specificity. The first such group is, by its numeric importance (at least 9 plays), that of the *moriscos* dramas, dramas of the frontier, in the War of Granada, that provides historical background to events essentially private. These dramas are characterized by a more novelistic than historical mode, which gives them a sophisticated and gallant look⁵⁴. These plays invade from the beginning Lope's early work, back then an accomplished poet of the *romancero morisco*, which inspires these dramas, as well as the *novela* or the *crónica moriscas*. In fact, Lope's first preserved play, and the only one in four acts, is one of these dramas: *Los hechos de Garcilaso de la Vega y moro Tarfe...* Other representative plays of the genre: *El cerco de Santa Fe*, *El hidalgo Bencerraje*, *Pedro Carbonero*, *El sol parado*, and, perhaps, the best play of the cycle, *El remedio en la desdicha*.

The second thematic group I want to point here focuses its representations on the colonization and conquest of the western empire. The occupation of the Canary Islands, in *Los guanches de Tenerife*, and *El descubrimiento del Nuevo Mundo por Cristóbal Colón*, during the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, the fight against the Araucanian Indians, in *El Arauco domado*, during the reign of Felipe II, the reconquest of the city of Bahía, occupied by the Dutch, in *El Brasil restituído*, during the reign of Felipe IV, are the conflicts this group focuses on. A very special case, which is also of conquest and occupation, but in a region of the peninsula that had been kept closed in itself and in a state of nature, is *Las Batuecas del Duque de Alba*, whose action takes place during the time of the Catholic Monarchs.

The last of these very specific thematic groups is related to the racial conflicts in Christian lands, which presents in *El Hamete de Toledo* a shocking tragedy, that of the

⁵⁴ Carrasco Urgoiti, 1956.

noble Muslim made into a slave and driven by the circumstances to kill, to be chased, to be horribly tortured and finally sent to death. In *El niño inocente de Laguardia*, there is a Christian-Jewish conflict which also reaches the dimensions of tragedy: the Jews of Laguardia are thirsty for revenge for all the humiliations and abuses they were subjected to by the Christians, so they decide to kidnap a Christian boy and make him embody the passion of Christ to its final consequences, with his crucifixion and death. If *El Hamete de Toledo* could be of doubtful historicity (although everything in it seems to refer to a true and contemporary event), *El niño inocente de Laguardia* concerns an event which took place in 1491 that had a lasting effect on public opinion, being collected and spread by different relations. In both cases Lope is able to see conflicts that his contemporaries ignored.

3.2.6. The historical dramas of private events

The most “modern” contribution of the *comedia nueva* is represented by the dramas of private events, which insert into history the private deeds of their protagonists, sometimes in such an inseparable way as in *Fuenteovejuna* or *Peribáñez*, other times in a more relaxed way, in which the historical element is reduced to background scenery, to the faded presence of a certain sovereign, event, situation, because Lope is interested more in the analysis of the conflict than in the recreation or the celebration of events and circumstances. Who remembers that the unfortunate death of *La desdichada Estefanía* and its relationship with the genealogy of the Castros takes place in the years of the Almohad invasion, which constitutes a second action? These dramas deal with conflicts which involve individual rights (personal honour, freedom of choice, the right to love), the recognition of civil or military merit, the impact of fortune on personal destinies, the always hazardous encounter between the individual and the power. There is still no awareness of the individual as emancipated from any determination of social status (of any determination of birth and blood), or religion, or country, which takes shape starting from the liberal revolutions, and especially from the Declaration of the Rights of Man, of 1789, so the defense of individual values (honour, merit, the right to justice or to the exercise of power...) will always involve the environment of which the individual is an indissoluble part: lineage first, the social group, the social class, the nation or the place of origin, but the aura of individuality which begins to permeate the conflicts of this type of dramas is already perfectly detectable.

They are very numerous, approximately 70-75, appear in the *comedia nueva* from the first moment and do not extinguish until the end, when Lope began to focus on the dramas of public famous events. These include many of the plays that the critics consider to be Lope's best works: *El caballero de Olmedo*, *El Duque de Viseo*, *Los Prados de León*, and the dramas of peasant honour, *Fuenteovejuna*, *Peribáñez*, *El mejor alcalde, el rey*, *Los Tellos de Meneses*.

Depending on the type of conflicts they develop, one could describe them as dramas of royal favour and disfavour⁵⁵, of inconstancy of fortune or of deeds, that have a broader public field of action, involving the relationship between the individual and the power in the first two cases, and between the individual and the war in the third one. Another group of dramas have a more familiar and domestic environment, these are the dramas of honour. Among them it should be delimited an autonomous space for the dramas of peasant honour due to the highly innovative role they play in the mentality of the time and to their unusual status in the Renaissance and Baroque European classical theatre. These dramas are nothing celebrative, rather analytical, exploring in depth the conflicts exposed on the stage and searching throughout history more the teachings of past experience rather than the commemoration of its antiques or heroic deeds.

There are very few: about 4, in the most restrictive sense, and 8 or 9, in a looser sense. One drama, for instance, is not historical, *El cuerdo en su casa*, and another one is not a drama but rather a comedy, *El galán de la Membrilla*, while in two other cases the features of the drama of peasant honour are subordinated to others of palatine character, *La Quinta de Florencia* or *El villano en su rincón*; finally, in the *Segunda parte* of *Los Tellos de Meneses* the conflict of peasant honour dilutes for the benefit of others and *El alcalde de Zalamea* is more than doubtful that it belongs to Lope. The most characteristic plays of the genre are not released until well into the 17th century, and they appear in blocks, at intervals every few years: *Peribáñez* in 1605, *El cuerdo en su casa* between 1606 and 1608, *Fuenteovejuna* possibly between 1611 and 1613. We will then have to wait until the twenties for the next plays to be released: *El mejor alcalde el Rey* (1620-23), *Los Tellos de Meneses* (1620-28). But the list of these plays of peasant dignity does not finish by what we might call the core, but it has so much strength that it expands on a galaxy of diverse works in which the theme is prefigured or

⁵⁵ Ferrer, 2004, pp. 15-30.

incorporated into an episode, this being the case of the early *Vida y muerte del Rey Bamba* that elaborates the myth of the king and the oxen, of the farmer king, which is later evoked in many other plays; *San Isidro labrador*, in turn elaborates the myth of the farmer saint, just like *San Diego de Alcalá*; and other plays such as *El galán de la Membrilla*, *El villano en su rincón*, *Los Prados de León*, *Los Guzmanes de Toral*, *La quinta de Florencia* and *El caballero de Illescas* develop veins and aspects of the vindication of peasant dignity. As a whole they constitute “an unusual species” in the European theatre of the time, “in them the farmer, the villain, against every precept and “decorum” bursts as the protagonist of the tragic action”, escaping the “rincón cómico” to which classical poetics had reduced him⁵⁶. These dramas written by Lope leave behind a trail which will extend to some of the best plays written by Tirso de Molina, Calderón de la Barca or Rojas Zorrilla.

4. LOPE DE VEGA’S ARCHITECTURE OF GENRES⁵⁷

Lope’s entire dramatic production lies on a balanced architecture of genres, that diversify and support it between symmetries and counterweights. There are two major structural axes: the dramas and the comedies, but each one is displayed in its turn in opposing collections: imaginary and historical dramas share drama, just as the comedies of imaginary universe and the comedies of verisimilar universe share comedy. Among

⁵⁶ A. Blecua ed. 1981.

⁵⁷ In our proposal of genres, we have taken into account the comments of contemporary playwrights and preceptists and also the most systematic elaborations of erudite critics (from Menéndez Pelayo to Marc Vitse), but this theorized and applied generic system starts from a deductive method, which creates its categories from pre-existing categories (tragedy, comedy, tragicomedy, fiction, truth, history...), but it systematizes them by abstract, hierarchical and non-contradictory relations: the first principle underpinning this categorization is the intended effect on the viewer through the kind of spectacle put into play, and distinguishes dramas from comedies. The second principle is the way of presenting the subject to the viewer, as a real (or historical) one or as imaginary one; if the subject is imaginary, it is worth taking into consideration the modality of imagination, its status of free invention or of previously literaturized subject; and if historical, the modality of the historical: the profane or religious subject; each of these options differently influences the viewer’s receptive attitude. After the application of these two principles can be used other additional criteria that will distinguish groups within gender groups, such as the type of conflict and subconflict (private or public), the setting in which they take place (Europe, the Spanish empire, Arcadia, cities...), and the social rank of the characters that star in them (gods, chivalrous heroes, Arcadian shepherds, urban knights, feudal nobles, villains, princes, kings, courtiers...). From this moment on, the groups are transformed into groupings of convenience, not strictly generic. If the reference is historical we can always emphasize the chronology of the conflict (Middle Ages, contemporary era...), but if it is religious then it should more appropriate than chronology emphasize the literary source (the Old and New Testament, the hagiographic legends...). One can also choose some thematic groupings starting from a very specific feature: for example, we have distinguished among the dramas of private events, those of honour, of deeds, of fortune inconstancy, and mentioned groups of moriscos dramas, of colonization and conquest or of racial conflict. Others may choose, considering them to be clearly indicative of certain tendencies of the *comedia nueva*, the drama or the comedy of captives, or the comedies of secretary, to give two examples.

these four groups there are many variants, but the genres that support the fundamental weigh of this architecture are four: the palatine and urban comedies, the dramas of public famous events of the history of Spain and the dramas of private events; a structural collection, but with a smaller role, is that of the palatine dramas, and a side collection, of great development, although not as determinant as the four groups mentioned before, is that of the hagiographic drama (the *comedies of saints*). On both sides of each of these genres, according to the stages of his writing, some minor but no less significant genres are displayed (pastorals comedies, mythological dramas, dramas of famous European events, etc.).

The system is not closed, because, as one goes deeper into the jungle of Lope's dramatic production, and moreover, into the Spanish Baroque theater, with its thousands of plays, one will reach the conclusion that it is not possible to enclose all the complexity in a rigid system of choices and features, because although it is true that Lope's dramatic discourse, to stick to it, is displayed with aesthetic and ideological coherence and that it often closely follows previous composition patterns, it is not less certain that from time to time, here and there, in one play or another, the discourse tends to deconstruct itself, to explore unexplored routes, to delve into the possibilities of the heterogeneous, of the surprising mixtures, of the excentric cases. There are dramas of free invention which nevertheless seek the pattern of the famous historical events, or of the private events of peasant honour, such as *El villano en su rincón*; the chronicle of famous events, the urban comedy and the drama of private events merge in *La octava maravilla*; there are mixed plays between the profane and the religious subject, like *El caballero del Sacramento* or *El niño inocente de Laguardia*; comedies that as Lope gets older gain seriousness and inner, sometimes moralizing meditation, that bring them close to dramas, this being the case of *Las flores de Don Juan*; there are others still that pursue a behavior guide based on individual experience and solutions - in the style of Montaigne or Machiavelli -, as it occurs in *La Dama boba* or in *El perro del hortelano*. When the reader has got used to thinking of the dramas of peasant honour as historical dramas of serious subject, related to the dignity of the villain and the conflict between nobles and farmers, like *Peribáñez* or *Fuenteovejuna*, one comes across plays that follow the same pattern, but without any historical setting, and with the undramatized treatment of a comedy of contemporary manners, such as *El cuerdo en su casa*. *Los Ponces de Barcelona* is a genealogical play, therefore historical, and with a very

dramatic first act, but it suddenly becomes an urban comedy, set in Barcelona, and then a *novelesca* comedy, whose action takes place in Moorish lands...

And it is not a static system, as it is not created at once, neither in practice nor in our theorization, which has advanced and modified since 1981. But if we stick to the movement of the stage practice of *comedia nueva*, its revolution starts more through comedy than drama, and certainly far more than through tragedy, which was the way the classicists proposed. And it starts with a very vast exploration of genres and subgenres, which will diminish over time, leaving aside a whole range of options that either will not be repeated or will repeat rarely (pastoral, *novelesca* and picaresque comedies, chivalrous dramas).

Starting from 1600 it seems as if Lope's entire production obeyed the order of moving from the primacy of comedy to that of drama, and inside this, to the drama of public famous events, and, additionally, to the religious drama. Within the maturity period, dramas absorb some of the palatine subject, seizing it from comedies, which otherwise undergo a notable change of sophistication, and are incorporated the dramas of peasant honour. Little by little, as the influence of the court increases on the public theatrical system, mythological dramas appear gradually in Lope's work. After 1627, when entering the period characterized as *de senectude*, dramas and comedies tend to balance, and the variety of subgenres that Lope used to handle is reduced. The dramas of public famous events lose their weight decisively, this being the favourite genre of the era of *Arte Nuevo*, for the benefit of the dramas of private events, while comedies transfer their primacy in the use of the palatine subject to dramas. Lope focuses on few dramatic options. On the other hand, the transformation of the conditions of theatrical reception, both by the incidence of court stage practice and by a process of increasing theatrical literaturization, that if in Lope's case it comes from afar it also marks the time of Calderón, is inevitably reflected in their options. The late Lope appears to us being conditioned by his production for the palace: *La noche de San Juan*, represented on the night of the 24th of June of 1631 in the garden of the Count of Monterrey, at a party promoted by the Count Duke of Olivares, and attended by the royal family, still maintains its urban comedy formula for the public open-air theatres; two posterior commissioned plays correspond by their literary subject to the most deeply-rooted court tradition of pageantry, the mythological-pastoral, although they refer to different spectacle models. *El amor enamorado*, represented in the very gardens of the royal

palace and in the presence of the Kings, sometime after 1633, is a hybrid of court pageant and comedy of open-air theatre, staged, thus, with a great variety of scenic effects and a spectacular change of scenery at the end of third *Jornada*, and with an occasional participation of music. Finally, *La selva sin amor*, represented in the Alcázar in 1629, may be considered, according to Barbieri, as the first Spanish opera, meaning by it the text that was sung in its entirety. With *La selva sin amor* we are at a moment of crossroads of the modern theatrical spectacle. On one hand, it is a commissioned play for that renewed court stage practice which now begins to compete with the stage practice of open-air theatres and to regulate itself autonomously, during the reign of Felipe IV. On the other hand, we are witnessing a moment in which music and singing no longer resigned to the subsidiary position of the pieces between two theatrical acts in the manner of the Florentine *intermedi* of the 16th century, strive to become an independent spectacle, the so-called *dramma per musica*, with a theatrical structure, a monodic singing technique (*el stile rappresentativo*), and a pompous stage technology, which originated in Florence in the last decades of the 16th century and which produced its first masterpiece, *Orfeo*, in 1607, and its first great musician-playwright, Monteverdi. Finally, the scenic engineering, in charge of specialists like Cosimo Lotti, responsible for an essentially spectacular staging, as that of *La selva sin amor*, is now beginning to question the model of stage practice in open-air theatres, a model of *poor theatre*, and to fully display the potential of the Baroque spectacularity. *La selva sin amor* shares these three key aspects of the crossroads, and it does it so radically that it will take considerable time to find continuities.

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