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Imaginary Matters: Realizing the Imagination in Early Modern Iberian Culture

Eds Isabel Torres and Anne Holloway

‘Self-Construction and the Imagination in the Drama of Lope de Vega and Cervantes’

Melanie Henry and Jonathan Thacker

Abstract:

In their mature drama Lope de Vega and Cervantes each produced characters of some sophistication. In spite of the conclusions of some scholars, both playwrights were able to imagine, create and sustain the illusion of character depth and development on stage. However, they did this in distinct ways and with differing aims. In this article we examine the ways characters are created and are seen to develop in the two dramatists’ work (using *El castigo sin venganza* and *La entretenida* as examples of their practice). In particular we are interested in the role of the imagination in this process: characters’ use and exploitation of earlier visual, poetic and dramatic models; the creation of theatre within theatre; the power of pre-existing images in self-construction; and the clash of the imaginary and the real world. Although it is common enough to contrast the popular theatre of Lope with the more overtly experimental Cervantes, this article moves beyond the antagonistic confines of the Lope/Cervantes debate to compare in depth their techniques of characterization.

Key words:

Lope de Vega; Cervantes; dramatic characterization; *El castigo sin venganza*; *La entretenida*; imagery; metatheatre; emblem literature.

The imagination is central to drama, to its composition, its performance and its reception. As the dramatist transforms a source or an idea into a play text – dialogue and stage directions – whilst creating the imaginary worlds of each character, he or she draws heavily upon a rich trove of possibilities that come to mind, related, experienced, thought, dreamed, read, seen, heard, sensed. The interpreter, the actor, rehearses using similar resources to create the inner world, the motives for word and action, of the character. The reader, or preferably spectator, recreates or repaints the characters and the story of the play through the clues in the dialogue and thanks to the skill of the actor and the production's creative team. For this process too, the imagination is crucial both for supplying what is not spelled out or remains unsaid and for understanding, recognizing similarity and also glimpsing the scope of the possible, what will often lie beyond the individual's experience. A shared admiration for the dramatist who can engage and hold an audience can easily bring together a *lopista* and a *cervantista* even when the drama they analyse is quite different and at times opposed aesthetically and perhaps ideologically. The purpose of what follows is not to dwell upon arguments about differences but to try to understand how the two dramatists – indeed the two most influential creative writers of the Golden Age – made use of the imagination in their mature dramatic practice.

Our aim here then is to move beyond the antagonistic confines of the prevailing tendency to oppose Lope and Cervantes, in order to compare in depth the playwrights' techniques of dramatic characterization, taking them as equally interesting for what they reveal about the turn of mind of these canonical writers and the period in which they lived. We take it as axiomatic that the *comedia*, in the hands of both dramatists, engages the audience through the illusion of character depth, and that actors must find ways to make their stage personae convincing portrayals which, at some level, prompt and support this engagement. What we are interested in, then, are the distinct ways that Lope and Cervantes, in a period of rapid artistic change, development and experimentation, imagine, create,

sustain and explore character. Our discussion is in the main limited to Lope's *El castigo sin venganza* (1631) and Cervantes's *La entretenida* (published in 1615), play texts which we believe show-case their mature practices and predilections, which represent some of the fruits of their artistic purpose and endeavour.¹

Lope de Vega and *El castigo sin venganza*

In *El castigo sin venganza*, the manner in which the audience is permitted to glimpse the role of images and the imagination in the make-up of its characters – principally Federico and Casandra, but also the duke (though he will not be considered here) – demonstrates, within the world of the play, how they envisage themselves and have constructed their sense of identity. Looked at more universally, we see the playwright uncovering certain tendencies of the human mind. Indeed, it is probably the illusion thus created of realistic, recognizable character depth that accounts for the modernity of the play, its power and tragic force, as well as the enduring admiration scholars and audiences have for it.

The story of 'un marqués de Ferrara', his new young wife and his grown-up son who begins an affair with her, came to Lope from the Italian *cuento* by Matteo Bandello, most probably via Belleforest and then the anonymous Spanish translator of his French *Histoires tragiques*. The Spanish prose version of the story, the eleventh of these *Historias trágicas*, closely follows the French, and is plainly told without any notable sophistication in terms of the use of imagery. What will have caught Lope's eye when he first read the tale was, as ever, a story ripe for dramatization, not the details of how it was told. Indeed, the main draw for all the readers of the story in Italian, French or Spanish, was the content, the *cause célèbre* itself,

¹ Quotations are taken from the following editions: Lope de Vega, *El castigo sin venganza*, ed. Jonathan Thacker (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) and Miguel de Cervantes, *La entretenida*, in *Teatro Completo*, ed. Florencio Sevilla Arroyo and Antonio Rey Hazas (Barcelona: Planeta, 1981), 543-630.

the novelty of the events in fifteenth-century Ferrara (and possibly the moral lessons to be learned from them), rather than their adornment or poeticization.²

It is true that a parallel made in the prose story between the dissolute but unfortunate ruler of Ferrara and the Old Testament King David, is echoed in Lope's play, in which the duke is compared to (and compares himself to) this patriarch. However, Lope resists the temptation to allude to Phaedra and Hippolytus whose story is referred to three times in the Spanish source.³ Similarly the hint of the Venus, Vulcan and Mars story ('había sido ella quien había armado los lazos en que ella y el príncipe se habían enredado') is absent from Lope's play, and other candidates for images possibly re-hashed by the dramatist from the source work are really clichés or commonplaces.⁴ The imagery Lope employs in *El castigo*, mainly in the form of similes, metaphors, analogies, parallels and allegorical stories, is his own invention, then, and is almost entirely absent from the versions of the source story he could have known.

Some of these images that Lope brought to his tragic drama have been singled out and analysed by scholars over the years and have been found to reveal aspects of his poetic wit and dramatic artistry. However, they have been analysed in a piecemeal way or as a tangent to a study whose main focus lies elsewhere, not as we are reading them here, as fundamental to Lope's whole and innovative conception of character. For example, Van Antwerp, finding Lope's use of imagery to be often ironically 'double edged', is one of a number of scholars to examine Batín's famous story of Cisne, the king of France's untamed horse (meant to be the duke) which was rendered docile by a forced encounter with a lion (Casandra) in a cave.⁵ The

² For more details on the relationship of Lope's play to its sources and the sources themselves, see the introduction to Thacker's edition of the play.

³ Victor Dixon and Isabel Torres, 'La madrastra enamorada: ¿Una tragedia de Séneca refundida por Lope de Vega?', *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 19.1 (1994), 39-60 (p. 40).

⁴ For the source story, see the appendix to Lope de Vega, *El castigo sin venganza*, ed. Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez (Barcelona: Octaedro, 2000). The quotation is from p. 245 of this edition.

⁵ Margaret A. Van Antwerp, 'Fearful Symmetry: the Poetic World of *El castigo sin venganza*', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies*, 58 (1981), 205-16 (p. 208).

gracioso's confidence in the role Casandra will play in the duke's life is misplaced as events unfold. Later the duke is described by Casandra as a stallion which has become unbridled and, elsewhere in the play, it is the duke who is compared to a lion, and who ends up tearing apart his wife and son. The secondary meaning of the image takes effect ironically, as Frenk explains, 'sin que los personajes que relaten esas historias emblemáticas se percaten de ello'. McGrady opines, similarly, that, 'la interpretación de un cuentecillo ofrecida por su narrador resulta inexacta; hay que profundizar hasta un segundo nivel para encontrar su verdadero sentido'.⁶ In this case Federico, taking up Batín's image of Casandra, imagines himself carrying in his arms a 'león que me ha de hacer pedazos' (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 312). Soon afterwards he will literally carry Casandra in his arms, rescuing her from the riverbank, and, in a sense other than the one he imagines, through love, she will poison him, causing his destruction.

These individual images and moments of imagining, often ironic or deceptive in some way, are in fact part of a broader, coherent, Lopean concern with the workings of the human imagination and its relationship to the human self, which are played out in the drama. They are evidence of how far the Spanish *comedia* has developed since Lope's (and Cervantes's) engagement with the Madrid *corrales* in the 1580s. The concern is signalled in the opening scene in which the duke discusses the nature of metaphorical representation with his lackeys and they overhear a play rehearsal, prompting the potentate's musings about the theatre and the individual. It is not, then, just single uses of images – however startling or telling – which make an impression on reader and audience, that underpin or undermine judgements about the play and its characters. Lope is interested, from the opening lines, in ways of representing

⁶ Margit Frenk, 'Claves metafóricas en *El castigo sin venganza*', *Filología*, 20:2 (1985), 147-55 (p. 153); Donald McGrady, 'Sentido y función de los cuentecillos en *El castigo sin venganza* de Lope', *Bulletin Hispanique*, 85: 1-2 (1983), 45-64 (p. 56). Edward Wilson also saw that the imagery of the play emphasizes and underscores the 'deceits and confusions with which all in Ferrara are surrounded', but he left the observation undeveloped, Edward M. Wilson, 'Quando Lope quiere, quiere', in *Spanish and English Literature of the 16th and 17th Centuries: Studies in Discretion, Illusion and Mutability* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 155-83 (p.160).

the world, in the manners in which characters envisage or paint themselves and others, and build themselves (or their selves) through imitation and analogy and, of course, the reasons behind this behaviour. In particular he explores the way the human imagination creates and responds to models and images, tells itself stories and has recourse to patterns and mental pictures when it comes to acting and justifying actions. Such mental 'self-fashioning' has moral consequences for characters (and audience), but Lope does not prioritize these in the play, being more engaged with the complexity of human endeavour. This is a mature and compassionate playwright who, like Cervantes in so many of his works, teaches us to understand before we judge.

Lope's young lovers, Casandra and Federico, have vivid imaginations in which compete visual images, for example from paintings and emblems, and literary figures and types, from poetry, mythology, chronicle and romance. These ready-made, accessible images appeal to the individual's mind at times when it cannot immediately grasp or understand the emotions being felt. They provide a model, through analogy, and appeal to the same human tendency in the audience-member, sparking a (perhaps unconscious) response. Federico is less aware of this process than Casandra, if he is conscious of it at all. These analogies of the self with a world, with characters, envisaged before, vicariously, might be explained today by the promptings of the unconscious, but in Casandra's case at least, are typically ascribed to an agent, usually malevolent, which plants the idea to the detriment of the individual. Thus, for example, the duchess is able to explain in a soliloquy in act 2 how love, personified as might be expected,

En cosas inaccesibles
quiere poner fundamentos
como si fuesen visibles;

que no puede haber contentos

fundados en imposibles (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1816-20).

She means that the apparently unimaginable or inexpressible (her incestuous desire for Federico and her concomitant urge for a satisfying vengeance on the Duke which combine fatally here) can become material. Indeed, for forbidden, nameless desire to become reality and bear fruit, she has to bring to mind examples from history: ‘A sus padres han querido / sus hijas y sus hermanos / algunas’ (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1846-48). The moment of naming, possible thanks to her memory and knowledge of the Bible or ancient history – ‘no fuera / la postrera enamorada, / ni la traidora primera’ (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1843-45) – gives the desire some currency in the imagination, though it remains illicit, a ‘desatino’ (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 1825), as she admits.

Federico, when questioned by Batín at the end of act 1, is also having trouble with his imagination as he battles with *his* illicit desire for his step-mother:

FEDERICO: ¡Qué necia imaginación!

BATÍN: ¿Cómo necia? ¿Qué tenemos?

FEDERICO: Bien dicen que nuestra vida
es sueño, y que toda es sueño,
pues que, no sólo dormidos,
pero aun estando despiertos,
cosas imagina un hombre
que al más abrasado enfermo
con frenesí no pudieran

llegar a su entendimiento (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 926-35).

His unfettered imagination presents a disturbing image to his intellect. These ‘cosas’ are no doubt the desired sexual consummation of the impossible relationship with Casandra which

take root here and haunt him throughout act 2. He is shocked and begins to break down when Batín guesses his thoughts and lists, comically, a number of taboo situations in which he has to force himself to restrain himself, not to act. The possibility of breaking a taboo has occurred to Federico too:

¡Jesús! ¡Dios me valga! ¡Afuera
desatinados conceptos
de sueños despiertos! ¿Yo
tal imagino, tal pienso,
tal me prometo, tal digo,
tal fabrico, tal emprendo?
¡No más, extraña locura! (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 958-64).

Faced with the progression within his mind from fleeting ‘imaginación’ to solid ‘empresa’, he is able to pull back to the (dis)comfort provided by the impossibility of the love. (Even that, though, as we shall see, has a literary model behind it.)

A few lines later, when Batín asks his master why he is hiding a secret from him, Federico explains that,

no es cosa que hice,
y así nada te reservo;
que las imaginaciones
son espíritus sin cuerpo.
Lo que no es, ni ha de ser,
no es esconderte mi pecho (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 966-71).

These ‘espíritus sin cuerpo’ which belong in an imaginary realm, according to the count, will in fact gain substance, ‘fundamentos’ (as Casandra has put it), without Federico ever being

aware of how his imagination has tricked him, has rushed in to fill the uncertainty with alternative models, mainly literary in origin.

Having established the importance of imagery in the play and the role of the imagination, signalled here by Lope, in the minds and self-perception of both of these characters, let us examine some of these models to which they have recourse in a little more detail.

In his first appearance on stage, even before the crisis occasioned by his attraction to his step-mother, Federico is already compromised by his imagination. He strays from the Mantua road into a *locus amoenus* inhabiting the guise of a wistful, introspective pastoral figure in order to examine his feelings, to pull back from his self, at the prospect of his father's marriage and his future disinheritance. The personified natural scene, made for melancholic self-contemplation, belongs to a model which Federico repaints for the audience in broad brush-strokes and with which he is (and we are) familiar as a reader of pastoral poetry and perhaps also from the emblem book tradition:

la gente dejo, fatigado
de varios pensamientos,
y al dosel destos árboles, que, atentos
a las dormidas ondas deste río,
en su puro cristal sonoro y frío,
mirando están sus copas,
después que los vistió de verdes ropas,
de mí mismo quisiera retirarme (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 240-47).⁷

⁷ The scene seems to us to belong to the pastoral tradition rather than to the emblematic depiction of the melancholy man, though there is some common ground between the two. On the latter, see Jorge Alcázar, 'La figura emblemática de la melancolía en *El sueño de Sor Juana*', *Poligrafías*, 1 (1996), 123-50.

And it happens that Casandra too is in contemplative mood seeking out the same *locus amoenus* on her way to Ferrara in order to ruminate on or distract herself from the imminent marriage to a man about whom she has heard only negative stories. We do not hear her intentions from her own mouth but Rutilio explains why she has dismissed him from her presence and we deduce her purpose:

Mandóme alejar, pensando
dar nieve al agua risueña,
bañando en ella los pies
para que corriese perlas (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 532-35).

Batín is characteristically quick to pick up the poetic resonances of the scene – pastoral and Petrarchan –, describing Casandra and Lucrecia as ‘ninfas’ (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 359). Both Federico and Casandra, uncertain how to act in their new and emotionally challenging circumstances, have recourse to a pre-formed image, taken from a literary world. They do what love-sick or melancholic shepherds do in pastoral poetry and romance, seeking solace by a shady stream. And their meeting by the softly-flowing river and instant mutual attraction is lent an authority or legitimacy – perhaps even an energy – by the pre-existing model present in both of their minds. Their very straying into a literary landscape is presented as an error, however, though Casandra sees it as a fortunate one, with Lope’s irony to the fore, ‘Dicha ha sido haber errado / el camino’ (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 478-79).

Beyond the poetic realm, in their real world, the love they feel is taboo, of course, and once it is kindled neither can, at first, find either the language to express it or another model against which to measure it. In Federico’s case love has wakened him from his melancholic self-contemplation verging on self-pity. At first it leads to a ridiculous, over-blown image of Casandra giving birth to him, a ‘fantasía’ (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 523) he excuses with a piece of sophistry about the sun’s ability to be born anew every day despite being old. And the clumsy

re-birth idea soon makes way for a characteristically confused rush of identifications with (this time) mythological figures which would take him soaring from the pastoral idyll to the court of Ferrara:

Señor marqués, yo quisiera
ser un Júpiter entonces,
que, transformándome cerca
en aquel ave imperial,
aunque las plumas pusiera
a la luz de tanto sol,
ya de Faetonte soberbia,
entre las doradas uñas,
tusón del pecho la hiciera,
y por el aire en los brazos
por mi cuidado la vieran

los del duque, mi señor (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 561-72).

Superficially Federico is expressing a desire to take Casandra directly to the arms of the duke, his father. However, the mythological stories he invokes have more sinister, violent or tragic overtones which he cannot intend: Jupiter turned into the eagle who snatches the beautiful youth, Ganymede, and transports him to Olympus, to become the god's cup-bearer; the reference to exposing his wings to the power of the sun (here Casandra, since he will fly too high in directing his reckless love to her), makes Federico fleetingly echo the Icarus story in which father (Daedalus) and son each contribute to the tragic outcome; the reference to Phaethon is also to the well-known myth in which the youth comes to a sad end through his own and his father's fault; and in transforming Casandra into the fleece, he evokes the story of Phrixus and Helle, transported on the back of the golden ram to escape from their step-

mother, Ino. A series of unconscious desires and associated fears are at play in these myths, remembered from the school-room or emblem books and mixed together, but the overriding senses which emerge for the audience from Federico's wishful self-construction are of naivety, *atrevimiento* and impending tragedy.

The euphoria of the rescue combined with relief that she is not in hostile or ignoble hands also encourages Casandra to wax lyrical. Noting the benefit of having erred 'pues más presto os conocí' (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 480), she has recourse to an image, reproduced time and again in poetry and emblem books of the period:

Cual suele en el mar airado
la tempestad, después della,
ver aquella lumbre bella,
así fue mi error la noche,
mar el río, nave el coche,
yo el piloto, y vos mi estrella (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 482-87).

The pilot places his faith in the star to guide the ship through a storm. Superficially the image may seem to fit the situation, though in fact Casandra's ordeal – the coach stuck in the riverbank – is hardly as perilous. The overblown imagery, together with the placing of the word, 'estrella' (with the additional ironic meaning of 'destiny') at the end of the *décima*, alerts the audience to the excess. It is the hint that Lope's intention is ironic.

Whether Lope had a specific or more general image in mind, the parallel is interesting for the light it sheds on Casandra's character and her self-dramatization. Alciato's emblem on 'la esperanza cercana', which has Castor and Pollux (St Elmo's fire) in the background and a struggling ship to the fore, is perhaps the best known representation of the idea in the period, but, as we shall see shortly when we return to Federico, Lope may also have had to hand

Villava's *Empresas espirituales y morales* (1613), which fits the context of *El castigo* well.⁸ The *lema* of his emblematic representation 'del pecador', depicting a ship facing a polarized choice of stars, reads *Ut flector ab uno, mox alium cerno* ('When I distance myself from one, I immediately discover the other'), an ironic commentary on the sinner who steers his ship easily to a new destination and, incidentally, cannot escape a divine 'castigo justo' in the end (see Figure 1).

Whatever the playwright's inspiration for the image put into Casandra's mouth, Lope's characterization of her here is meant first, to demonstrate her imaginative faculties and histrionic tendencies and second, to prefigure for the audience her decision to follow Federico when she finds herself in troubled waters after her new husband's neglect in act 2.

Like Casandra, Federico is an impressionable youth. The prospect of her new role as duchess frightens her, while his security is threatened by a sudden, acute recognition of his lack of a role. This is caused by his father's failures to guide him appropriately and the arrival of the bewitching Casandra whose purpose in Ferrara is to produce an heir who will render him irrelevant. Faced with such a crisis Federico imitates types he recognizes, unaware of the consequences of his identification with them. He is the melancholic figure in the pastoral landscape, he is the headstrong youth (who does not realize until it is too late that a reckless flight will cause his death), and in act 2 he becomes the pelican and the courtly lover, further doomed iconographical and poetic models taken from the apparent safety of his imagination. His character is underpinned by a succession of borrowed images and ideas which, brilliantly sewn into a convincing and coherent whole by the dramatist, betray his principal weakness.

The model of the courtly lover appeals to Federico when, in the conversation with Batín at the close of act 1 to which we have already referred, he recognizes his love as

⁸ Juan Francisco de Villava, *Empresas espirituales y morales* (Baeza: Fernando Díaz de Montoya, 1613).

impossible, ‘Con eso puedo / morir de imposible amor, / y tener posibles celos’ (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 991-93). The impossibility of his love becomes almost a refrain in act 2, with his ‘imposible pensamiento’ and a love that is ‘imposible eternamente’ central to the play’s only sonnet, for example. Once again the poetic model is tempting but deficient within the real life of the play. A love that ought to be impossible, that ought to consist of the lover admiring his untouchable, disdainful beloved on her pedestal, is nothing of the sort given Casandra’s feelings and especially the opening presented to her to avenge the duke’s neglect. For the duchess, considering how to respond to Federico’s passion, ‘los imposibles parecen / fáciles’ (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1566-67) and in the end, after the duke has returned and she is fully committed to the affair ‘no hay a amor imposible’ (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 2766). Unfortunately for Federico, the image of himself he has fashioned is again faulty, this time because, somewhat unexpectedly to his poetic eyes, Casandra fails to conform to the paradigm of the unattainable *belle dame sans merci*.

There is no doubt that Federico suffers from his feelings for his step-mother and that he is confused by them. His ‘mal [...] no cabe en mi razón’ (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1237-38) and he must go beyond his own experience or knowledge to express it. Thus his self-construction as a lover becomes heavily dependent on the imagination, the paradox-rich courtly model, to which suffering is essential, evident for example in the paradoxical living death he experiences:

Tal estoy que no me atrevo
ni a vivir ni a morir ya,
por ver que el vivir será
volver a morir de nuevo.

Y si no soy mi homicida,
es por ser mi mal tan fuerte

que, porque es menos la muerte,

me dejo estar con la vida (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1208-15).

Batín's response to his complaints, that he is like a hermaphrodite, neither one thing nor the other, is a welcome comic undermining of his master's self-presentation, but it has no effect on Federico. The latter goes on melodramatically in his exchanges with Casandra in act 2 to compare himself to the phoenix (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 1316) because of his repeated deaths, and his own 'locura' (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 1478) to that of another flurry of figures from legend and antiquity who risked overreaching: Phaethon, Icarus, Bellerophon, Sinon and Jason. The parallels are telling even if Federico is claiming potentially to exceed their mythological boldness in having fallen for his step-mother. They involve attempts to usurp or challenge the role of the father or ruler (Phaeton, Bellerophon), to aspire to the sun (Icarus, with the sun being the lady/Casandra for the courtly lover), to overcome Troy (with an impregnated horse giving birth to violence and destruction) and to steal the golden fleece (Casandra, in the *conde*'s earlier analogy) from King Aeetes of Colchis.

Federico's constant searching for parallels to his own story – figures or images which explain his circumstances – is expressive of his insecurity, lack of self-knowledge and perhaps the absence of a role model, evidence of a paternal dereliction of duty. Lope shows how this individual again creates himself by means of his imagination in the next major image he uses of himself, that of the pelican. The Indian pelican, which can represent both greed and Christ's sacrifice – since the adult bird was thought capable of resurrecting its children by piercing its own side and feeding them with its blood – has already been explored by scholars and its central place in the play (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1502-13) remarked upon.⁹

⁹ On this central image see especially Mitchell D. Triwedi, 'The Source and Meaning of the Pelican Fable in *El castigo sin venganza*', *Modern Language Notes*, 92 (1977), 326-29, and Currie K Thompson, 'Unstable Irony in Lope de Vega's *El castigo sin venganza*', *Studies in Philology*, 78 (1981), 224-40.

Federico becomes the pelican whose nest is threatened by the fire set by the hunter as a trap to catch the adult bird, which fans the flames in trying to rescue its young:

El cazador con industria
pone al pelícano indiano
fuego alrededor del nido,
y él, decendiendo de un árbol
para librar a sus hijos,
bate las alas turbado,
con que más enciende el fuego
que piensa que está matando;
finalmente se le queman,
y sin alas en el campo
se deja coger, no viendo
que era imposible volando (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1502-13).

The young are Federico's thoughts, he explains, fruits of his love for Casandra; the nest is his silence; she is the huntress who has tried to trap him; and his love beats its wings and destroys them in an attempt to save them. This further self-dramatization, with the winged Federico crashing fatally to earth (once again), is again telling and ironic. He paints himself as the victim, the prey, when he himself has agency and is pursuing a love he should forsake. The pictorial representation of the pelican vainly fighting the fire is also to be found in Villava, with the motto, *Non discurrit amor*, or 'Love does not extend to reason' (see Figure 2). Perhaps this is meant to be Lope's ironic commentary on the character. Here is a man who veers from one fanciful depiction of himself to another, without ever taking responsibility for himself.

These are not the only cases of Federico and Casandra dramatizing themselves or presenting themselves using borrowed images: in Casandra's lament at the opening of act 2, she fantasizes about being 'una ruda villana' (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 999), waking beside her peasant husband in his hut, and, when encouraging Federico to express his love, she presents herself, amongst other images, as a painted Venus, 'rendida a un sátiro o fauno' (Vega, *El castigo*, l. 1493). The former image suggests Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and the latter a number of Renaissance paintings of this mythological scene.¹⁰ Other characters, notably the duke and Aurora, also borrow images to construct themselves and their views of others.

Casandra does seem more self-aware, that is more aware of her self as consisting of a series of images presented to others, than Federico is, especially after the *desengaño* which takes place between acts 1 and 2. In the opening *décima* of her first soliloquy of act 2, she ruminates again on the power of the imagination as her designated role in life turns to ashes around her and she seeks both affection and revenge:

No ha hecho en la tierra el cielo
cosa de más confusión
que fue la imaginación
para el humano desvelo;
ella vuelve el fuego en hielo
y en el color se transforma
del deseo, donde forma
guerra, paz, tormenta, y calma;

¹⁰ According to McKendrick, Casandra allows herself 'to realize fantasies by formulating and defining them', Melveena McKendrick, 'Language and Silence in *El castigo sin venganza*', *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 35 (1983), 79-95 (p. 91). On the connection with Renaissance painting, see Frederick A. de Armas, 'From Mantua to Madrid: The License of Desire in Giulio Romano, Correggio and Lope de Vega's *El castigo sin venganza*', *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 59 (2007), 233-65 (pp. 246-48).

y es una manera de alma

que más engaña que informa (Vega, *El castigo*, ll. 1532-41).

Like Federico, Casandra admits to confusion. However, unlike him she recognizes that the imagination is adept at transforming itself to blend in with the individual's desire. It is a deceptive force, liable to trick the unaware or the unwary. Casandra's words are the clearest expression of Lope's concern in the play with the role of the imagination.

That the mature dramatist so consistently undermined and ironized the images characters have recourse to (of themselves and of others), is clearly intentional. The clues are there for the audience from the opening scene of the tragedy, to which imaginative representation is metatheatrically central. Whereas the search for metaphorical equivalence is generally designed to aid understanding, to produce a pleasing recognition of likeness between the individual or feeling and the new terms in which it is 'described', in *El castigo*, the analogy is almost always an ironic failure, and a harbinger of doom. Lope may intend to be moralistic here but the fact that all of the major characters suffer from the same fault to different degrees suggests that his characterization is pointing to a human tendency toward excessive use of the imagination leading to self-delusion, a tendency examined also by other great writers of the Spanish Golden Age, not least amongst them, Miguel de Cervantes.

Cervantes and *La entretenida*

Cervantes's *La entretenida* has conventionally been received as a parody of Lope's well-established *capa y espada* formula and an indictment of orthodox *corral* practices.¹¹ The drama distorts the Lopean model deliberately and calls attention to its mockery of the dominant stage and the poetics espoused by the *comedia nueva*. Considered from this perspective, *La entretenida* is symptomatic of its creator's lack of dramatic success and his

¹¹ See, for instance, Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, 'On *La entretenida* of Cervantes', *Modern Language Notes*, 74 (1959), 418–21; Stanislav Zimic, 'Cervantes frente a Lope y a la comedia nueva: Observaciones sobre *La entretenida*', *Anales Cervantinos*, 15 (1976), 19–119; Francisco José López Alfonso, '*La entretenida*, parodia y teatralidad', *Anales Cervantinos*, 24 (1986), 193–205.

efforts to destabilize the prototype championed by the new theatre of the 1600s. Whilst this line of enquiry is entirely valid, it represents a partial assessment which risks an approach that does not exploit fully the complex set of social interactions and antagonisms which drive and complicate the play. More recent analysis, such as that promoted by Mariscal, recognizes the critical demand for robust interpretation which moves beyond a Lope-centred methodology in order to explore the nuances of a dramatically-represented world in crisis.¹² One such facet of the turbulent environment depicted by *La entretenida* is Cervantes's multi-layered representation of the strategies of self-discovery and negotiation with which his dramatic characters engage so compellingly.

In *La entretenida*, the imagination operates as a mechanism integral to the theatrical apparatus. The characters of Cervantes's play perceive and construct themselves via metadramatic machinations which expose quite blatantly the processes of making and unmaking, fashioning and re-fashioning in which they participate as they shape themselves and subjectively attempt to devise their lives as building blocks of society.¹³ The audience is allowed – and most likely induced – to see how the imagination functions prominently within the characters' intricate and often convoluted strategies of self-cultivation and portrayal, in a way which is both similar to and distinct from that 'employed' by Federico and Casandra in *El castigo sin venganza*. The concept of identity and its significance within *La entretenida* has been well highlighted by Friedman's study which explores the ramifications of the

¹² George Mariscal's reading of the play particularly focuses on issues of class and gender. See 'Woman and Other Metaphors in Cervantes's *Comedia famosa de la entretenida*', *Theatre Journal*, 46 (1994), 213-30.

¹³ Critical analysis of *La entretenida* has also tended to focus on the *comedia*'s metatheatrical facets. Such readings illuminate Cervantes's work as a self-reflexive construct which draws explicit attention to the play's artifice. See Edward Friedman, *The Unifying Concept: Approaches to the Structure of Cervantes' Comedias* (York, SC: Spanish Literature Publications, 1981); Carmen Cubero, 'En torno a *La entretenida* de Cervantes. El teatro dentro del teatro y el teatro sobre el teatro', in *El teatro dentro del teatro: Cervantes, Lope, Tirso y Calderón. Actas del 'Grand Séminaire' de la Universidad de Neuchâtel, 18-19 de Mayo de 1995*, ed. Irene Andrés-Suárez, José Manuel López de Abiada and Pedro Ramírez Molas (Madrid: Editorial Verbum, 1997), 59–72; Eric J. Kartchner, 'Empty Words: Promises and Deception in *La entretenida*', *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 56 (2004), 327–43.

protagonists' fictional re-creations.¹⁴ In fact, the play's mediations of identity are the central axis on which it pivots. In Cervantes's drama, we are presented with characters that rarely play themselves. Rather, they are people in flux; dynamic characters in search of themselves and disposed to traverse labyrinthine social apparatus in their pursuit of new *modi vivendi*. Many of the protagonists – and even those we might deem secondary to the play's action – characterize themselves as someone or something which deviates from their own role in life. Within the kinetic plots and role-plays constructed by the drama's characters there is a heightened sense of transience. The world of the play becomes an ever-shifting locus of social struggle and composite collaborations through which the characters shape themselves and others. Cervantes fabricates a dramatic domain not unlike that of *Pedro de Urdemalas* in which his protean protagonist launches himself from one scheme to another in search of a permanent state of motion.

Significantly, *La entretenida*'s portrayal of self-navigation and promotion is present in the behaviour of the aristocracy and the lower classes alike. Undoubtedly, Cervantes undermines conventional *comedia* structure when he attributes six of the ten principal parts to the play's servants and permits them to voice two thirds of the lines.¹⁵ The playwright's prominent and subversive positioning of the servant class likely unsettles the expectations of the reader/spectator. Principles of hierarchy and notions of a stratified society are undercut by the working class characters who assume leading roles and fabricate their own plots within the play. Rather than imitate the conduct of their employers or help their masters to achieve their desires, as per *comedia* conventions, the servants live a distinctly separate existence to those who master them. In Walthaus's view, this strategy is suggestive of the individuality of

¹⁴ Friedman contends that the failure of Cervantes's characters results from the negation of true selves and the assumption of inauthentic roles. See *The Unifying Concept*, 108-17. See also 'The Comic Vision of Cervantes's *La entretenida*', *Theatralia*, 5 (2003), 351-59.

¹⁵ See Jean-Louis Fleckniakoska, 'Quelques propos sur la Comedia famosa de *La entretenida*', *Anales Cervantinos*, 11 (1972), 17-32.

the servants whilst functioning as a unique counterpoint to the actions of the *galanes* and *damas*.¹⁶ It has the additional consequence, of course, of creating an impression of a disintegrating and fractured community. The servants often work against their employers by creating schemes which undermine the authority of the ruling class and expose the fault lines within a socially-constructed hierarchic sphere. The rupture is compounded by the frequent allusions made by the servants to the unjust hardships and abuse they endure at the hands of the governing class. Ocaña not only laments his master's forceful treatment (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 604-06) but complains that his social position precludes recognition of his innate ability and intelligence:

A nadie se le trasluce,
por más que yo lo procuro,
el ingenio lucio y puro
que en este lacayo luce (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 613-16).

Cristina's well-articulated speech at the opening of act 2 points to an abusive mistress/servant relationship which disdains the lower classes on account of a lack of propriety indicative of humble rank (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 991-1050). Both expressions suggest the fragility of an association between virtue and morality as well as the discrimination exploited by those with access to discourses of power. *La entretenida* thus bristles with dark undertones which consistently threaten its generic status and the very title which frames it. Spadaccini and Talens note the presence of such a strategy in the *entremeses*: 'beneath the jocular and festive rhythm of Cervantes's farces, through the eccentric dialogues of the character types, there lies a series of ideas about a society in crisis'.¹⁷ The comic backdrop of *La entretenida* and the

¹⁶ Rita Walthaus, 'Contrapunto, distancia, aislamiento: *La entretenida* de Cervantes como drama barroco', in *Cervantes. Estudios en la víspera de su centenario*, ed. José Ángel Ascunce Arrieta (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1994), 447-62 (p. 450).

¹⁷ Nicholas Spadaccini and Jenaro Talens, *Through the Shattering Glass: Cervantes and the Self-Made World* (London; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 41.

often nonsensical behaviour exhibited by its dramatic inhabitants superficially mask a problematic culture characterized by powerful tensions.

Although *La entretenida*'s servants and their masters share little in common, each social group is adept at creating illusions and assembling mental fictions, though the sources of these are less innocently, or rather are more knowingly or archly used, than in Lope's tragedy. Cristina, a *fregona* and one of the drama's focal characters, imagines herself as a lady pursued by no less than three suitors. Her language throughout the play repeatedly conforms to 'societal and literary conventions' as she dramatizes herself as a heroine and desired woman who must choose which man to marry; a choice predicated on the basis of rank and advantage.¹⁸ Dorotea, Marcela Almendárez's maid, fancies herself as her mistress's friend and confidante rather than assume the role of subordinate. Muñoz, an *escudero*, is the architect of a scheme in which he coaches the student Cardenio to usurp fraudulently the character and role of his superior Don Silvestre. Marcela Almendárez similarly promotes misrepresentation when she purports that she is the Marcela with whom her brother, Don Antonio, says that he is in love. She has recourse to metaliterary allusion to explain and justify the situation:

¿Ya no se sabe que Amón
amó a su hermana Tamar?
¿Y no nos vienen a dar
Mirra y su padre ocasión
de temer estos incestos? (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 503-07).

Don Ambrosio utilizes a parallel strategy when he compares the frustration he feels in his search for the mysterious Marcela Osorio to that of Sisyphus (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, l. 1557). The deployment of this analogical infrastructure allows the characters to express

¹⁸ Kartchner, 'Empty Words', 336.

emotions and make sense of their circumstances, albeit in an ironic and hyperbolic fashion. Although the use of imagery does not portend tragedy, in the mode of *El castigo*, it signifies insecurities and foregrounds language as a vehicle through which *La entretenida*'s characters attempt to transcend limitations and lend credibility to latent desire. Collectively, the servants and their masters harness the power of the imagination in their negotiation – and negation – of identity.¹⁹ As the play's characters manoeuvre the 'real' and creatively constructed worlds which they inhabit, their sense of self seemingly becomes 'what is necessary in order to extract maximum advantage from a problematical situation' – an approach which, as McKendrick discerns, permeates the Lopean *comedia*.²⁰

Much more is at stake, however, for the working class in their dalliance with invention. Despite the servants' acute awareness of their exclusion from sites of power and privilege, they remain highly class conscious and in tune with the accoutrements accessible to authority. Muñoz is eager to obtain clothing which will symbolize social ascension:

estoy
pensando siempre y soñando
cuándo ha de llegar el cuándo
mude el pellejo en que estoy;
cuándo querrá aquel planeta
que sobre mi predomina,
que remedien mi ruina
el gran sastre y la bayeta (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 808-15).

Not unlike *Lazarillo de Tormes*'s *escudero*, Muñoz associates external adornment with a system of rank and is willing to invest in it. Cristina is similarly enamoured with social

¹⁹ See Friedman, *The Unifying Concept*, 113.

²⁰ Melveena McKendrick, 'Writings for the Stage', in *The Cambridge Companion to Cervantes*, ed. Anthony Cascardi (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 136.

standing. In *La entretenida*'s opening scene, Cristina spurns Ocaña on account of his lowly status (*lacayo*) and dramatizes an imagined pedigree:

¿Soy, por ventura, mujer
que he de avasallarme a un paje?
¿O vengo yo de linaje
de tan bajo proceder?
¿No soy yo la que en mi flor,
por no querer ofendella,
presumo más de doncellas,
que no el Cid de campeador?
¿No soy yo de los Capoches
de Oviedo? (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 53-62).

Her repeated use of 'ser' coupled with a determination to present an untainted and prominent ancestry underlines Cristina's sense of self-importance and the degree to which notions of lineage and discourses of blood permeate society. Cristina's skewed self-perception directs her outer public self and her exchanges with others. Throughout the play, the kitchen maid vehemently rejects insinuations of immoral behaviour and a lack of decorum.²¹ Her attitude toward others remains haughty and is marked by an over-inflated superiority complex. Cristina cannot, however, withstand easily the demands of her employers despite her lucid protestations of unjust treatment at their hands. The *fregona* disparages her mistress's conduct yet yearns for her employer's role and associated privilege; a desire which is mirrored by her choice of a partner predicated on social standing. Cristina's aspirations incongruously echo the patriarchal codes advocated by Don Pedro Osorio's efforts to marry his daughter, Marcela, to a suitably ranked nobleman. Whilst Marcela resists her father's

²¹ Kartchner notes that Cristina fails to accept the sexual implications of her role as *fregona* which would most likely undermine the expectations of characters as well as readers of the play. See 'Empty Promises', 340.

manipulations, Cristina vainly wishes to enact the rigidity of social edifice. In Greenblatt's terms, Cervantes's female protagonist is 'the ideological product of the relations of power in [...] society'.²² She is subject to codes of culture and authority which compel a realignment of self in tandem with the demands of dominant values. Thus, it is role-play and theatrical self-representation which allow Cristina the prospect of experimenting with the possibilities of a world diametrically opposed to the subordinate position she ordinarily occupies. In contradictory fashion, society's power relations exercise over the *fregona* a heightened level of control and rouse within her the unfeasibility of social mobility.

It is in act 3 when the world of the servants and that of their masters collide spectacularly causing disarray and confusion; within a locus which simultaneously unsettles Lope's formula and carves out a distinctive Cervantine space.²³ The servants direct and perform an *entremés*, allowing for both a diversion and a departure from their troubled realities. This imaginative theatre space grants the lower classes a degree of autonomy in order to seek out 'las placeres de la imaginación en un mundo que les ha quitado acceso al poder', as El Saffar frames it.²⁴ This is a *mundo al revés* in which the servants assume the upper hand and the aristocracy are forced to observe the more passive role of spectator. Throughout these scenes, the nobility are subject to the fashioning powers and dramatic authority of the servant class. In the Bakhtinian-like space hierarchy is disrupted temporarily and the social codes which determine the servants' compliance and marginality are overturned. *La entretenida*'s *entremés* bears many similarities to the play-within-the-play in Cervantes's *Los baños de Argel*. In the *comedia de cautiva*, Spanish prisoners perform an interlude for their Muslim captors which not only permits a degree of escapism from their

²² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (London; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 256.

²³ See Melanie Henry, *The Signifying Self: Cervantine Drama as Counter-Perspective Aesthetic* (London: MHRA, 2013), 30.

²⁴ Ruth El Saffar, 'Voces Marginales y la visión del ser cervantino', *Anthropos*, 98-99 (1989), 59-62 (p. 61).

incarceration but also facilitates a space in which they harness a right to self-expression and implement a level of control over their jailors.²⁵ Neither *Los baños* nor *La entretenida*, then, seeks to confirm conventional distributions of power. Despite the fact that in *La entretenida* Don Antonio's approval is required before the play can commence (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2033-38), it is the servants who appropriate authority to the extent that they toy with established dramatic imaginings, producing a play that has no distinct be

ginning or end. As with *Los baños*, the actors forge a highly fluid theatrical domain which requires its audience to pay careful attention to the dramatic apparatus on display. In fact, not only does Cristina reiterate at different times that the *entremés* is about to begin (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2201-2; 2233), but her repeated use of the verb 'ensayar' leaves the spectator unsure whether the performance will constitute a play or a rehearsal.²⁶ The servant directors and actors are, therefore, innovators and craftsmen rendering an illusion that will play with and challenge audience perspective – both on and off stage.

In an illusory space formed by fictions and constituted by actors/actresses who have assumed alternate roles from the outset of *La entretenida*, it is striking that the servants' pretensions and affectations are dropped with immediate effect. Paradoxically, within the theatrical arena the servants project a degree of authenticity and play *themselves* rather than revert to the fabricated roles they have adopted from *La entretenida*'s opening scenes. This is compounded visually by Cervantes's stage directions which stipulate that Ocaña and Torrente dress 'como lacayos embozados' (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, l. 2235) and Cristina and Dorotea 'como fregonas' (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, l. 2250). Cervantes makes issues of interiority central to the workings of the play when protagonists such as the socially-

²⁵ For further discussion of the metaplay's inversion of the captor/captive relationship, see Melanie Henry, 'Playing Lope in Cervantes's *Los baños de Argel*', in *Artifice and Invention in the Spanish Golden Age*, ed. Terry O'Reilly and Stephen Boyd (Oxford: Legenda, 2014), 116-25.

²⁶ Jonathan Thacker comments on Cervantes's blurring of the boundaries in *La entretenida*'s metaplay. See 'Play rehearsals on the Golden Age stage', in *Artifice and Invention in the Spanish Golden Age*, ed. Terry O'Reilly and Stephen Boyd (Oxford: Legenda, 2014), 126-35 (p. 133).

motivated Cristina divest themselves of their convoluted theatrical representations in order to enact their own selves and lives. In the *entremés*, the working class characters retain their social positions, occupations and names within self-consciously constructed roles which prod the spectator's attention toward the socio-cultural codes which impinge upon the lived experience of the interlude's actors.²⁷ The performative act, therefore, re-produces and amplifies social relations for both the on and off stage audience. The deployment of stereotypical expressions of servanthood and the desertion of previously contrived persons collectively prime an audience for the ideologically harnessed space which the representation creates. As we will see, the system of signs projected by the servants' theatrical interpretation is not a simple mimetic reflection of social practices but a highly charged forum where conflicting discourses intersect.

The complex and rigid nature of social precepts is developed forcefully by the performers' dialogue. In the opening scene, Cristina and Dorotea re-represent their roles as servants, commenting on the eating habits and behaviour of their high-born mistresses (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2260-89). The scene not only demystifies the power and inaccessibility of the dominant classes but goes so far as to insinuate that religious devotion practised by noblewomen amounts to façade and pretence. Cristina and Dorotea make clear that they are privy to intimate information which could potentially challenge the orthodox master/servant dichotomy:

CRISTINA:	Si ellas fueran resbaladoras de carcaño, acaso tropezaran aquí, y allí rodaran; y, sabiendo nosotras sus melindres, tuviéramos la nuestra sobre el hito:
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²⁷ For a further discussion of the way in which the servants 're-represent' themselves in terms of Butler's ideas of subversive repetition, see Henry, *The Signifying Self*, 33.

ellas fueran las mozas, y nosotras
fuéramos las patronas a baqueta,
como dice il toscano.

DOROTEA:

Verdad dices;

que el ama de quien sabe su criada
tiernas fragilidades, no se atreve,
ni aun es bien que se atreva, a darle voces,
ni a reñir sus descuidos, temerosa
que no salgan a plaza sus holguras (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2272-84).

The *entremés*'s scene echoes Cristina's staged dialogue at the opening of act 2 in which she insinuates that she has suffered verbal and physical abuse on account of her modest status (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 972-1063). There are also resonances of Muñoz's anxiety that he will be punished harshly should Don Antonio uncover his schemes (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 1412-29). More significantly, Dorotea and Cristina's interchange affirms but also reverses power relations for a moment in time.²⁸ The uneasy relationship between their apparent compliance and covert portrayal of a flawed system creates a site of social struggle which licenses the women to contest the dominant vantage point.²⁹ What may seem to be a confirmation of conventional classification becomes a challenging of static structures. Via the dramatic space, the maids memorialize their experience and grapple with the realities of their world and discursive representations of it. The interlude thus becomes a vehicle which empowers the underclasses to vocalize dissent and underscore the volatility of ideological

²⁸ Jean E. Howard's analysis of the early modern English stage is useful in this regard. The scholar imagines the stage in terms of contest, struggle and competing forces constantly at odds. See *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), 10.

²⁹ According to Mariscal: 'the critique of the mistress's holiness as an ideological front for exploitation and abuse [...] while not subverting the established system of domination, with the proper information about her mistress's vices she might at least ease if not temporarily reverse the relations of power'. See 'Woman and Other Metaphors', 222.

diktats. Moreover, the women prove themselves to be capable of thwarting aspirations to control and regulate modes of conduct and orthodox hierarchic relationships. The interlude, therefore, not only makes space for marginalized groups but reveals the working class to be as sensible of the dynamics of power as the aristocracy, thereby contesting the supremacy of their overseers.

The maids destabilize social order further when they contend with the commands of their superiors. Don Antonio Almendárez has previously instructed Cristina that the interlude should in no way violate rules of morality, insinuating that a link exists between her lowly status and a lack of integrity: ‘El término decente / de honestidad se guarde, / Cristina’ (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2046-48). His sister, Marcela, highlights her theatrical code of expectations when she requires that the interlude please her and that the dramatic piece is ‘discreto, alegre y cortés, / sin que haya en él cosa fea’ (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2059-60). Cristina and Dorotea violate these charges when they dance a sensuous *seguidilla* with the barber. The servants demonstrate absolute control of the theatrical arena as they flout the directives of the Almendárez family and overturn their horizon of expectations. Exploitation of the imagination thus allows the servants to express themselves, to exercise insubordination temporarily and to voice the hypocrisies of a system which would repress them. The working class’s performance evidently does not facilitate the perpetuation of cultural assumptions which may lead to their oppression. The illusion which the servants construct behaves as a veil which very thinly disguises stark truths. The interlude’s protagonists are a set of individuals among many disenfranchised social groups within Cervantine theatre which convey dissent and oppose the status quo. Marginalized women (*El laberinto de amor*), captives (*La gran sultana*; *Los baños de Argel*) and pícaros (*Pedro de Urdemalas*), among others, imaginatively construct loci in which they display a measure of power within the social field and draw attention to the fissures within early modern Spain’s ideological

infrastructure.³⁰ Moreover, the servants subversive dramatic operation in *La entretenida* is not unlike Don Quijote's misguided liberation of the galley slaves in chapter 22 of the novel; an act which uncovers a political imagination that does not fall in line with the strictures of the Castilian State. Ultimately, these Cervantine creations may not be able to modify public apparatus but they can, at least, underscore its contradictions and the precarious foundations on which it rests.

While Cristina and Dorotea dance, the musicians perform 'Madre, la mi madre'; a lyric which also features in Cervantes's *El celoso extremeño* and relates to the restrictions which Carrizales vainly imposes upon Leonora. In Cervantes's play, the song – which refers to a person heavily guarded and contained – commentates on the plight of Marcela Osorio who has been confined to a monastery while her father negotiates a marriage contract and dowry with a suitable partner (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 1994-98). Throughout *La entretenida*, Marcela is made known to the audience via references made by others and mainly by men. To her father, she represents little more than a bargaining chip within the male aristocratic system of exchange:

una niña a quien apenas
el sol ni el viento han tocado;
un armiño aprisionado
con religiosas cadenas;
una que son sus cuidados
de simple y tierna doncella;
y ofrezco en dote con ella

³⁰ Viewed from this perspective, it is little wonder that *Don Quijote's* disempowered *hidalgo* casts off his former life and fashions himself as the knight from La Mancha.

de renta dos mil ducados (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2788–95).³¹

His thoughts mirror Ocaña's in act 1 who is similarly aware that a woman must conform to the demanding standards of patriarchal culture: 'La mujer ha de ser buena, / y parecerlo, que es más' (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 81–82). Prior to the interlude, then, the spectator is conscious that the male protagonists embody conventional dominant attitudes toward women. Marcela Osorio is subjected to a particularly passive role in light of the fact that Cervantes denies her a physical presence on stage. Nonetheless, Marcela's non-appearance lends itself well to motifs of mistaken identity and her character is central to the confusion which propels the plot. Consequently, she occupies a more vital role than we might anticipate. The musicians' performance in the *entremés* underscores Marcela's oppressive circumstances as well as the futile restrictions inflicted upon her will:

Madre, la mi madre,
guardas me ponéis;
que si yo no me guardo,
mal me guardaréis [...]
Dicen que está escrito,
y con gran razón,
que es la privación
causa de apetito.
Crece en infinito
encerrado amor;
por eso es mejor
que no me encerréis:
que si yo no me guardo (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2319-22; 2327-35)

³¹ For further discussion on the symbolic resonance of the ermine, see Mariscal, 'Woman and Other Metaphors', 214.

The lyrics prefigure the ending of *La entretenida* when the on and off stage spectators learn that Marcela has dictated her future beyond the confines of the monastery and her father's will. She contracts a *cédula* with Don Ambrosio which counteracts the decisions imposed by her father's negotiations and, therefore, displays resolute self-determination. In effect, Marcela becomes a script-writer authoring her place within the plot to alter significantly the fate of Don Antonio, to whom she had been promised, and to re-write her own textual exclusion. Just as the servants author a dramatic piece which disputes existing social parameters, Cervantes's female protagonist also challenges her subordination. Significantly, both groups usurp and exercise prerogatives of those in power by means of a previously prohibited linguistic empowerment.³² Once again we see the interlude acting as a vehicle which brings the individual in from the margins whilst disclosing the repression experienced by those isolated from social prerogatives. The imaginary space, therefore, confers autonomy highlighting the individual's capacity to contest centres of power.

Marcela Osorio, a paradoxically active and non-conforming woman who re-configures her own future, may fulfil the necessary criteria to be characterized as the archetypal *mujer varonil*. Nonetheless, she occupies no position on stage and is never permitted to articulate or imagine herself in the same manner as *La entretenida*'s other characters. She is unlike Casandra who portrays her unhappiness ferociously at the opening of act 2 of *El castigo sin venganza* by associating her subordination with inanimate objects which adorn her husband's home and re-imaging herself as a peasant woman. In the *entremés*, Cervantes does not give life to Lope de Vega's female construct and Marcela is not allowed to become something she is not, thereby projecting a reality which is an illusion.³³ Rather, Cervantes reverses the formula to present an illusion (the interlude) which makes

³² See Henry, *The Signifying Self*, 27-28, for comment on Marcela Osorio's disruption of the boundaries between private (female) and public (male) sphere.

³³ See Merveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Study of the Mujer varonil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 323.

manifest contemporary social realities whilst extolling the inner self as a potentially powerful resource. The emphasis, then, is not an unattainable or contrived representation of early modern Spanish womanhood but self as an agent invested with ability, determination and subjectivity. The playwright appears to focus on process rather than product; drawing out the implications of increasingly individualized personhood. As Marcela – and the servants – legitimize their positions and confront the rigidity of cultural mores, they not only debunk stereotypes, both within a literary and an extra-literary context, but cultivate selves which bring to the fore uneasy antagonisms regarding the individual's relationship with his/her world.

The *entremés* often mirrors the plot and concerns of the framing play provoking the audience 'to see double'. In this way, the metaplay is not a discrete entity which neither invades the main action of the play nor provides a rupture from the framed drama's main events and purposes. Thus, there is a sense of solidarity between the theatrical pieces. As Canavaggio suggests, the *entremés* directly transposes the 'real' world and immediately establishes a close relationship with the central play.³⁴ As intimated above, the lines between *La entretenida* and the metaplay are blurred and fragile from the outset as a consequence of its ambiguous beginning. The relationship between the imaginary and reality becomes precarious and confused as the play space exudes a sense of porosity. Within the metadramatic structure, life and art mingle and the lines between fact and fiction are rendered indistinct. For instance, Torrente and Ocaña stage a fight as they vie for the love of Cristina – a plotline which features throughout *La entretenida*. Their competition descends into farce as the servants engage in sword combat with the result that Torrente protests his nose has been cut off. His proclamation engenders chaos: Marcela Almendárez faints, Don Antonio stands

³⁴ Jean Canavaggio, 'Cervantine Variations of the Theme of the Theater within the Theater', in *Critical Essays on Cervantes*, ed. Ruth El Saffar (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), 147-62 (p. 152).

bewildered in the middle of the scuffle, Torrente urges caution lest anyone should tread on his nose and an *alguacil* enters and shuts down the theatre space and the house itself. It quickly transpires that the incident is a sham and that the audience has been ‘burlado’ by the ingenuity of the interlude’s actors. Don Antonio requests confirmation of the pretence: ‘¿todo esto es fingido?’ (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, l. 2472), as does the *alguacil*: ‘Luego, ¿todo aquesto es burla?’ (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, l. 2480). The on stage audience is seemingly unable to negotiate the complexities of the interlude’s blurred boundaries and the dynamic interplay of tricks and truths. In fact, the implausibility of the event is rejected until Ocaña confirms: ‘Todo aquesto es burla luego’ (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, l. 2481), re-framing the spectator’s questions and bringing a confident close to the illusion.

Torrente and Ocaña’s scheme successfully ensnares its audience within the fiction. The Almendárez family, unaware and injudicious, are cast as unwitting role-players and collaborators within the plot. The scene has resonances of the events of act 1 when Don Antonio and Marcela are easily embroiled in a subterfuge imagined by Cardenio and Torrente, despite the fact that the servants’ role-play is less than practised (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 824-971). Not only do the servants confer a subordinate role upon their employers but act *on* them, revealing the nobility’s failure to distinguish the real from the imaginary when these spheres clash. The actors challenge their masters’ perception, entangling them within a space where perspective is fluid and shifting. For a moment in time, the world of the interlude reigns supreme as it fashions fictions which abuse the apparently lucid spectators. The demarcation between *amo/criado* becomes unclear and parameters which delineate notions of class superiority are ruptured. Thus, Cervantes’s servants emerge as clever and skilful individuals capable of entertaining desires and expectations.³⁵ Ironically,

³⁵ María Ángela Celis Sánchez comments that Cervantes’s portrayal of the servant’s individualism ‘es uno de los más obvios reflejos del Cervantes-hombre renacentista que descubre la autonomía del ser y la miseria de la condición humana en la conciencia de serlo’, ‘Planos de comunicación en las comedias cervantinas: el juego

the ludic frame of reference enunciates the servants not as a subsidiary indistinguishable mass or conventional character types but as individuals seeking to craft their futures and convey a sense of self.

The illusion promulgated by the *entremés* is punctured by the arrival of an officer of the law – an external authority who demands that the interlude should halt. However, the *alguacil*'s appearance and role are superfluous:

De que todo sea comedia,
y no tragedia, me alegro;
y así, a mi ronda, señores,
con vuestra licencia, vuelvo (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2496-99).

He does not, therefore, enact the traditional *deus ex machina* role bringing restoration and order to the chaos and the flouting of social conventions. Rather, the *alguacil*'s statement calls attention to the generic status of the *entremés* whilst highlighting the self-conscious construction of the theatre space and the artistic abilities of those who have forged it.

Although the metaplay's action dissipates and the working class return to servitude, subversive possibilities are not entirely expunged. Neither a representative of the law nor the ruling class has restrained or directed control over the servants. The *entremés* produces and draws out characters which undermine easy assumptions about their eventual subjugation. The Cervantine stage, therefore, produces a creative space which resists formulaic expectations and demonstrates that what appears to be immutable is, in fact, modifiable and open to debate. Ultimately, the dramatic interlude awakens Cervantes's spectator to formidable truths which dispute the status quo and empowers the servants to behave with freedom beyond the limitations of their social existence.

metateatral', in *El teatro en tiempos de Felipe II: Actas de las XXI Jornadas de Teatro Clásico* (Almagro, Julio de 1998), ed. Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez and Rafael González Cañal (Almagro: Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, 1999), 83–98 (p. 93).

The oppositional tensions between the real and the imaginary continue to find expression in the play; for instance, the authentic Don Silvestre and his impersonator, Cardenio, meet face to face in the final act (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 2884-3027). Nevertheless, as the play draws to a close, the role of illusion increasingly diminishes. The differences – economic, social and cultural – which fiercely separate the working class from their superiors are once again enacted. *La entretenida* eventually collapses and ends in failure projecting a note of paralysis which denies any of the characters their desires. Cristina, the vivacious female protagonist, is spurned by all three of her suitors who will not stand to be manipulated by the *fregona*'s petulance. Marcela Almendárez's marriage depends on the acquisition of papal dispensation and an audience can only surmise what will happen to the mysterious Marcela Osorio. The play goes so far as to underscore intentionally the absence of marital unions:

Desta verdad conocida

pido me den testimonio:

que acaba sin matrimonio

la comedia entretenida (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 3084-87).³⁶

The ending is glaringly different to the finish of Cervantes's *El laberinto de amor* in which the three female protagonists acquire their desires so triumphantly. *La entretenida*'s conclusion, however, sees each character proclaiming their inability to secure their wishes as they leave the stage:

MUÑOZ: Camina, Muñoz, camina,

pobre, sin bayeta y sastre.

DOROTEA: Sin Marcela, don Antonio,

³⁶ To some extent, the ending is, of course, a form of retaliation against the formulaic endings typical of the *comedia nueva*. Cervantes also draws attention to marriage as an overly convenient closing device at the end of *Pedro de Urdemalas*.

se entra amargo el corazón.

D. SILVESTRE: Y yo sin dispensación.

CRISTINA: Cristina sin matrimonio (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 3066-71).

Collectively, this exodus and provocatively expressed corporate failure communicates a lack of self-fulfilment. Whilst the ending is clearly not in the tragic mode of Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*, Cervantes infuses his *comedia*'s denouement with a greater sense of poignancy and frustration than the spectator most likely would have anticipated.

Despite the persistent role-playing and the contradictory fabrication of fantasy in the form of the *entremés*, the resourceful abilities of the play's characters do not end fruitfully and, in fact, there is no sense of development or progress in *La entretenida*'s closing scene. Each of the protagonists exits the stage in the same state which they entered: servants remain servants; the nobility remain noble; and vague promises of future unions are positioned outside of the theatrical frame. Marcela underscores the impression of stagnancy,

Yo quedaré en mi entereza,

no procurando imposibles,

sino casos convenientes

a nuestra naturaleza (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 3076-79).

The ending appears to reiterate quite firmly exclamations made during *La entretenida* which highlight the impossibility of realizing social mobility, such as when Ocaña denounces art which mobilizes false hopes and provokes individuals to aspire to unworkable desires (Cervantes, *La entretenida*, ll. 625-40). Unlike on the Lopean stage, there is no sense of anagnorisis or reconciliation present here. There is an irony that a play constituted and

propelled by motion ends with inactivity and dejection.³⁷ Outwardly, hierarchical precedence is affirmed and the subordination of character to social position is preeminent.

The sense of ‘silencing’ and defeat present in the ending constructs a compelling dialectic between the happenings of the play – as represented by the fanciful imaginings of its characters – and the note of inertia on which *La entretenida* concludes. The deflation of the imagination may say something about how Cervantes envisaged his own stage and the remit of character composition. The drama offers a representation of a contradictory domain in which characters are compositely constructed. Idealism is substituted by paradox which casts doubt on easy identification with the value systems usually encoded within a play’s resolution. Moreover, the heightened artificiality of the ending resists unproblematic reception. It invites critical consideration of the mechanics of representation and the signification of the events which have transpired. Cervantes provokes his spectator to interact with an ambiguous and beguiling space which underscores the tensions between truths and deceptive appearances. Most significantly, the playwright’s stage does not promote illusory and misleading values in the guise of reality – values which did not hold up to interrogation and which had little rooting in the real world.³⁸

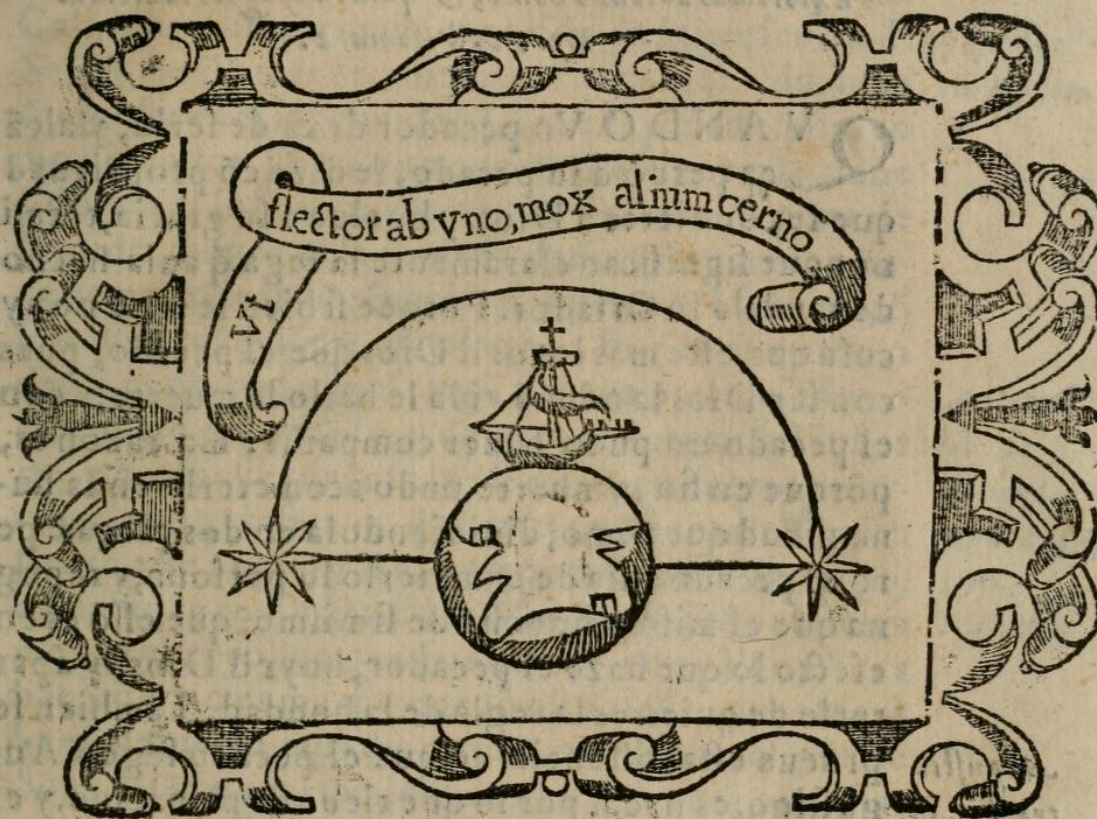
Furthermore, the characters’ apparent loss does not render the subject a subordinate non-entity. Rather, Cervantes’s protagonists are more realized *because* of it. They recognize their flaws, their limitations, the fact that they inhabit a world with both boundaries and ambiguities; an environment where self-fashioning is not easily won and where the proverbial ever after is not always part of the story. The characters’ admission of failure acknowledges

³⁷ For Walthaus, the ending of Cervantes’s play ‘se denota un hondo sentido de desengaño barroco’, ‘Contrapunto, distancia, aislamiento’, 460.

³⁸ Such a judgement fits within recent critical appraisal which perceives Cervantes’s stage as a counter-perspective to the aesthetics and ideologies practised and transmitted by the early modern Spanish *corral*. See, for instance, Henry, *The Signifying Self* and Antonio Rey Hazas, *Poética de la libertad y otras claves cervantinas* (Madrid: Ediciones Eneida, 2005).

that life does not necessarily materialize easily to produce one's desire. Cervantes seemingly does not allow for self-delusion and *La entretenida*'s characters are spared from investing in deceptive fictions. It is this critical and judicious attitude toward the imagination which paradoxically imbues the protagonists with some autonomy. Here, at the close of *La entretenida*, invention is put aside in favour of characters who are now better positioned to know 'quiénes son'; a strategy which Cervantes may wish to impart to his more discriminating spectator.

These are two writers writing at the height of their theatrical powers and both fundamentally concerned with the role of illusion, the imagination, artistic models within human life both on and beyond the stage. Though they may have different intentions in the two plays we have discussed – one displaying a tragic vision of lives gone astray and the other revealing the illusions that humans use to divide and rule each other –, both playwrights find the root of social life in the collective and individual imagination. Lope's and Cervantes's are distinct voices, their theatre has headed in different directions, but they share an early-modern concern with subjecthood and the development of the self which is a far-cry from the tradition they inherited in the early years of the *corrales* in Spain.



SI ACASO piensa quien a Dios ofende

Que pues del se desuia,
Lexos está de su terrible mano.

Muy ciego error emprende

Pues va por otra via

Cayendo ante su rostro soberano.

Y es porque quando en vano

De su bondad propicia

Se aparta en pos de vn fugitivo gusto,

Luego en castigo justo

Da en el poder de su real justicia;

Qual quien a vn passo solo

Dexando el vno toma el otro polo.

Q

Existimas

[Figure 1: Juan Francisco de Villava, *Empresas espirituales y morales*, del pecador]



CONTRA La llama que a su nido espira
 Va el Pelicano alerto,
 Por librar a sus pollos, y no advierte,
 Ciego de amor, ni mira,
 Que en peligro tan cierto
 Por daries vida se à de dar la muerte.
 Buena señal del animoso y fuerte
 Caritativo pecho
 Que así el justo provecho
 Del proximo apetece
 Que a carecer del summo bien se ofrece.
 Y aunque este mal sin culpa no se incurre,
 Por esso es ciego amor, y no discurre.

A

Optabã

[Figure 2: Juan Francisco de Villava, *Empresas espirituales y morales*, del caritativo]