

‘QUE YO LE HARÉ DE SUERTE QUE OS ESPANTE, |
SI EL FINGIMIENTO A LA VERDAD EXCEDE’: CREATIVE
USE OF ART IN LOPE DE VEGA’S *LOS LOCOS DE
VALENCIA* (AND VELÁZQUEZ’S *FÁBULA DE ARACNE*)

This study makes no claim for a direct influence of Lope de Vega on Diego Velázquez, especially in the two works under consideration here: the early comedy *Los locos de Valencia* and the late mythological painting the *Fábula de Aracne*, otherwise known as *Las hilanderas*. Indeed, the play has been chosen not for any close similarity to Velázquez’s painting but as representative, in many respects, of the early *comedia* in the hands of its creator.¹ Velázquez, like any courtier or town-dweller of his day, cannot have avoided the influence of the Golden-Age *comedia nueva*, which was in its heyday as his career blossomed, and later frequently became, like his own painting, a deliberate (although at times ironic) expression of the grandeur of the court of Philip IV. The influence of specific Golden-Age plays on Velázquez’s painting has attracted some critical attention.² Of interest to me here, however, are certain parallels in the two works under consideration between the dramatist’s and the painter’s approaches to their art. By comparing the way painter and playwright employ art-within-art I hope to fortify some recent critics’ interpretations of the *Fábula de Aracne*, and to reassess Lope’s early play. The study dwells upon the play, which is less well known, in an attempt to show that its conceptual sophistication is comparable to that of Velázquez’s painting. I shall suggest that there are two main similarities in the way art is employed by Lope and Velázquez within drama and painting, the second being arguably subsidiary to the first. Both painter and playwright use art-within-art, first to draw attention to the process, and attempt to bolster the status, of artistic endeavour in Golden-Age Spain, and secondly to express the ways in which each perceived and understood the links between art and life.

Although art historians are not, of course, in complete agreement in their interpretation of Velázquez’s *Fábula de Aracne*, there is some common ground between many of them. The sources of this mythological painting have been rediscovered over recent decades, and this has led to its reinterpretation and the

¹ *Los locos de Valencia* was published in Lope’s *Parte XIII* in 1620, but was possibly written in the very late 1580s (when Lope was in exile in Valencia) or, more likely, in the early 1590s, when the dramatist would have been in his late twenties or early thirties. S. Griswold Morley and Courtney Bruerton date the play as 1590–95, certainly ‘anterior a 1596’ (*Cronología de las comedias de Lope de Vega*, trans. by María Rosa Cartes (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), pp. 248–49).

² Everett W. Hesse claims a close relationship between some of Calderón’s and Velázquez’s artistic works, notably *El sitio de Bredá* (1625) and *La rendición de Breda (Las lanzas)* (1635): ‘It is virtually beyond doubt that Velázquez was acquainted with Calderón’s drama’ (‘Calderón and Velázquez’, *Hispania*, 35 (1952), 74–82 (p. 76)). The debt owed by Golden-Age painters to two playwrights, Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca, is discussed in the context of Olivares’s propaganda by Jonathan Brown and J. H. Elliott, *A Palace for a King: The Buen Retiro and the Court of Philip IV* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1980), pp. 182, 190, and Victor Dixon, ‘Spanish Renaissance Theatre’, in *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Theatre*, ed. by John Russell Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 142–72 (p. 163). Writing on the *Fábula de Aracne*, Hesse opines that ‘the whole picture seems to be a theatrical interpretation of the fable’ (p. 79). Ana M. Beamud takes the relationship a step further, arguing that rather than being a mythological work, this painting quite possibly represents a moment in Act III of Calderón’s *Darlo todo y no dar nada* (‘*Las hilanderas*, the Theater, and a *comedia* by Calderón’, *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, 34 (1982), 37–44).

frequent reapplication of its original title. The *Fábula* is generally taken to be one of Velázquez's last and greatest works, its greatness residing not just in the artist's mature technical skill but in the content and the arrangement of the painting.³ The work unmistakably depicts part of a tale from Ovid: the mythological weaving contest between the vain mortal, Arachne, and the goddess, Pallas Athene, in which the goddess's skills are matched by her low-born opponent.⁴ Interpretation of this 'peculiar alusión indirecta a la historia de Ovidio'⁵ has varied from critic to critic, but it is generally assumed that Velázquez intended to send a message through his painting, as he also did in *Las meninas*. This message, in my view, is personal and local, yet of universal significance, simultaneously defensive yet affirmative. In the painting Velázquez cleverly equates himself, to his own advantage, with both the historical Titian and the fabulous Arachne. In the background scene he eschews the usual depiction of Arachne's ultimate punishment by the goddess (metamorphosis into a spider), thereby emphasizing the mortal's bold defence of her art faced with Pallas's powerful anger (Brown, p. 252). Additionally Velázquez lets us glimpse only Arachne's handiwork in the contest, and to represent her achievement he chooses the first subject of her insolent tapestry, the rape of Europa perpetrated by Zeus disguised as a bull. As Velázquez's educated contemporaries knew and twentieth-century critics have rediscovered, Arachne's tapestry, described in Ovid's poetry, is represented in Velázquez's painting by Titian's *The Rape of Europa*, which hung in the Royal Palace in Madrid and would have been well known to the painter.⁶ Velázquez's implication is clearly that Titian's composition is of a divine quality, as Arachne's was judged to be, to Pallas's consternation. Both by taking a subject from Ovid and by using the 'quotation' (Brown, p. 253) from Titian in a context in which art is extolled, Velázquez is putting himself on a par with Arachne and with the Venetian painter so admired and honoured by Charles V and Philip II.⁷ He is arguing for the acceptance of painting as a liberal art by advertising his 'trabajo intelectual',⁸ and bolstering his own case for honour (also craved by the low-born Arachne) and ennoblement.

Less frequently stressed, however, is Velázquez's universal message in the *Fábula de Aracne* about the purpose and import of art. Critics have commented on the lack of separation between the two spaces of the painting, the facility of communication between the background room and the foreground workshop: this in spite of the fact

³ Jonathan Brown dates it as *c.* 1656, rejecting the arguments of those who would see it as a work of the 1640s (*Velázquez: Painter and Courtier* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 252).

⁴ The story is from Book vi of the *Metamorphoses*. Critics disagree on the exact extent of the depiction of the fable, especially in the foreground, the part of the painting taken for a long time to be a naturalistic rendering of the inside of the royal tapestry factory of Santa Isabel in Madrid. Beamud lists recent critics who deny that the source of the painting is the mythological contest from Ovid (pp. 42–43, n. 11), but the evidence is not favourable to their case.

⁵ Enriqueta Harris, *Velázquez* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1982), p. 160.

⁶ See José López-Rey, *Velázquez: The Complete Works* (Cologne: Taschen, 1997), p. 163. Velázquez's painting came to be known as *Las hilanderas* as its mythological allusion was forgotten, so that by the turn of the twentieth century the references in the painting had to be recovered: 'Its subject is a mythological scene, in which some of the figures [...] are reminiscent of Titian's *Rape of Europa*' (Albert F. Calvert and C. Gasquoine Hartley, *Velázquez: An Account of his Life and Works* (London: John Lane, Bodley Head, 1908), p. 161). Diego Angulo Íñiguez gives details of how Velázquez might have read and interpreted Ovid's tale, according to the books in the painter's library ('Las hilanderas', *Archivo Español de Arte*, 21 (1948), 1–19).

⁷ By copying Titian's painting he also equates himself with Rubens, who did the same.

⁸ The phrase is taken from Javier Portús Pérez, *Lope de Vega y las artes plásticas: Estudio sobre las relaciones entre pintura y poesía en la España del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Editorial de la Universidad Complutense, 1992), p. 124.

that some of the characters are thought to occur in both scenes.⁹ Two steps connect the rooms, making the background scene appear to be on a kind of stage.¹⁰ The *in medias res* theatricality of the scene exaggerates this effect. One character (the lady dressed in red) directs her attention into the tapestry workshop and probably beyond.¹¹ Given its subject, this painting should surely be seen as a metaphor for the ease with which art impinges upon life (the theatricalized mythological scene's connection to the contemporary naturalistic foreground), as well as, incidentally, an illustration of the integration of the cultured with the popular in the Spanish seventeenth century. Arachne's art (and Velázquez equates himself with the spinner) has an iconoclastic message (her tapestry reveals the exploitation of mortals by the powerful gods) and a real effect on her world. So life-like are her tapestries, according to Ovid, that they impress all and ultimately lead to the unjust sacrifice (attempted suicide) of the utterly committed artist.¹² Velázquez is melodramatically, playfully, and ironically trumpeting the pervasive social importance of the artist and his art. Must the devoted artist continue to be despised and misunderstood? Wittily, all the characters in the foreground, in the process of creating royal art, are ignoring the background scene, as if they are immune to the effects of art, in the form of the story of Arachne. By concerning itself with the relationship of art to life, the painting makes the viewer question its (and art's) relevance to his or her own life, the scene beyond the picture frame. It 'reaches out to us ineluctably, and links us to the representation of the picture', as Michel Foucault wrote of *Las meninas*.¹³ As viewers we can ignore the framing techniques that help to draw us into the world created artistically; but if we do, we respond unworthily, without allowing the painting to challenge or 'read' us.¹⁴ Parallels with *Las meninas* and also with *Don Quijote* are obvious. The *Fábula de Aracne* challenges its viewer not to ignore it.

The Baroque allusiveness and epistemological playfulness of the *Fábula* have parallels most obviously in other works by Velázquez and Murillo. Attention is less frequently drawn to similarities with the theatre of the Golden Age, partly because the theatre (especially the early theatre), despite (or perhaps because of) its huge popularity, has so often been taken to be one-dimensional and rather unchallenging in its socio-political and artistic aims and achievements. Is it possible then that the model used by Velázquez, probably in the 1650s, of alluding to classical and Renaissance Italian art within his own work, in order both to raise his own status and that of his art, and to show the proximity of the relationship of art to the real world of seventeenth-century existence, had already been employed by Lope de

⁹ For example, Harris notes that 'no hay una distinción clara entre el mundo del mito y la realidad' (p. 162). This is in contrast to *Escena de cocina con Cristo en la casa de Marta y María* (1618), which depends upon a more traditional didactic relationship between the two scenes, not an intermingling.

¹⁰ Ángulo Iñiguez describes the painting as 'una historia desdoblada en dos actos' (p. 16). Beamud, as I have noted, believes Velázquez was painting a theatrical performance (p. 39).

¹¹ This lady clearly fascinated Antonio Buero Vallejo, since she plays a symbolically transcendent role at the end of his play influenced by Velázquez's painting (*Diálogo secreto* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1985), p. 132).

¹² Ann Livermore suggests that Arachne should be seen as an heroic figure (*Artists and Aesthetics in Spain* (London: Tamesis, 1988), p. 97).

¹³ *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 1974), p. 4.

¹⁴ George Steiner's discussion of 'responson' applied to the literary text is equally applicable to the painting of Velázquez (*No Passion Spent: Essays 1978–1996* (London: Faber, 1996), pp. 1–19 (p. 6)).

Vega in (*inter alia*) his 'capricho juvenil', *Los locos de Valencia*?¹⁵ In fact the position of Lope de Vega as an artist in the 1580s and 1590s (and indeed into the seventeenth century) was not dissimilar in an important respect to that of Velázquez some fifty or sixty years later. Both the nascent *comedia nueva* (and its practitioners) and the art of painting were looked down upon by influential traditionalists, as Lope well knew. Lope was, in the words of Javier Portús Pérez, 'el escritor del Siglo de Oro que más activamente se comprometió en la defensa de la pintura [. . .] que además de intervenir en algún pleito multiplicó en su obra literaria las referencias al carácter noble de este arte' (p. 126). Lope's father was (not unlike Arachne) a *bordador*, and many of the playwright's friends were artists. He took painting extremely seriously as an art form, viewing it and poetry as close relatives of equal status (Portús Pérez, pp. 250–53). His defences of his own art are frequent, reasoned, heartfelt, and often bitter. Jonathan Brown writes (of *Las meninas*) that Velázquez's 'defense of the art, by its very nature, acknowledges the existence of a credible attack on its pretensions to a lofty status' (p. 264). Lope's literary battles have been chronicled.¹⁶ Both painting and drama in Golden-Age Spain had to try to slough off the old skin of institutional condescension, and both emerged dazzlingly beautiful but concealing a venomous bite. Velázquez and Lope were both innovators, both quick to go against the current. Lope dispensed with the academic, neo-classical 'arte' of playwriting, eventually self-consciously describing his dramatic recipe as an 'arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo'. Lope defended himself in the 389-line manifesto of this title (published in 1609), with an eye to his probably academic audience, but like Velázquez he also allowed his art to defend itself. Velázquez's eventual success came several decades after Lope's anti-*preceptista* camp had emerged victorious in the battle over the future form of the *comedia*. The two artists' strategy was, at least in part, to exploit the authority of respectable cultural heritage for novel cultural purposes.

Having looked briefly at this process in Velázquez's *Fábula de Aracne*, stressing the personal and universal messages the painting sends, I now concentrate on Lope's play. *Los locos de Valencia* does not quite lack even a minimal critical bibliography (as Luciano García Lorenzo has claimed), but like so many of Lope's early works, it has attracted scant attention from critics.¹⁷ Certainly the central influence of Ariosto (or

¹⁵ It was Emilio Cotarelo y Mori who passed this judgement on the play, writing that 'esta comedia es un original capricho juvenil de Lope, en que para nada tuvo en cuenta el buen orden y verosimilitud de los hechos' ('Prólogo' to *Obras de Lope de Vega*, ed. by Cotarelo y Mori and others, Real Academia Española (nueva edición), 13 vols (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1930), xii, xxii). References to the play, however, are from *Comedias escogidas de Frey Lope Félix de Vega Carpio*, ed. by Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 24 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1853), pp. 113–35. I have also consulted the *Trezena parte de las comedias de Lope Félix de Vega Carpio* (Madrid: Viuda de Alonso Martín, 1620) in the University Library, Cambridge, and occasionally prefer its text to Hartzenbusch's. The differences, for the purposes of this article, are not significant.

¹⁶ See Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, *Estudios sobre Lope de Vega*, 2nd edn, 3 vols (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1967), 1.

¹⁷ 'Amor y locura fingida: *Los locos de Valencia* de Lope de Vega', in *El mundo del teatro español en su Siglo de Oro: ensayos dedicados a John E. Varey*, ed. by J. M. Ruano de la Haza (Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1989), pp. 213–28 (p. 214). In fact José Luis Aguirre has twice edited modern editions of the play with introductions: Lope de Vega, *Los locos de Valencia* (Madrid: Aguilar, 1966), and *La viuda valenciana, Los locos de Valencia* (Gerona: Aubí, 1977). García Lorenzo does not cite either of these editions (p. 225, n. 5), perhaps because Aguirre makes no attempt to refine Hartzenbusch's 1853 edition. The play has tended to interest critics primarily because of its Valencian setting. See Aguirre's editions and Arturo Zabala, 'El decorado verbal y otras observaciones en y sobre las comedias valencianas de Lope de Vega', in *Comedias y comediantes: Estudios sobre el teatro clásico español*, ed. by Manuel V. Diago and Teresa Ferrer (Valencia: Universitat de València, 1991) pp. 143–64 (pp. 149–50).

at least the Orlando stories) has gone practically unnoticed.¹⁸ The play is set in the Hospital de Inocentes in Valencia, Europe's first asylum for the mentally disturbed, set up in 1409 by a Mercedarian. The plot involves the coincidental incarceration of two nobles, Erifila and Floriano, in the hospital. Erifila has run away from home to avoid marriage, and has been robbed and left all but naked by the servant who accompanied her. She is taken for a madwoman by Pisano, who works in the hospital, and is escorted to the asylum, where she decides to feign madness to cover up her dishonourable situation. Floriano, having killed Prince Reinero of Zaragoza in self-defence, has travelled to Valencia in haste to ask his friend, Valerio, for help. Valerio suggests that his only hope of avoiding detection and punishment by the authorities is to pretend to be mad and voluntarily enter the asylum. Erifila and Floriano, now known as Elvira and Beltrán, meet as inmates and fall in love. The play traces the vicissitudes on the way to their final union, and addresses the thorny question of whether and how one can love someone who is mad.

Critics of the play have found it a light and frothy comedy. They have praised its witty dialogue, the development of the intrigue, and its depiction of *locura de amor*,¹⁹ but have criticized it for its structural weaknesses, and above all its lack of verisimilitude, even its absurdity. These criticisms can be dispelled by an acknowledgement of the source material for the play. Lope is influenced by the Orlando stories, whether from Boiardo and Ariosto, their imitators in Spain such as Nicolás Espinosa, or the *romance* tradition (or most likely all of these). As with Velázquez, there are two main reasons why Lope anchors his text in one of the major achievements of the Italian Renaissance. The first is to lend the authority of an accepted and successful literary model to a dramatic form still in its infancy.²⁰ Lope's self-consciously abundant quotation of classical authors is well known (and I shall shortly examine an example of it in the dedication he wrote for this play). The second is more complex; it involves the relationship of art to life, and specifically satirizes the society of Lope's day.

I take first Lope's attempt to bolster his new art-form. The exploits of the knights surrounding the court of Charlemagne, the *Chanson de Roland*, as set down by Boiardo in *Orlando Innamorato* and then Ariosto in *Orlando Furioso*, had a huge diffusion in Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²¹ Lope wrote a number of plays based obviously on plots and characters in the stories, notably *Los celos de Rodamonte* and *Angélica en el Catay*, as well as the epic poem *La hermosura de*

¹⁸ Aguirre limits himself to the observation that the first Act concludes with 'alusión a los libros de caballerías' (*Los locos*, p. 52); García Lorenzo is more precise (p. 219). In Sabatino G. Maglione's critical edition of *Los celos de Rodamonte* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), the editor notes the mention of Rodamonte in *Los locos*, p. 125n., and comments on the frequent inclusion of this character from Ariosto in early Lope plays. Additionally, in his translation of the play for performance at the Gate, London, in 1992, David Johnston allowed Floriano the assumed name of Orlando Furioso, but generally transformed Ariosto's world into King Arthur's for the British audience (Alastair Macaulay, 'Madness Tours the Country', *Financial Times*, 18 January 1993, p. 9).

¹⁹ In fact, *pace* García Lorenzo, *locura de amor* is only one (relatively unimportant) aspect of the theme of madness explored in the play.

²⁰ Ariosto was extremely popular in all echelons of Spanish society. There is little evidence of the debate about the work's literary value that occurred in sixteenth-century Italy; see C. P. Brand, *Ludovico Ariosto: A Preface to the 'Orlando Furioso'* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), pp. 184–89.

²¹ The main exploration of the influence is still Maxime Chevalier, *L'Arioste en Espagne (1530–1650): Recherches sur l'influence du 'Roland furieux'* (Bordeaux: L'Université de Bordeaux, 1966). Chevalier informs us that Velázquez himself was one of the many educated men of his century to possess a copy of Ariosto in his library (p. 309).

Angélica, written while Lope was sailing with the Spanish Armada in 1588.²² Ariosto's poem also heavily influenced plays such as *Belardo el furioso*. In addition, references to the world of Orlando and its myriad characters (some of Spanish invention), are scattered liberally through the early works for the stage. By cloaking many of these works in a genre (the epic) both popular in educated circles and of classical origins, Lope certainly hoped to profit from the association, and may have wanted to disguise or play down his own departures from classical dramatic theory. (There are clear parallels here with Velázquez's use of Ovid and Titian.) The characters from Ariosto and his imitators had become common currency, mainly through the ballad, and were as well known amongst the *vulgo* as in *culto* circles, giving the plays an extended reach and appeal. In *Los locos*, Lope does not dramatize a story from Ariosto but uses the work in a much more subtle way.²³ Characters from the Orlando tradition do not appear as such, and their names are specifically referred to on only four occasions in the play.²⁴ Lope's desire is not to echo characters and plots from the epic but to prop the *comedia* up as it searches for a new poetics and an identity, to add a certain pedigree in support of its claim to the status of serious art.²⁵

At a time when there was strong hostility to the theatre,²⁶ which had moved to permanent playhouses in Madrid only just before he began to write for the stage, Lope was under pressure to produce an artefact that satisfied a number of constituencies. His knowledge of classical theory is beyond doubt, but he is also the heir to the Spanish popular theatre of the sixteenth century. He sprinkles references to classical works and the pagan gods of Greece and Rome liberally through *Los locos*, revealing his erudition, for example, with a rather forced allusion to the means by which Apuleius's Golden Ass was transformed back into his human shape (p. 119b). He refers to historical and literary figures ancient and contemporary, and shows off his knowledge (of theories) of love (from Ovid to León Hebreo), madness, humoural medicine, and natural history, as well as chess and card games.

This stock of often well-known cultural references is familiar to anyone who knows the works of Lope de Vega. Indeed, the frequency of allusions in his works is considered vulgar name-dropping by some. Cervantes notoriously satirized such

²² For a list and summaries of the plays, see Thomas E. Case, *Lope and Islam: Islamic Personages in his 'Comedias'* (Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1993), pp. 35–53.

²³ To the extent that Chevalier does not even consider the play in his study of Ariosto's influence in Spain.

²⁴ These are: Mandricardo, Doralice, Rugero, Roldán, Calainos, Sansoneto, and Urgel on p. 120c; Mandricardo and Rodamonte on pp. 122b–122c; Mandricardo, Doralice, and Rodamonte on p. 126c; Orlando on p. 131c. There are other possible references; for example, the 'doncella de Dinamarca' (p. 122b) could refer to Dalinda of Ariosto's sixth canto (*Orlando Furioso*, trans. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 52). Not all the characters are of Ariosto's invention, of course. Many were better known in Spain from the *romancero*; Calainos and Urgel are cases in point here. It is not always clear to what extent Lope intended to make parallels (serious or mocking) between his creations and those from the Orlando tradition whose names or exploits are similar. Nevertheless, Chevalier does assert that the Mandricardo–Doralice relationship, to which he returned more than once, reminded Lope strongly of his own lover's pain (p. 413). The cultural milieu in which these characters 'became legendary' (Brand, p. 188) is alien to us but should not be beyond our recovery and appreciation today.

²⁵ Chevalier recognized that Lope's interest was not in the epic *per se* but in situations and themes from the Orlando stories. He writes that by the late sixteenth century 'le *Roland furieux* n'est qu'un répertoire d'intrigues et de motifs' (p. 405).

²⁶ See Melveena McKendrick, *Theatre in Spain, 1490–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 111–13, for details of the arguments, theoretical and moral, over the new theatre. See also some of the entries for the 1580s and 1590s in Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España* (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1904), of which Pedro de Rivadeneira's is a good example (pp. 522–23).

practices in his prologue to *Don Quijote Part I*, probably with Lope in mind. Condescension towards Lope's name-dropping was not restricted to his seventeenth-century literary enemies. Aguirre writes in the introduction to his 1966 edition of *Los locos* that 'en toda la obra de Lope no hay ni una sola idea original y sí alusiones y citas tomadas de diccionarios y compendios' (p. 20). Such a sweeping statement is, of course, absurd, although not untypical of the incomprehension from which Lope's drama has suffered. The quantity of writing that Lope produced over his lifetime clearly militates against his allusiveness being merely skin-deep.

I suggest, I hope not anachronistically and/or hagiographically, that (in this early *comedia* at least) Lope is more than the crowd-pleaser, the satisfier of the populace, that he is often taken to be and sometimes himself claims to be. Like Velázquez (who is not accused of superficiality in his cultural references), Lope thought about and planned his artistic creations. Painter and dramatist defended their art partly through an intellectual exploration within art of the purpose of art, its relationship to and interaction with life. Lope is a slippery playwright whose claim to artistic seriousness cannot be dismissed because of a chaotic personal life, the elusiveness of an overarching philosophy (which some have found in the disparate works of Calderón), the lack of sophistication of some of his public and some of his critics, his frequent pot-boilers, and apparent contradictions within his art. A Baroque masterpiece such as *Lo fingido verdadero*, Lope's play on the conversion of St Genesius, clearly reveals the extent and profundity of his preoccupations with the relationship of art to life. The lines spoken in *Los locos* to Valerio by Floriano, euphorically confident in his ability to play the madman in Valencia, are themselves indicative of Lope's awareness of the power of fiction to beguile, to undermine reality: 'Que yo le haré de suerte que os espante, | si el fingimiento a la verdad excede' (p. 115a). So is the scene in which Floriano accosts Liberto, who has been sent to Valencia to seek him out, and deceives him with the truth (pp. 125c-26b). The dramatist perhaps came closest to defining his dramatic purpose in the still playfully enigmatic 'entre los que me siguen, unos hay que entienden, otros que piensan que entienden y otros que dicen lo que oyen a los que entienden'.²⁷ The quotation, echoing the sentiments of the closing lines of the *Arte nuevo*, is characteristically elusive, hinting at a driving purpose behind his art, but does show that Lope saw a number of levels on which his art might be 'understood' and interpreted. This is a consistent concern of Lope's in his writing on his poetics. In 1619 or 1620, with the *Spongia* affair having heightened tensions over the worth of his art, he penned the dedication to *Los locos de Valencia*. In typical style the playwright works hard to cram several quotations in Latin and Spanish into the brief dedication. He is clearly extremely bitter at the criticisms his art receives from those he characterizes as his envious critics. He stresses their mad desire to appear knowledgeable when in fact their ignorance is spectacular, and advises his addressee, the Frenchman Simon Chauvel (Xabelo), to read the play with his accustomed 'benignidad' (p. 113), not expecting it to conform to the rigorous model of classical drama.

²⁷ The quotation comes from the 'Prólogo' to *Parte XII*, included in *Comedias escogidas de Frey Lope Félix de Vega Carpio*, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 51 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1860), p. xxiii. The 'Prólogo' to *Parte XIII* (which includes *Los locos*) is also interesting for the stress Lope puts on the errors of the *preceptistas* and the 'estudio' a reader should devote to his published *comedias* (p. xxiiib).

It is no coincidence that Lope dedicates this particular play to one of his key supporters in his battle against his literary enemies.²⁸ What irked him, in my view, was the reluctance of the traditionalists to enter a new mind-set, to see more than one way of producing art, and meaning through art. This weak and empty-headed obstinacy is taken by Lope to be a kind of madness, as the dedication reveals: ‘Si el ánimo es cobarde y la arrogante apariencia cubre la interior ignorancia [. . .] creamos que son locos’ (p. 113). ‘Cada loco con su tema’ applies as much to those resistant to innovation, because of an obsession with ancient and outmoded models, as to the inmates in the asylum crazily obsessed with honour, music, love, or indeed poetry. In his dedication, and in the play, Lope in fact specifically links his arrogant and ignorant critics to his ‘mad’ characters, a link made more explicit when Floriano and Erífila meet at the end of Act I and comment each on the other’s madness. They regret that the other is so beautiful on the exterior but lacking the most essential interior element: sense, understanding, an ability to connect with the world. In asides, each uses a series of metaphors and similes to describe the other: ‘¿Que a tan perfecto edificio | falte el más divino oficio | que adornó su compostura?’; ‘[. . .] o mármol de gran beldad | sin agente entendimiento’ (p. 120a); ‘[. . .] de fuera está la beldad. | Y vacío el aposento’; ‘[. . .] es como un vaso dorado, | que está lleno de veneno’ (p. 120b). What is the point in producing exterior beauty, asks Lope, through formal perfection, when it is merely a disguise, a distraction from a lack of adequate content? Both characters, although partially seduced by appearances, admit the madness of their attraction. Lope himself characteristically sacrifices formal ‘perfection’ in his composition at the altar of a multi-layered, provocatively plural content.

It is no coincidence that Lope’s defence against his dissenters, those who would take him to task for his desertion of the ‘arte’, was to make his works play with the literary and with the relationship between art and life, whilst ostentatiously sidelining neo-classical concerns. In *Los locos* he borrows heavily from the lexicon of the Orlando stories, and not just to bolster his *comedia* with the credibility of a popular yet cultured genre. Apart from sprinkling names from *Orlando Furioso* throughout the play, and inventing names with a similar ring to them, Lope mimics many of the conventions of the chivalresque epic in setting, character, plot, theme, and form: Erífila’s independence and her flight through the woods with an untrustworthy companion to be left naked and defenceless in particular smacks of the stories of Ariosto’s Olympia, Angelica, Doralice, and others; the feigned *locura de amor* of Laida and Fedra is also comically reminiscent of Orlando, as is Calandrio’s real madness, which is specifically compared to it (p. 131c); the vicissitudes in love of the main characters rekindle memories of Angelica, Orlando, and Medoro and the unfortunate love triangle of Mandricardo, Doralice, and Rodamonte; love at first sight is the norm, as it is in *Orlando Furioso*; authorial comment is also present in the person of Lope’s dramatic *alter ego*, Belardo; disguise, suspense, coincidence, and lack of verisimilitude are all characteristic of Lope’s model and Lope’s play.²⁹

²⁸ See Simon A. Vosters, *Lope de Vega y la tradición occidental*, 2 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1977), II, 110–26, for details of Lope’s relationship with Chauvel.

²⁹ Chevalier’s tendency is to look for reworkings of plots from Ariosto and his imitators rather than tracing echoes and reproductions of the atmosphere of his work. The lack of verisimilitude in Lope’s early theatre, which has worried critics ancient and modern, can surely be partly explained or excused by the popularity of the Orlando stories and plots that imitated them.

This intertextuality is sometimes an esoteric joke: for example, the naming of the peerless Erífila after the monstrous and debauched warrior of *Orlando Furioso*, and possibly the ironic comparison of Valerio, who fails dismally in love, to his misogynist namesake, who also makes a contribution to Ariosto's epic poem.³⁰ Yet it is also, as I have claimed, a deliberate and meaningful strategy employed to disorientate critics of the *comedia* and to shed light on the content for which Lope has sacrificed the traditional form, and which he is so inclined to defend. To analyse this matter further it is necessary to tackle the theme of the play. The theme is madness in general, not simply *locura de amor*, and the play anticipates the serious questions later raised by Cervantes in *Don Quixote*. Even without the sustained references to Orlando, the play would form an interesting addition to the many texts and works that attest to the interest in madness in the Spanish Golden Age.³¹ Lope reveals a marked sympathy towards his mad characters, and an interest in the causes (diet, the moon, love, study) of the humoural imbalance that leads to madness. He is also at clear pains to point out the 'madness' not just of the inmates in his play but of all the other significant characters too. His dramatic mouthpiece, Belardo, in this case one of the incarcerated lunatics, points out to the disguised Prince Reinero, who had substituted a servant for himself on the fateful night of his apparent death at the hands of Floriano:

en este tiempo
no me daréis un hombre tan perfecto,
que no haya hecho alguna gran locura,
y vos podéis juzgar por vuestro pecho
lo que conozco yo por vuestra frente.

(p. 131c)

In *Los locos de Valencia*, Floriano sees himself as mad even before his pretence, thanks to the effect that the murder he has committed has had on his mind (p. 115a); Erífila claims to have lost her mind to have run away from home even before she is robbed (pp. 115b, 116c), and Valerio is soon heading back to the asylum having lost his composure at the sight of the beautiful Erífila: 'Yo soy, Floriano, el loco' (p. 121b). Fedra, niece of Gerardo, the Hospital's director, accuses the love-struck servant Laida (p. 118b) and then herself (p. 121c) of madness, for falling in love with a madman. Even the practical Pisano's reason is disturbed by his charge's beauty (p. 123c), and Reinero accepts the accuracy of Belardo's accusation that he has committed a 'gran locura' (p. 131c). The play ultimately presents a number of categories of mad people: those who are sane but ingeniously feign madness (Floriano, Erífila, possibly Fedra and Laida); those who are hospitalized for their failure to interact with the real world (Mordacho the musician, Calandrio the Portuguese lover); the *locos de amor* (Fedra, Laida); the artist/cynic (Belardo); the unnatural 'groseros' (Leonato, Tomás); the *furiosos* (everyone in the play).³² The lunatics can produce good sense and those supposedly in control of their minds can take the most senseless decisions, in a world that often does not seem to make sense anyway. The characters recognize that *locura* occurs where an individual cannot

³⁰ Erífila appears in Cantos 6 and 7, Valerio in 27, 28, and 46. Other characters' names are reminiscent of Ariosto's: for example, Verino, Reinero, Calandrio.

³¹ For a history and examples of the concern with madness, see Martine Bigeard, *La folie et les fous littéraires en Espagne, 1500–1650* (Paris: Centre de Recherches Hispaniques, 1972).

³² I am grateful to Professor Jack Sage for his advice on these categories.

guarantee self-control: that is, where *entendimiento* is sacrificed to the demands of a passion (usually love), where normal social comportment and role-play is deserted in the face of burning desire.³³ This desire, and therefore, madness, is in Foucault's view inevitable: 'There is nothing that the madness of men invents which is not either nature made manifest or nature restored'; 'The madness of desire [. . .], the most unreasonable passions' are examples of what 'morality and religion, [. . .] a clumsy society has stifled in man.'³⁴ If the madness in the play is an expression of the natural, and is often caused by the strictness of behaviour in society, then that society is to a degree unnatural. The role of comedy is to mock its worst excesses, and Lope's work is no exception.

In order to mock society Lope compares it unfavourably both with an asylum and with a literary world, showing a much more specific satirical purpose in his use of art-within-art than did Velázquez. Despite having committed murder, and eloped, respectively, Floriano and Erífila are rewarded with marriage based on love at the end of the play. What facilitates this happy ending is *Orlando Furioso*. The detailed knowledge of one of (what Ariosto calls) the strands of his tapestry,³⁵ one of the plot lines of *Orlando Furioso*, provides Erífila and Floriano with a safe island in a sea of uncertainty. Unable to deal with the fiction-like complexities of life itself (the apparent murder of a prince and the attempted forced marriage of a daughter), the two characters are compelled to take refuge in the more solid and predictable world of literary invention. Jeremy Robbins has commented on the relationship between the two *Part IIs* of *Don Quijote* (written by Avellaneda and Cervantes) that 'what these juxtapositions of texts and people explore are the ways in which fiction impinges upon and often substantially actually shapes reality by providing the mental framework by means of which reality is experienced, understood and interpreted'.³⁶ When Erífila pretends to be mad she chooses to play the character of Doralice, her initial purpose being simply to convince others that she really is insane. However, when Floriano begins to reply to her as her literary lover, Mandricardo, she realizes that he is sane. The characters they play, from the epic, which happily they have both read, eventually help them to achieve real aims in their 'real' lives. Initially these roles allow them to test each other out in a far more direct fashion than would be permitted in the society beyond the asylum. It is through the consistent correspondences in their mad language that their mutual understanding, and underlying sanity, become evident. Erífila becomes convinced by Floriano's echoing of her choice of language that he possesses his wits: 'Él responde en mi lenguaje, | válame Dios, sino es loco' (p. 123b). Both characters have seen feigned madness as a strategy to move forward tentatively in the relationship, as they admit in asides:

³³ One critic of the Gate's production of *Madness in Valencia* in 1992 wrote: 'The asylum [Lope] de Vega points out with astonishing modernity, is the dump for people who break the rules of society; as such it contains those whose minds are free. Leave it, warns one character, and you go to a far greater prison where your feelings are always locked away' (Claire Armitstead, *The Guardian*, G2, 22 December 1992, p. 6).

³⁴ *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 1971), pp. 283, 282.

³⁵ For example, the end of Canto 13, p. 136.

³⁶ *The Challenges of Uncertainty: An Introduction to Seventeenth-Century Spanish Literature* (London: Duckworth, 1998), p. 58.

Floriano and Erifila are not the only characters in Lope's theatre who 'discover themselves' in a world of fiction supposedly unattached to their own 'real life'.³⁸ There are two important implications of this discovery of truth in art: first, contemporary means of social expression are unable to reflect what individuals feel they need to express, and so need to change; secondly, the successful social role of fiction, of play-acting, evident in this play can be paralleled in the message sent to the audience by the play in the theatre. Art's role in life is not (just) to possess a beautiful form but to dirty its hands.

How comparable are Lope de Vega and Velázquez in their use of art-within-art? This study began with the conviction that Velázquez's highly regarded and modern painting, the *Fábula de Aracne*, was comparable with Lope's early play *Los locos de Valencia*. Both works of art quote ostentatiously (for their contemporary publics) from works of the Italian Renaissance and from the classical world. They open up a dialogue between themselves and older, well-respected artistic expression, but not with a sense of inferiority, or of conservatism, but to assert themselves, to stake a claim to be heirs to an artistic heritage that is institutionally accepted, and to raise their own unresolved status. Additionally, both works exploit the Baroque confusion of art and life, illusion and reality, for a purpose, not merely to dazzle. Velázquez suggests that art (Arachne's, Titian's, his own) has a direct and meaningful connection to life, whether we choose to ignore or embrace it. This is part of his claim that the painter is an intellectual, and an artist. Lope reveals that art is often a means of communication in a formal society in which direct exchanges of ideas and feelings are problematic. In a sense, of course, characters who find a connection with the world through literature prefigure Don Quijote, and Lope's main lesson in *Los locos de Valencia* accords with readings of *Don Quijote* that see the comic knight's madness as in some ways a positive, satirical tool of Cervantes. The clash of cultures is the same.³⁹

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³⁸ Two comparable figures are Ginés of *Lo fingido verdadero* and Leonarda of *La viuda valenciana*. Many other characters in Lope's drama (particularly women) are profoundly influenced by (characters in) books or mythological stories.

³⁹ This article is an expanded version of a paper presented at a conference at the University of Leeds, 25–26 September 1999, to mark the fourth centenary of the birth of Diego Velázquez.