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THE DEVELOPMENT OF DRAMATIC CRITICISM IN ENGLAND AND SPAIN DURING THE ELIZABETHAN PERIOD AND THE GOLDEN AGE

by
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of the requirements for the degree of
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PREFACE

The purpose of this study is to investigate the development of dramatic criticism in England and Spain during the Elizabethan period and the Siglo de Oro, with a view to comparing the coincident emergence of parallel aesthetic issues and attitudes in the two countries.

Two objectives have structured the content of the study. The first is a survey of the various factors involved in the contemporary evaluation of the social function of drama. The second is a consideration of the way in which these factors influenced Renaissance interpretation of the dramatic principles of decorum and verisimilitude.

In the initial stages of the investigation it became evident that certain arbitrary decisions had to be made in order to delimit the scope of the study. In the first place, I have restricted the range of my discussion to an examination of those problems of English and Spanish dramatic criticism raised by commentators roughly contemporary with William Shakespeare (1564–1616) and Lope de Vega (1562–1635). And while I have made no pretense of treating every writer of this period who may have commented

on current dramatic practices, I have sought to represent all major points of view.

Secondly, since it is impossible to confine literary movements within neat blocks of time, I have made no consistent effort to discuss writers and their aesthetic ideas in strict chronological order. Where it has seemed conducive to the better understanding of a particular critical concept, I have generally followed a historical sequence of development. On the other hand, I have not hesitated to modify this procedure where it has seemed desirable to sacrifice chronology to the clearer presentation of a widely accepted attitude or position.

Although I have suppressed merely antiquarian interest in tracking Renaissance aesthetic ideas to their ultimate sources, it has proved impossible to overlook the pervasive influence of Aristotle and Horace on Renaissance critical thought. I have not attempted to treat separately the topics of the unities, verisimilitude, and decorum because, in the thinking of the Renaissance writers themselves, these aspects of dramatic technique were to a great extent interdependent.

It is hoped that this study may serve as a stimulus for similar investigations by students of comparative literature who desire to promote a less insular view of European letters of the period.

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CHAPTER I

THE MORAL ISSUE IN ELIZABETHAN DRAMATIC CRITICISM

The Puritan Position

Elizabethan dramatic criticism developed out of the controversy over the morality or immorality of the new popular theater. The most decisive factor in determining the initial direction of the controversy was the moralistic opposition of the Puritans to all forms of dramatic work.[1] The Puritan attack on drama was twofold: First, it was an attack upon the immoral atmosphere surrounding the public theater; and secondly, it was an attack upon the ethical content of the plays themselves. In the view of the Puritan moralists the flourishing popular theater represented an insidious undermining of ethical standards, on the one hand because most plays taught the subtle techniques of moral debauchery, and

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[1] ". . . a new critical phase was inaugurated by the Puritan opposition to all forms of dramatic work, an attack which raged most fiercely from 1577 to 1583, though echoes were to be heard right on to the middle of the following century." J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Renascence (London, 1957), p. 224.

on the other, because most playhouses afforded a convenient location for indulging in wanton promiscuity. It was particularly abhorrent to the Puritan clergy that the lewd allurements of the theatre increasingly attracted larger audiences than the preached word of God. The following excerpts from Elizabethan documents indicate the temper of Puritan sentiment concerning the depravity of the public theaters.

> Wyll not a fylthye playe, wyth the blast of a Trumpette, sooner call thyther a thousande, thanſ an houres tolling of a Bell, bring to the Sermon a hundred? nay euen heere in the Citie, without it be at this place, and some other certaine ordinarie audience, where shall you finde a reasonable company? whereas, if you resorte to the Theatre, the Curtayne, and other places of Playes in the Citie, you shall on the Lords day haue these places, with many other that I can not recken, so full, as possible they can throng.[1]

> In our assemblies at playes in London, you shall see suche heauing, and shoouing, suche ytching and shouldring, too sitte by the women; suche care for their garments, that they bee not trode on: such eyes to their lappes, that no chippes light in them: such pillowes to their backes, that they take no hurte: such masking in their eares, I knowe not what: such giuing them pippins to passe the time: suche playing at foote saunt without cardes: such ticking, such toying, such smiling, such winking, and such manning them home, when the sportes are ended, that it is a right comedie, to marke their behauiour, to watche their conceites, as the catte for the mouse, and as good as a course at the game it selfe, to dogge them a little, or followe aloofe by the printe of their feete, and so discouer by slotte where the deare taketh soyle. If this were as well noted, as ill seene: or as openly punished, as secretly practised: I haue no doubte but the cause would be seared to dry vp the

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[1] John Stockwood, A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse on 24 Aug. 1578, The Elizabethan Stage, ed. E. K. Chambers (Oxford, 1923–45), IV, 199–200.

effect, and these prettie rabbets very cunningly ferretted from their burrowes. For they that lack customers al the weeke, either because their haunte is vnknowen, or the constables and officers of their parishe watch them so narrowly, that they dare not queatche, to celebrate the Sabboth, flock to theaters, and there keepe a generall market of bawdrie: not that any filthynesse in deede is committed within the compasse of that grounde, as was doone in Rome, but that euery wanton and his paramour, euery man and his mistresse, euery John and his Joan, euery knaue and his queane, are there first acquainted and cheapen the merchandise in that place, which they pay for elsewhere as they can agree.[1]

There is no mischief which these plaies maintain not. For do they not norish ydlenes? and otia dant vitia, ydleness is the Mother of vice. Doo they not draw the people from hering the word of God, from godly Lectures and sermons? for you shall haue them flocke thither, thick & threefould, when the church of God shalbe bare & emptie. . . . Do they not maintaine bawdrie, infinit folery, & renue the remembrance of hethen ydolatrie? Do they not induce whordom & vnclennes? nay, are they not rather plaine deuourers of maydenly virginitie and chastitie? For proofe wherof, but marke the flocking and running to Theaters and curtens, daylie and hourely, night and daye, tyme and tyde, to see Playes and Enterludes; where such wanton gestures, such bawdie speaches, such laughing and fleering, such kissing and bussing, such clipping and culling, Suche winckinge and glancinge of wanton eyes, and the like, is vsed, as is wonderfull to behold. Then, these goodly pageants being done, euery mate sorts to his mate, euery one bringes another homeward of their way verye freendly, and in their secret conclaues (couertly) they play the Sodomits, or worse. And these be the fruits of Playes or Enterluds for the most part. And wheras you say there are good Examples to be learned in them, Trulie so there are: if you will learne falshood; if you will learn cosenage; if you will learn to deceiue; if you will learn to play the Hipocrit, to cogge, lye, and falsifie; if you will learne to gest, laugh, and fleer, to grin, to nodd, and mow; if you will learn to playe the vice, to swear, teare, and blaspheme both Heauen and Earth; If you will

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[1]Stephen Gosson, The Schoole of Abuse (1579), in The Elizabethan Stage, IV, 203–4.

> learn to become a bawde, uncleane, and to deuerginat Maydes, to deflour honest Wyues: if you will learne to murther, slaie, kill, picke, steal, robbe, and roue: If you will learn to rebel against Princes, to commit treasons, to consume treasurs, to practise ydlenes, to sing and talke of bawdie loue and venery; if you will lerne to deride, scoffe, mock, & flowt, to flatter & smooth: If you will learn to play the whoremaister, the glutton, Drunkard, or incestuous person: if you will learn to become proude, hawtie, & arrogant; and, finally, if you will learne to contemne God and al his lawes, to care nither for heauen nor hel, and to commit all kinde of sinne and mischeef, you need to goe to no other schoole, for all these good Examples may you see painted before your eyes in enterludes and playes:[1]

Far from representing the fanatical rantings of a few zealous reformers, the ethical opposition to plays reflected the attitude of a considerable body of opinion rooted in certain philosophical ideas. According to Puritan doctrine, man should endeavor to convert his earthly existence into a walk alone with God. If possible, he should have no other companions. Any obstacle that might frustrate the attainment of man's solitary communion with God should be eliminated. Moreover, Puritan epistemology held that it was impossible for man to acquire knowledge of truth or virtue through representational objects or actions; first, because of the inherent fallibility of sensory perception and secondly, because of the necessarily imperfect nature of the objects or actions represented.

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[1]Phillip Stubbes, The Anatomie of Abuses (1583), in The Elizabethan Stage, IV, 223–24.

In terms of Puritan religious practices, this conception of life led to a concentrated preoccupation with the reading of the Bible as the revealed word of God. Concomitantly, it led to the banishment of religious images, paintings, elaborate music, ritual and ceremony, together with a vigorous denunciation of most secular literature. The drama was attacked with unrelenting vehemence because, in the Puritan view, it represented a particularly malevolent influence in society.

> By the long suffering and permitting of these vaine plays, it hath stricken such a blinde zeale into the heartes of the people, that they shame not to say, and affirme openly, that playes are as good as sermons, and that they learne as much or more at a playe, than they do at God's worde preached. . . . Many can tarie at a vayne playe two or three houres, when as they will not abide scarce one houre at a sermon . . . I speake (alas! with griefe and sorowe of heart) against those people that are so fleshlye ledde, to see what rewarde there is giuen to such crocodiles, which deuoure the pure chastitie bothe of single and maried persons, men and women, when as in their playes you shall learne all things that appertayne to craft, mischiefe, deceytes, and filthinesse, &c. If you will learne howe to bee false and deceyue your husbandes, or husbandes their wyues, howe to beguyle, howe to betraye, to flatter, lye, sweare, forsweare, howe to allure to whoredome, howe to murther, howe to poyson, howe to disobey and rebell against princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to mooue against princes, to consume treasures prodigally, to mooue to lustes, to ransacke and spoyle cities and townes, to bee ydle, to blaspheme, to sing filthie songs of loue, to speake filthily, to be prowde, howe to mocke, scoffe, and deryde any nation . . . shall not you learne, then, at such enterludes howe to practise them?[1]

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[1]John Northbrooke, A Treatise Wherein Dicing, Dauncing, Vaine playes, or Enterluds, with other idle pastimes, &c., commonly

Drama and Moral Reform

Not only did the defenders of the drama deny that plays popularized the delights of moral delinquency, but on the contrary, they affirmed that the positive moral lessons of most plays had an altogether salutory effect on society. Instead of being seduced to imitate the unethical actions of stage characters, the public was being taught to eschew such actions out of fear of the just retribution implicit in all forms of evil. Whatever lasciviousness or immorality there might be in a play was only there for the twofold purpose of indicating the inevitable suffering of sin in contrast to the rewards of right-living.

Historical tragedies were thought to be especially effective as a means of moral instruction. Plots based on historical figures provided a vivid and moving representation of God's retributive intervention in human affairs. According to this line of thought the tragic hero always met his downfall as a direct result of his own deliberately sinful behavior. The catastrophe that inevitably subdued the protagonist, thwarting any temporary success, served as a clear warning of God's just punishment of unethical conduct.

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used on the Sabbath Day, are reproued by the Authorities of the Word of God and auntient writers (1577), in The Elizabethan Stage, IV, 198.

Nash states the typical position of the defenders of the drama on this point in the following passage.

> In Playes, all coosonages, all cunning drifts ouer-guylded with outward holinesse, all stratagems of warre, all the canker-wormes that breede on the rust of peace, are most liuely anatomiz'd: they shewe the ill successe of treason, the fall of hastie climbers, the wretched end of vsurpers, the miserie of ciuill dissention, and how iust God is euermore in punishing. ...[1]

The psychology of the moral theory of catharsis is that the spectator experiences such an urgent and overwhelming feeling of pity and fear at the plight of the tragic hero that he decides to amend his own behavior in order to avoid a similar fate. Heywood expresses this idea from the point of view of the actor-dramatist.

> If we present a tragedy, we include the fatal and abortive ends of such as commit notorious murders, which is aggravated and acted with all the art that may be, to terrify men from the like abhorred practices. If we present a foreign history, the subject is so intended that in the lives of Romans, Grecians, or others, either the virtues of our countrymen are extolled or their vices reproved . . . either animating men to noble attempts or attacking the consciences of the spectators, finding themselves touched in presenting the vices of others.[2]

The history play had several other advantages as a dramatic form. For example, the fact that the historical plot was based on

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[1]Thomas Nashe, Pierce Penilesse his Supplication to the Diuell (1592), in The Elizabethan Stage, IV, 239.

[2]Thomas Heywood, An Apology for Actors (1612), in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. A. H. Gilbert (New York, 1940), pp. 558–59.

events that actually happened made the story seem more credible and the moral lesson more readily acceptable. Thus, Richard Edwardes, in the Prologue to Damon and Pithias, makes an appeal for the audience's acceptance of his play by stating that "it is no legend-lie, But a thing once done, indeed, as histories do descry."[1] Then, too, the history play helped to foster a knowledge of and pride in the glorious history of England. The promotion of a sense of national identity through the dramatization of the Chronicles was particularly useful and even necessary for the many who could not read. Also, it was widely believed that the refined speeches put into the mouths of kings, princes, and other noblemen enriched and purified the English language among the people generally. But no matter how much the defenders of the drama talked about these secondary benefits of the historical tragedy, their primary justification for the genre consisted in emphasizing its ability to churn up the emotions and move people to act in predetermined ways.

The idea that the drama should move people emotionally in order to affect their later conduct developed, in part, from the transfer of the purposes of rhetoric to the purposes of poetry.

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[1]Richard Edwardes, Damon and Pithias, in Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, ed. Joseph Q. Adams (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), p. 572.

The fundamental purpose of the orator is to capture and redirect the will of his audience. By arousing the emotions of his listeners to the height of unresolved anxiety and then by reducing the alternatives of resolving this inner tension to a single course of action, the orator seeks to control the future conduct of the audience after the speech has ended. In this sense a rhetorical experience is never a terminal or framed experience because it always aims at some objective beyond itself.

From the standpoint of dramatic criticism, the intrusion of this rhetorical purpose into dramatic theory unduly emphasized the postexperiential effects of the drama on the audience. Most Elizabethan critics took the position that the special efficacy of the moral lessons of the drama resided in its capacity to move more powerfully and persuasively than the sterile admonitions of philosophy, history, or any other didactic media. A crucial statement of this position is Sir Phillip Sidney's assertion:

> The philosopher therefore and the historian are they which would win the goal, the one by precept, the other by example. But both, not having both, do both halt. For the philosopher, setting down with thorny argument the bare rule, is so hard of utterance, and so misty to be conceived, that one that hath no other guide but him shall wade in him till he be old before he shall find sufficient cause to be honest. For his knowledge standeth so upon the abstract and general, that happy is that man who may understand him, and more happy that can apply what he doth understand. On the other side, the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be but to

> what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draweth no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine.
>
> Now doth the peerless poet perform both: for whatsoever the philosopher saith should be done, he giveth a perfect picture of it in someone by whom he presupposeth it was done; so as he coupleth the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture I say, for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description: which doth neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other doth.[1]

That the poet had the power "to strike, pierce and possess the sight of the soul," the Puritans readily conceded. That the product of a poet's power as manifested in a drama was always morally informed, the Puritans most vigorously challenged. To meet the implications of this issue, Sidney espoused a theory of poetic inspiration which identified the creative process of the poet with the creative power of God. Sidney introduces this phase of his defense of poetry by tracing the etymologies of the terms for poet. He states that among the Roman writers "a poet was called Vates, which is as much a diviner, foreseer, or prophet." The Greeks with characteristic penetration employed the term "poet" in the sense of "maker" from the word Poiein. The English, "whether by luck or wisdom," also refer to the poet as a maker. The

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[1] Sir Phillip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry (1595), in The Golden Hind, ed. R. Lamson and H. Smith (New York, 1942), p. 568. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in my text.

import of these etymologies in terms of the concept of poetic inspiration is that, while the workers in the other branches of knowledge are dependent upon and limited by the phenomenal world of nature, the poet or maker has no such dependency or limitation. As Sidney puts it (p. 563):

> Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, doth grow in effect another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the Heroes, Demigods, Cyclops, Chimeras, Furies, and such like: so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit.

This special "nature" of the poet is essentially an instrument of divine creativity since the vivifying force that works in the imagination of the poet is of the same kind as the vivifying force that works in nature. In Sidney's view, it should not

> be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather give right honor to the heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to his own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature: which in nothing he showeth so much as in poetry, when with the force of a divine breath he bringeth things forth far surpassing her doings. [p. 564.]

A play, therefore, as the creation of a divinely inspired poet, is endowed with a kind of quasi-divine authority. The particular attributes of this authority are manifested in the artful use of figurative language, the sensuous pleasure of stage spectacle and

the emotional excitement of plot construction. These attributes serve to beguile the public into embracing the ethical message of the play without being fully conscious of having done so. And thus, for Sidney and his followers, the function of drama in society is to teach and delight, or to delight and teach, or to delight in order to teach.

> Now therein of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to the humane conceits) is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it. Nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of grapes, that, full of that taste, you may long to pass further. He beginneth not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margent with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness; but he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting skill of music; and with a tale forsooth he cometh unto you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner. And, pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue: even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste [p. 573].

Other Elizabethan approaches to the justification of drama are Thomas Lodge's revival of the theory of allegorical interpretation[1] and Ben Jonson's concept of satire as a means of social reform. Lodge's Defence of Poetry, Music, and Stage Plays (1579–80)

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[1]Two early expressions of the theory of allegorical interpretation as applied to English drama are: W. Bavande, The Good Ordering of a Common Weal (1559), and L. Wager, The Repentance of Mary Magdeline (1566).

is a direct rejoinder to Gosson's School of Abuse and, as such, its central concern is to sustain the idea of the morally instructive value of poetry. Although Lodge is inclined to admit that from time to time in the history of poetry there have appeared a few poets whose works may seem to encourage immoral conduct, nevertheless, he steadfastly insists that such perversions of poetry are no part of its essential nature. It is his contention that the essential nature of poetry is divine and, therefore, incapable of teaching evil. He sums up his position in this connection by saying, "I reson not that al poets are holy, but I affirme that poetry is a heauenly gift, a perfit gift" (p. 75). And as for the misuse of the heavenly gift of poetry by unholy poets, he adds,

> I abhore those poets that sauor of ribaldry: I will with the zealous admit the expullcion of such enormities; poetry is dispraised not for the folly that is in it, but for the abuse whiche manye ill Wryters couller by it [p. 76].[1]

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Lodge's defense of poetry is his attempt to account for the fact that even in the writings of the greatest poets there are passages of ambiguous ethical value. What is the proper approach in interpreting such passages? Is the irresistible beauty of poetic imagery always employed to portray

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[1]Thomas Lodge, Defence of Poetry, Music and Stage Plays, in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford, 1904), I, 75. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in my text.

virtue triumphant? Is it not true that sin is often so attractively apparelled as to ensnare the innocent and lure him into the way of unchastity? To all such questioning Lodge answers that there are always deeper didactic lessons in poetry than may appear on the surface. He asserts that the true apprehension of the poet's intention can only be arrived at through a process of symbolic interpretation which seeks to uncover the hidden meanings beneath the overt expression. Quoting Lactantius as his authority, he says,

> I suppose (sayth he) Poets are full of credit, and yet it is requisite for those that will vnderstand them to be admonished that among them, not onely the name but the matter beareth a show of that it is not; for if, sayth he, we examine the Scriptures litterallye, nothing will seeme more falls, and if we way Poetes wordes and not ther meaning, our learning in them wilbe very mene" [p. 73].

And in another section in which Gosson is rebuked for not having perceived the validity of allegorical interpretation, Lodge observes, "you remember not . . . that under the shadow of byrds, beastes and trees, the follies of the world were disiphered" (p. 65).

Lodge realizes, of course, that the great redemptive work of poetry is not being zealously prosecuted by all the poets of his time. From his point of view, many English writers seem to be unaware of the tremendous potential for social reform which properly oriented poetry holds within its power. He regrets that the didactic role of satire is not sufficiently understood. The follies and abuses

of his time could be corrected without offense, Lodge states, "if we had some Satericall Poetes nowe a dayes to penn our commedies, that might be admitted of zeale to discypher the abuses of the worlde" (p. 82).

In the exposition of the Humour plays, generally, and more specifically, in the Prologue to Every Man in His Humour, Ben Jonson proclaims himself to be such a satirical poet as Lodge had longed for. Although Jonson was not the first to write a Humour play, the significance of his innovation lay in making the exhibition of the humours the sole function of plot. The particular targets of Jonson's satirical treatment of the humours are those psychological eccentricities of personality that result from some overdominant character trait.

> When some one peculiar quality
> Doth so possesse a man, that it doth draw
> All his affects, his spirits, and his powers,
> In their confluctions, all to runne one way,
> This may be truly said to be a Humour.[1]

Jonson's purpose is to present to his audience a picture of life in which it "shall see the times deformitie Anatomized in euery nerue, and sinnew."[2] As the follies of the world are held up to ridicule

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[1]Ben Jonson, Every Man out of His Humor, Induction, in Ben Jonson, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson (11 vols.; Oxford, 1927), III, 432.

[2]Loc. cit.

and scorn, certain curative reactions are induced in the audience. While vicariously experiencing criticism of its own foibles and follies in the person of stage characters, the audience also is experiencing a kind of therapeutic laughter or catharsis which leads to the correction of exaggerated and undesirable personality traits. To Jonson, the comic or satiric dramatist is primarily a social monitor whose mission it is to represent:

> . . . deedes, and language, such as men doe vse,
> And persons, such as Comoedie would chuse,
> When she would shew an Image of the times,
> And sport with humane follies, not with crimes;
> Except, we make 'hem such by louing still
> Our popular errors, when we know th' are ill.
> I meane such errors as you'll all confesse
> By laughing at them, they deserue no lesse:
> Which when you heartily doe, there's hope left, then,
> You, that haue so grac'd monsters, may like men.[1]

Drama and the Pleasure of the Audience

Although throughout the Elizabethan period the didactic effects of drama continued to be an important topic in discussions of dramatic practice and theory, attention shifted somewhat after about 1590. By that date, the public theaters were well established as successful business ventures. The Theater and the Curtain had relatively stable acting companies and an increasingly varied repertoire. Professional

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[1] Ben Jonson, Prologue to Every Man in His Humour, in Herford and Simpson, III, 303.

actors were now receiving official recognition and protection. "The Spanish Tragedy" had achieved extraordinary popularity as the hit of the day, and the influence of Marlowe was spreading as a result of the enormous artistic innovations he introduced in the use of English as a medium of dramatic expression. The early success of the first Blackfriars Theater had demonstrated the financial and aesthetic potentialities of the private indoor theater. The popular drama had survived the vehement attack of the Puritan reformers with amazing vitality and, in fact, was about to enter a decade of phenomenal development.

During and after the 1590's, commentators on the drama were no longer exclusively dedicated to the moralistic justification of the dramatic art. As dramatic technique and the taste of the audience became more refined, greater attention began to be paid to the pleasure-giving qualities of plays. But even during the time when the moral issue was a vigorous topic of debate, there was a current of opinion which emphasized the importance of the pleasure of the audience over other dramatic considerations. Two factors that facilitated the tendency toward the appreciation of drama as mere amusement were the contemporary views on the suitability of mixing comic and tragic material in the same play and Sidney's theory of poetic inspiration.

As we have seen in a previous section of this study, Sidney liberated the poetic imagination from the fetters of natural law. For him, the poet was a kind of demigod who, under the power of divine inspiration, had the capacity to create "things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature."[1] Further, in their imitating, the true poets "borrow nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be, and should be" (p. 565). This broad conception of imaginative creativity gave a quasi-philosophical sanction to the use of fanciful and romantic themes such as those in the comedies of John Lyly. It would seem also to allow for the mixed form of tragicomedy, which, in fact, Sidney thoroughly condemned. Not only is Sidney's statement on the freedom of the poetic imagination inconsistent with his condemnation of tragicomedy, but even his condemnation of that dramatic type is ambiguous. At one point in the Apology he distinguishes the variety and mixture of poetic species and observes "it is to be noted that some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds, as tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragicomical." His judgment here on the mixed forms

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[1]Sidney, in The Golden Hind, p. 563.

is that "if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful" (p. 575). And yet, in another section, while discussing the absurdities of contemporary dramatists, he states that "their plays be neither right tragedies, nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it, but thrust in clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion" (p. 591).

Some dozen years before Sidney's strictures against tragicomedy, Ulpian Fulwell set forth the idea of mixing mirth with sadness as the conscious purpose of his play Like Will to Like (1568).

> And because divers men of divers minds be,
> Some do matters of mirth and pastime require;
> Other some are delighted with matters of gravity;
> To please all men is our author's chief desire;
> Wherefore mirth with measure to sadness is annexed,
> Desiring that none here at our matter will be perplexed . . .
>
> And sith mirth for sadness is a sauce most sweet,
> Take mirth then with measure that best sauceth it.[1]

The special significance of Fulwell's statement lies in the fact that his dramatic technique was deliberately conditioned by what he conceived to be the psychological demands of his audience. He was

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[1] Ulpian Fulwell, Prolog to Like Will to Like, in David Klein, Literary Criticism from the Elizabethan Dramatists (New York, 1910), p. 24.

concerned that everyone should leave the performance with the feeling of having had a pleasurable experience.

In the "Prolog" to Damon and Pithias, Richard Edwardes specifically described the play as a "tragical comedy," a new dramatic form in which the elements of comedy were mixed with tragical material to create a more serious effect on the audience.

> Which matter, mix'd with mirth and care, a just name to apply
> As seems most fit, we have it termed a "tragical comedy" . . .
>
> Whose upright judgment we do crave with heedful ear and eye
> To hear the cause and see th' effect of this new tragical comedy.[1]

In the "Dedication" to Promos and Cassandra (1578), George Whetstone, who generally condemns the inartistic violation of decorum for the mere sake of arousing laughter, nevertheless recognizes the psychological importance of dramatic variety in holding the attention of the audience. He states that the elements of a play should be so ordered that the "graue matter may instruct and the pleasant delight; for without this chaunge the attention would be small, and the likinge lesse."[2] Here again it is apparent that the dramatist realizes that whatever else a play may do, it must give pleasure to the audience.

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[1] Edwardes, loc. cit.

[2] George Whetstone, Promos and Cassandra, in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford, 1904), I, 60.

To John Lyly belongs the distinction of being the first major Elizabethan dramatist to suggest that the function of comedy is merely to provide amusement. In the "Prolog" to Endymion he states that his only intention in the play is to present a fantasy, a pleasant trifle, the sole object of which is the recreation of the audience. He writes, "Wee present neither Comedie, nor Tragedie, nor storie, nor anie thing but that whosoeuer heareth may say this: Why heere is a tale of the Man in the Moone."[1]

As Fulwell had done earlier, Lyly also supported the native tradition of mingling dramatic elements in order to satisfy the demands of a mixed audience. His sanction of the practice reemphasized the fact that the taste of the audience had to be taken into account in determining dramatic norms.

> At our exercises, Souldiers call for Tragedies, their obiect is bloud: Courtiers for Commedies, their subiect is loue; Countriemen for Pastoralles, Shepheards are their Saintes. Trafficke and trauell hath wouen the nature of all Nations into ours, . . . but all commeth to this passe, that what heretofore hath beene serued in seuerall dishes for a feaste, is now minced in a charger for a Gallimaufrey.[2]

In maintaining that the characteristics of the dramatic species were subject to alteration in order to accord with popular taste, and

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[1] The Complete Works of John Lyly, ed. R. Warwick Bond (Oxford, 1902), III, 20.

[2] Ibid., p. 115.

that the pleasure of the audience was a proper and sufficient end of comedy, Lyly suggested an approach to drama which was frequently echoed by later dramatists. In the "Prolog" to The Dutch Courtezan Marston states that "we strive not to instruct but to delight."[1] Dekker's "Dedication" to The Shoemaker's Holiday explains that in the play "nothing is proposed but mirth; mirth lengtheneth long life."[2] Fletcher's "Prolog" to The Knight of the Burning Pestle states that the purpose of the play was "to move inward lightness; and to breed (if it might be) soft smiling."[3]

In defense of tragicomedy, the following comments indicate the dramatist's conscious concern for the pleasure of the audience.

> Francisco. My tragedy must have some idle mirth in't,
> Else it will never pass.[4]
>
> We shall both make you sad and tickle ye.[5]

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[1] John Marston, "Prolog" to The Dutch Courtezan, in Klein, op. cit., p. 167.

[2] Thomas Dekker, "Dedication" of The Shoemaker's Holiday, in Klein, op. cit., p. 10.

[3] John Fletcher, "Prolog" to The Knight of the Burning Pestle, in J. W. H. Atkins, English Literary Criticism: The Renascence (London, 1947), p. 245.

[4] John Webster, The White Devil, IV, 1, in Klein, op. cit., p. 189.

[5] Thomas Middleton, "Prolog" to No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's, in Klein, op. cit., p. 189.

> This our device we do not call a play,
> Because we break the stage's laws to-day
> Of acts and scenes: sometimes a comic strain
> Hath hit delight home in a master-vein,
> Thalia's prize; Melpomene's sad style
> Hath shook the tragic hand another while;
> The Muse of History hath caught your eyes,
> And she that chants the pastoral psalteries:
> We now lay claim to none, yet all present,
> Seeking out pleasure to find your content.[1]

Perhaps the most remarkable statement in this period of the aesthetic interdependence of the poet, the actor, and the audience is to be found in Dekker's "Prolog" to The Devil Is in It (1612).

> Give me that man
> Can call the banished auditor home, and tie
> His ear with golden chains to his melody:
> Can draw with adamantine pen even creatures,
> Forged out of the hammer, on tiptoe to reach up
> And (from rare silence) clap their brawny hands,
> T'applaud what their charmed soul scarce understands.
> That man give me, whose breast filled by the Muses
> With raptures, into a second them infuses:
> Can give an actor sorrow, rage, joy, passion,
> Whilst he again, by selfsame agitation,
> Commands the hearers, sometimes drawing out tears,
> Then smiles, and fills them both with hope and fears.
> That man give me. And to be such a one
> Our poet this day strives, or to be none.[2]

Dekker here expresses the conviction that a dramatic experience at its best must give pleasure to the whole audience regardless of its

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[1]Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, "Prolog" to The World Tost at Tennis, in Klein, pp. 189–90.

[2]Thomas Dekker, "Prolog" to The Devil Is in It, in Klein, op. cit., pp. 198–99.

capacity to intellectualize every aspect of the plot. Such an experience results from the word-magic of the dramatist, the inspired performance of the actors and the imaginative participation of the audience.

CHAPTER II

DECORUM AND VERISIMILITUDE IN ELIZABETHAN DRAMATIC CRITICISM

In Chapter I it was established that the moral attack on drama largely determined the moralistic nature of its defense. Since for most Elizabethan critics the principal function of drama was to teach ethical life values, it did not seem unreasonable to them to expect that life on the stage should approximate the realities of life outside the theater. In fact, most critics agreed that drama achieved its didactic objectives better if it accurately reflected human nature of the nonaesthetic world. Thus the demand that drama should be true to life became a central issue in most discussions of dramatic theory.

In this period the term "true to life" had two meanings that included the interrelated problems of dramatic function and dramatic technique. In the first instance, "true to life" referred to ethical truth and involved the presentation of moral precepts that were applicable to the conditions of everyday life. This topic was considered in the preceding chapter. In the second instance, "true to life" referred to psychological truth and involved the adjustment of

dramatic theory to the prevailing psychological conventions of the period. This aspect of the problem is now to be considered.

Throughout the Elizabethan period the general insistence on the observance of decorum in character seemed to indicate a view of human nature that was both rigid and one-dimensional. Although the Elizabethans frequently employed the catch phrase "true to life," their understanding of the term as regards character was the portrayal of the standard or customary. The principle of decorum demanded that the actions, speech, and emotional range of characters conform to stereotypical categories of race, sex, age, occupation, social status, et cetera. It also helped to establish a hierarchy of appropriate relationships among characters of different social classes. A servant, for example, was expected to walk, talk, dress, feel, and behave according to the accepted conventions governing the nature of servants. It was considered indecorous, except for comic effect, for a servant to express the lofty sentiments appropriate to a nobleman, who, it was thought, possessed a larger, more sensitive soul. Or to cite another example, in Elizabethan times a harlot was a harlot, and not a "floozy with a heart of gold," which is a modern convention.

Of course, the idea of typical characters with invariably typical attributes was not original with the Elizabethans. A kind of rough psychological typing of individuals was implicit in the

critical theory and practice of the ancient Greeks and Romans. For example, certain passages in the Poetics of Aristotle suggested that the development of character should be consistent, that only a limited range of characteristics was appropriate for women, and that noble qualities existed in women or slaves only to an inferior degree.[1] The Ars Poetica of Horace also supported the classification of personal traits according to typical patterns. In describing character, the following lines set forth the description of the qualities of various ages which dominated the Elizabethan idea of decorum.

> Heare, what it is the people, and I desire;
> If such a ones applause thou dost require,
> That tarries till the Hanging be tane downe,
> And sits till the Epilogue sayes clap, or crowne:
> The customes of each age thou must observe,
> And give their years and natures as they swerve,
> Fit dues. The child that now knows how to say,
> And can tread firme, longs with like lads to play.
> Soone angry, and soone pleas'd, is sweet, or soure,
> He knowes not why, and changeth every houre.
> The unbearded youth, his Guardian being gone,
> Loves Dogs, and Horses; and is every one
> I'th' open field; is waxe-like to be wrought
> To every vice: as hardly to be brought
> To endure Counsell: a provider slow
> For his owne good, a carelesse letter-goe
> of Mony, haughty, to desire soone mov'd,
> And then as swift to leave what he hath lov'd.

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[1] Aristotle, "The Poetics," chap. 15, in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. A. H. Gilbert (New York, 1940), pp. 89–90 (from the text of Alfred Gudeman).

> These Studies alter now, in one growne Man;
> His betterd mind seeks wealth, and friendships than,
> Looks after honours, and bewares to act
> What straightway he must labour to retract.
> The old man many evills doe girt round;
> Either because he seeks, and having found,
> Doth, wretchedly, the use of things forbeare,
> Or does all businesse coldly, and with feare:
> A great differrer, long in hope, grown numbe
> With sloth, yet greedy still of whats to come:
> Froward, complaining; a commender glad
> Of the times past, when he was a young lad,
> And still correcting youth, and censuring.
> Mans comming yeares much good with them doe bring,
> At his departing take much thence: lest then
> The parts of age to youth be given, or men
> To children, we must alwayes dwell, and stay,
> In fitting proper adjuncts to each day.[1]

With the passage of time, the rigidity of the old personality categories was reinforced by certain notions of medieval physiology which gave rise to the development of the psychology of humours. It was believed that the physical and mental qualities of individuals were determined by the mixture of certain fluids or humours in the body. Since all matter was composed of earth, air, fire, and water, these elements had their correspondences in the human body. Earth was equated with black bile, air with blood, fire with bile, and water with phlegm. These elements were thought to be mutually antagonistic, but they could exist in combination when properly proportioned.

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[1]Horace, Ars Poetica, trans. Ben Jonson, ed. Edward Henry Blakeney, in Horace on the Art of Poetry (London, 1928), pp. 115–16.

The four bodily fluids, in turn, were equated with different temperaments or humours. An excess of black bile accounted for the melancholic humour; air, the sanguine; fire, the choleric; water, the phlegmatic. In each normal personality there was a natural balance of the humours. An imbalance in the mixture of the humours resulted in distinctive and exaggerated personality traits. Influenced by this conception of human nature, dramatists and critics alike conceived of dramatic characterization in terms of artificial types.

Another aspect of the problem of accommodating dramatic theory to psychological conventions involved the effect of the Renaissance view of verisimilitude on plot construction. In the Renaissance, critics came to identify poetic verisimilitude with accuracy in factual or historical reporting. It was believed that the dominance of the intellectual faculty of the mind determined the scope of an imaginative experience and set the limits of aesthetic credibility. This conception of poetic truth was based in part on a distortion of Horace's dictum that "ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris [1. 338]." A reasonable interpretation of Horace's statement in context would have suggested the useful aesthetic principle that fictions made to please should keep close enough to the truth of things so as not to demand the indiscriminate credence of the audience. Instead of this, the general position of Renaissance

critics was that each episode of the plot of a play had to square with the realities of everyday life; otherwise, the spectators would reject the play as a gross presumption on the part of the dramatist.

In his Poetica d'Aristotelé vulgarizzata et sposta, Castelvetro developed this line of thought to an incredible point of critical naïveté. He argued that the spectator's awareness of the passage of time at a play was more dependent upon his periodic need for food, drink, and sleep than upon what he saw happening on the stage. He maintained that ". . . tragedy and comedy, which are members of the dramatic class, cannot last longer than the time allowed by the convenience of the audience, nor represent more things than those which come about in the space of time that the comedies and the tragedies themselves require."[1] And in distinguishing between the epic and tragedy he explained that:

> The epic, narrating by means of words only, can relate an action that occupied many years and happened in various places without any difficulty, for the words present to our intellect things remote in place and time. But tragedy cannot do the same, for it must needs have as a subject an action that happened in a short space of time, that is in the extent of place and time just such as the actors actually use in the performance, and not otherwise as to place and time. . . . It is not possible to make the audience suppose that several days and

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[1]Castelvetro, Poetica d'Aristotelé vulgarizzata et sposta, ed. and trans. Allan H. Gilbert, op. cit., p. 310.

> nights have passed when they have the evidence of their senses that only a few hours have gone by.[1]

Thus the Renaissance idea of illusion in the theater required the strict observance of the Unities in order to allay the audience's disbelief.

It is evident from the frequent allusions to the principles of decorum and verisimilitude that the Elizabethan critics accepted and applied these concepts to English drama. But the question arises whether the Elizabethans simply imposed classical theories upon contemporary dramatic forms without reservation or whether they attempted to use classical doctrines as touchstones to develop a new and native aesthetic. Both tendencies were apparent throughout the Elizabethan period, although after 1600 the demand for aesthetic freedom became more persistent.

It was not until the late 1590's that plays began to appear in the London theaters that were entirely conceived within the framework of the psychology of the humours. But as early as 1571, there is evidence that the principle of decorum in character was an influential dogma in the practice of Richard Edwardes.

> In comedies the greatest skill is this: rightly to touch
> All things to the quick, and eke to frame each person so

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[1] Loc. cit., n. 15.

> That by his common talk you may his nature rightly know.
> A roister ought not preach—that were too strange to hear,—
> But, as from virtue he doth swerve, so ought his words appear.
> The old man is sober; the young man rash; the lover triumphing in joys;
> The matron grave; the harlot wild, and full of wanton toys:
> Which all in one course they no wise do agree,
> So correspondent to their kind speeches ought to be.[1]

Edwardes cites Horace as his authority for the use of certain styles of speech to portray different characters. This standardized method of managing dialogue, he believed, satisfied the expectations of the audience since it provided for the quick recognition of the nature of a character by his typical manner of speaking.

In a notable passage in the Dedication to Promos and Cassandra (1578), commenting on the faulty practice of certain contemporary dramatists, George Whetstone criticized those playwrights who failed to observe the artistic necessity of maintaining decorum. In language and point of view very similar to that expressed by Edwardes, he restates the canon.

> Manye tymes (to make mirthe) they make a Clowne companion with a Kinge; in theyr graue Counsels they allow the aduise of fooles; yea, they vse one order of speach for all persons: a grose Indecorum, for a Crowe wyll yll counterfet the Nightingale's sweete voice; euen so affected speeche doth misbecome a Clowne. For, to work a Comedie kindly, graue olde men

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[1]Richard Edwardes, Prologue to Damon and Pithias (1571), in Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas, ed. Joseph Quincy Adams (Cambridge, Mass., 1924), p. 572.

> should instruct, yonge men should be lasciuious, Boyes vnhappy, and Clownes should speake disorderlye:[1]

Whetstone also has something to say about the Unities. Although his criticism of the abuses of current dramatic practice is in part based on classical authority, the substance of his argument is that gross improbabilities in plot are psychologically unacceptable. The lack of concentration in the selection and arrangement of the dramatic episodes arouses the audience's incredulity and encourages the application of nonaesthetic criteria to the play experience. The English dramatist, he says,

> fyrst groundes his worke on impossibilities; then in three howers ronnes he throwe the worlde, marryes, gets Children, makes Children men, men to conquer kingdomes, murder Monsters, and bringeth Gods from Heauen, and fetcheth Diuels from Hel . . . not waying, so the people laugh, though they laugh them (for theyr follyes) to scorne.[2]

There is an interesting passage in Lodge's Defense of Poetry that extends the idea of decorum to costuming. Lodge supposes that a stylized manner of dress to coincide with character developed on the English stage as a continuation of the practice of the ancient Roman theaters.

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[1]George Whetstone, Promos and Cassandra, Dedication, in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford, 1904), I, 59–60.

[2]Whetstone, op. cit., p. 59.

> The actors in Rome had also gay clothing, and euery mans aparel was apliable to his part and person. The old men in white, the rich men in purple, the paraside disguisedly, the yong men in gorgeous coulours, ther wanted no deuise nor good iudgement of the comedy, where I suppose our players both drew their plaies and fourme of garments.[1]

The significant point of Lodge's observation in context is that variety in costuming as well as appropriate music and forceful acting are all factors which contribute to the creation of a dramatic mood. He seems to recognize the power of spectacle as a means of heightening the effect of a play on the audience, but he fails to appreciate the efforts of native dramatists who are attempting to modify ancient traditions to suit contemporary taste. His comment is that ". . . they apply ther writing to the peoples vain"; instead of closely following the satiric purposes of "Terrence's profession."[2]

Sidney also approves of the principle of decorum, as an aid to the accomplishment of drama's didactic purpose. In his view, stock characters that represent prototypes of virtues or vices evoke stock responses in the audience. Each spectator, seeing the common faults of mankind contemptibly set forth on the stage, examines his own character with the object of avoiding the bad and embracing the

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[1]Thomas Lodge, Defence of Poetry (1579), in Elizabethan Critical Essays, ed. G. Gregory Smith (Oxford, 1904), I, 83.

[2]Loc. cit.

good. This process is most efficiently expedited when the spectator is provided with a set of conventional clues that channel his reactions during the play experience. As Sidney puts it: "This doth the comedy handle so in our private and domestical matters, as with hearing it we get as it were an experience, what is to be looked for of a niggardly Demea, of a crafty Davus, of a flattering Gnatho, of a vain-glorious Thraso, and not only to know what effects are to be expected, but to know who be such, by the signifying badge given them by the Comedian."[1]

It should be pointed out in passing that although Sidney's Apology was undoubtedly the most influential document of Elizabethan criticism, it was written long before the dramatic achievements of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. The precise date of the Apology's composition is not known; however, authorities generally agree on a date not later than 1583. This means that, of necessity, Sidney's dramatic principles were derived from classical models and the relatively primitive examples of the early English theater. Moreover, while Sidney was probably familiar with many of the plays of his day, he was careful to state that his criticism was based on

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[1]Sir Philip Sidney, An Apology for Poetry (1595), in The Golden Hind, ed. Roy Lamson and Hallett Smith (New York, 1942), p. 577.

limited observation. "Our tragedies and comedies (not without cause cried out against), observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skillful poetry, . . . (again, I say, of those that I have seen)," (p. 590). Then, too, the Apology is primarily a treatise on poetry. It is true that, in the Elizabethan period, drama was thought of as a subdivision of poetry, but it is also true that only a small portion of the Apology deals directly and specifically with problems of dramatic theory. Despite these qualifications, Sidney's comments are crucial in any discussion of Elizabethan criticism, and his theory of poetic imagination is fundamental to all subsequent critical developments.

One of Sidney's several descriptions of the freedom of the imagination appears in his treatment of the Unities. In answer to the question as to how dramatists should handle stories that contain many places and many times, Sidney replies: "And do they not know that a tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not of history; not bound to follow the story, but, having liberty, either to feign a quite new matter, or to frame the history to the most tragical conveniency" (p. 591). As so often happens in literary criticism, Sidney here announces a perfectly sound aesthetic principle and then proceeds to misapply it when treating a concrete example. In his critique of Gorboduck—a play which would stand as an exact model

of all tragedies except for its violation of the Unities—Sidney denies to the audience the imaginative capacity to enter into the space-time scheme of the dramatist. On the authority of "Aristotle's precept and common reason" the dramatist should limit himself to representing on the stage "but one place, . . . but one day" (p. 590). Sidney's "common reason" is similar to Castlevetro's "evidence of the senses"; one simply cannot deceive the audience into accepting for true what it knows to be false. Therefore, Gorboduck is censored for being "very defectious in the circumstances," and Sidney continues:

> But if it be so in Gorboduc, how much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Afric of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived? Now ye shall have three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that, comes out a hideous monster, with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a Cave. While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords and bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field? Now, of time they are much more liberal, for ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love. After many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child; and all this in two hours space: which, how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine, and art hath taught, and all ancient examples justified. . . . [p. 590.]

Like Sidney, whose classical orientation he generally follows, Jonson sets himself against the "ill customs of the age." In the "Prolog" to Every Man in His Humor, he asserts that in this play he intends to depict "deeds and language such as men do use" instead of the unrealistic deeds and language of other dramatists. This apparent demand for greater realism in characterization loses much of its force by virtue of being linked to Jonson's didactic objectives. What he really seems to want are more vivid characters to drive home more forcefully his particular ethical message. Thus his appeal for realism represents little more than a wish for a sharper delineation of Sidney's "signifying badges." As the champion of dramatic decorum and the theory of the humours, Jonson accepts a view of humanity which precludes any genuine realism in character. In the estimate of Herford and Simpson,

> He seizes character under one aspect, because he sees it so; neglecting, because he does not see them, the cross-play of impulses, the inconsistencies and conflicts, the mingled strength and weakness, . . . The nuances fell together for him, and the vast complexes of detail . . . grouped themselves about a few nuclei of ludicrous character.[1]

Again, showing his indebtedness to Sidney, Jonson supports the Renaissance interpretation of the classical practice of observing

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[1] C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, Ben Jonson (Oxford, 1925–1952), I, 338.

the unities of time, place, and action. He ridicules those popular romantic dramatists whose practice it is:

> To make a child, now swadled, to proceede
> Man, and then shoote vp, in one beard and weede,
> Past threescore yeares: or, with three rustie swords
> and helpe of some few foot-and-halfe-foot words,
> Fight ouer Yorke and Lancasters long iarres. . . .[1]

In addition to denying the theatrical and artistic propriety of representing great changes in time and space, Jonson also opposes the symbolic portrayal of such actions as could not realistically happen within the narrow compass of the stage. With lofty disdain he scoffs at the use of such tricks of stage business as the bringing of "wounds to scars" in the "tyring-house," the chorus that "wafts you ore the seas," the "creaking throne," and the "roul'd bullet" and "tempestuous drumme"[2] that announced an approaching storm. That these and many similar devices were employed to enhance the delight of the audience is a further indication that drama increasingly was being adapted to the taste of the times despite the objections of a few.

Those dramatists who conditioned their writing to the temper of the times justified their methods by claiming for themselves the

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[1]Ben Jonson, Prologue to Every Man in His Humour, in Herford and Simpson, III, 303.

[2]Loc. cit.

license of a poet. Sidney had already pointed the way with his explanations of poetic inspiration, and now a later generation continued the struggle for artistic freedom, using essentially the same arguments. A case in point is Marston's declaration, "I have not laboured . . . to tie myself to relate anything as an historian, but to enlarge everything as a poet."[1] In similar vein, Dekker defends his deviation from historical truth by explaining that the historian and the poet "do not live under one law."[2] Of the same tenor is Chapman's scorn of "those poor envious souls . . . [who] cavil at truth's want in these natural fictions."[3] Marston had stated this viewpoint even more forcefully in an earlier work:

> I wonder what tight brain,
> Wrung in this custom to maintain contempt
> 'Gainst common censure; to give stiff counter-buffs,
> To crack rude scorn even on the very face
> Of better audience. Slight, is't not odious?
> Why, hark you, honest, honest Phylomuse,
> (You that endeavor to endear our thoughts
> To the composer's spirit), hold this firm:
> Music and poetry were first approved
> By common sense; and that which pleased most,

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[1] John Marston, Sophonisba (1606), "To the General Reader," quoted by David Klein, in Literary Criticism from the Elizabethan Dramatists (New York, 1910), p. 154.

[2] Thomas Dekker, The Whore of Babylon (1607), "To the General Reader," quoted by Klein, op. cit., p. 155.

[3] George Chapman, Dedication to The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois (1613), in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, p. 550.

> Held most allowed to pass: know rules of art
> Were shaped to pleasure, not pleasure to your rules;
> Think you, that if his scenes took stamp in mint
> Of three or four deem'd most judicious,
> It would enforce the world to current them,
> That you must spit defiance on dislike?
> Now, as I love the light, were I to pass
> Through public verdict, I should fear my form,
> Lest ought I offer'd were unsquared or warp'd.[1]

This repeated argument for poetic license resulted in part from the natural demand of creative genius to express itself unencumbered by restrictive aesthetic laws. It was also a reflection of the dramatist's growing awareness that the popular judgment placed pleasure higher than art, and that that judgment was basically sound.

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[1] John Marston, What You Will, The Works of John Marston, ed. A. H. Bullen (Boston, 1887), II, 325.

CHAPTER III

SPANISH DRAMATIC CRITICISM OF THE SIGLO DE ORO

An examination of representative critical documents of the Siglo de Oro reveals that Spanish dramatic critics were concerned with the same practical questions that commanded the attention of their English contemporaries. Just as in England, the secular theater of the Spanish Golden Age was continually attacked on the grounds of the immoral content of the plays and the unwholesome atmosphere of the public playhouses. In Spain, the assault on drama was initiated and sustained by ecclesiastics of several religious orders, with the Jesuits and Franciscans in the vanguard. A survey of the issues involved in the clerical opposition to the Golden Age theater is presented by J. C. J. Metford in an article entitled "The Enemies of the Theatre in the Golden Age."[1]

Metford demonstrates that the opposition of the clergy to theatrical productions dates from the early period of the Christian era,

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[1]J. C. J. Metford, "The Enemies of the Theatre in the Golden Age," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXVIII (1951), 76–92.

when the church fathers were joined in a desperate battle to preserve the purity of Christian doctrine. In their condemnation of the deleterious influence on society of decadent Roman drama, the early fathers formulated the basic arguments which the later Spanish clerics repeatedly used in attacking the alleged abuses of Golden Age drama. In addition to the authority of the fathers, the church councils, the Bible, and even pagan philosophers, the opponents of stage plays exploited the conservatism of the Counter Reformation to advance their case against all aspects of the dramatic art. The principal accusations were set forth in Padre Juan de Mariana's Tratado contra los juegos públicos.[1] Mariana argued that plays were very schools of indecency and shamelessness where the morals of every age, rank, and sex were corrupted by the lewd themes of the plots and the sensual jests and gestures of the players. Plays aroused sexual desires, and, what was worse, they taught the means by which illicit passions might be satisfied.

> What else does the theatre contain and what else is there represented but the deflowering of virgins, the love affairs of strumpets, the craftiness of pimps and panderers, and the deceitful intrigues of servants—all related in elegantly rhythmical verse and embellished with clear and beautiful sententiae so that

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[1] Padre Juan de Mariana, Tratado contra los juegos públicos, v. 2, obras del P. Juan de Mariana, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles (Madrid, 1854), v. 31.

> it most tenaciously imprints in the memory the knowledge of things better unknown? The seductive slinking and switching of the players, the tender insinuating voices and motions with which lustful actresses perform their unchaste roles—for what else do they serve but to inflame with passion the male spectators who are already, by nature, overinclined to vice?[1]

Mariana and others attacked the theater not only because of the sexual excitement which the plays aroused, but also because of the irregular lives of the actors. The women's parts in the Spanish Golden Age theater were generally acted by female members of the acting companies—not by boy actors as in Elizabethan England—and the constant intimacy of rehearsals, the close proximity of the dressing rooms, and the necessity of traveling about the countryside together gave rise to the charge that all players lived in the sin of communal fornication. Hurtado de Mendoza, in 1630, wrote that the men, who spent the day learning amorous speeches, were entertained at night by the women of the company, "a las que ven los hombres vestirse y desnudarse; ya en el lecho, ya semidesnudas y siempre provocativas."[2]

Condemnation of the disorderly private lives of the players was monotonously repeated through the years—to the point that old

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[1]Mariana, op. cit., p. 413. My translation.

[2]Huryado de Mendoza, in Morales Disputationes (1631), Disp. 173, in Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, Bibliografía de los controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España (Madrid, 1904), p. 364.

anecdotes were frequently recounted as the latest scandal. Metford cites the case of a tale first told by Leonardo de Argensola in 1598:

> . . . the part of Our Lady was played by an actress who was living in sin with the actor who played St. Joseph. Not only did it cause the public great amusement when she was hailed by the angel as a pure virgin, but it scandalized everyone when the actor, in a savage aside, called her a whore because she was making eyes at a gentleman in the audience. This same tale, told in almost identical words by Fray Alonso de Ribera, appears again in 1621, and crops up at intervals throughout the period under consideration, the last mention of it . . . being in the eighteenth century.[1]

In addition to being intimate with their fellow players, the promiscuous actresses frequently seduced the innocent public. The very young men upon whom the future of the nation depended were often driven to waste their fortunes, and even their lives, in the service of women players whose charms were great but whose unchastity was notorious. Many noblemen maintained luxurious houses for their mistresses and openly accompanied them when the acting companies went on tour. Some even killed themselves out of jealousy and disillusionment over their mistresses' infidelities.

A third line of attack was to point out the evil effects of plays on public morals and the general welfare of the state:

> ... En ellas se representa con la viveza de los colores que el demonio sabe dar á un pensamiento ocioso y á un corazón lozano,

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[1]Metford, op. cit., p. 83.

> cómo ha de armar traiciones la muger casada á su marido, le facilita el hecho y disminuye la fealdad con el ejemplo que allí le ponen delante de otras que lo han hecho así. A la doncella la incitan á que piense lo que no sabe y desee lo que no entiende. ... Enséñanla ... á fingir en lo público, á perder los temblores en lo secreto. ... A los mozos, libertades, atrevimientos y insolencias ... y cómo en todos los sucesos se han de portar. A los casados, el continuo oir desenvolturas de mugeres les amansa los oídos, les retunde los bríos y el uso común les modera la disonancia, y poco á poco se hacen unos á otros descuidados de su casa.
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> . . . . . .
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> ... en las comedias ... se representan torpezas, deshonestidades, mentiras; y si alguna vez se representa alguna de edificación, viene tan disfrazada y descolorida entre mil coloridas lascivias, que queda sepultado en olvido lo bueno y sólo se quedó pegado en la memoria lo malo. ...[1]

The corruption of the stage affected not only those of wealthy or noble families. Artisans, servants, and other workmen neglected the honest pursuit of their occupations in order to attend scandalous stage spectacles. In such ways as these, both plays and players contributed to the decline of national virility.

Metford formulates a number of "general conclusions regarding the extent and effectiveness of the clerical attack on the Golden Age theatre" of which the most significant, insofar as this discussion is concerned, are the following:

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[1]Fray Jerónimo de la Cruz, Iob evangelico stoyco ilvstrado. Doctrina ethica, civil y política (Zaragoza, 1636), in Cotarelo, op. cit., pp. 203–4. Written about 1630.

> 1. Spain, for the same reasons that prevailed in other countries, experienced opposition to her national drama, but was not unique in this.
> 2. The opposition was on moral, not artistic grounds. . . .
> 3. The enemies of the theatre in Spain, . . . [like] the Puritans in England, . . . were able, when opportunity favoured, to secure the suspension of dramatic performances for a time, but had mostly to content themselves with influencing legislation to remove the more flagrant abuses.
> . . . . . .
> 5. Clerical opposition had but scant effect on the popularity of the comedia or on the number of plays produced. . . .[1]

The moralistic attack on the theater continued unabated throughout the Golden Age. Thus, writing in 1682, Agustín de Herrera reiterates the familiar list of complaints against popular plays.

> Son los comedias una cátedra pública en que se enseña el arte de enamorar; donde lo primero se instruye de todo el vocabulario de voces y frases amatorias, ocupando el primer lugar las voces hurtadas del gentilismo, aras, altares, sacrificios, holocaustos, adoraciones y deidades; y pasando después a más práctica enseñanza, se proponen los lances todos para que ni la modestia los evite, ni el encogimiento los suspenda, ni el temor los embarace, ni la falta de experiencia los yerre. Ésta es en realidad la doctrina de las comedias.[2]

Thus it is clear that the critique of the clergy never went beyond the point of merely reviling drama for its debasing effect on private and public morality. There was no serious artistic criticism from this quarter addressed to the interrelated problems of defining the

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[1]Metford, op. cit., pp. 91–92.

[2]Agustín de Herrara, Discurso teológico y político (Alcalá, 1682?), in Cotarelo, op. cit., p. 356.

appropriate social function of drama and then determining the aesthetic principles by which drama should be judged. There was no attempt to develop a viable theory of poetic inspiration, nor were there established criteria with which to assess the validity of the product of a poet's imagination, either on aesthetic or philosophic grounds. These were the topics of a different group of seventeenth-century critics, heralded by the publication of Philosophía antigua poética (Madrid, 1596) by Alonso López Pinciano, who, as the title of his treatise indicates, approached the specifics of literary criticism from the perspective of philosophy, basing his theory of literature on Aristotelian and Horatian principles. Although Pinciano's work represents the first comprehensive exposition of the neoclassic point of view in Golden Age dramatic criticism, substantially the same ground is covered with less meandering and greater relevance to future trends by Luis Alfonso de Carballo in the Cisne de Apolo (1602).[1] Subsequent critics often appear to be merely rephrasing, in fragmentary and disjointed fashion, what Carballo had said earlier and better.

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[1]Luis Alfonso de Carballo, Cisne de Apolo, 2 vols., ed. Alberto Porqueras Mayo (Madrid, 1958). Subsequent references to this work will appear in my text.

The Cisne de Apolo is a rhetorical treatise on poetics, cast in the form of four dialogues which classify and define the various aspects of poetry. The participants in the dialogues are Zoylo, who takes the position of the detractors of poetry, and Lectura and Caruallo, who present the author's points of view. The first dialogue deals with the definition, invention, and matter of poetry. The second describes the disposition and form of Spanish versification in relation to one of poetry's objectives, which is to give pleasure. The third dialogue discusses the various literary genres in relation to the second objective of poetry, which is to be a benefit. The fourth dialogue treats decorum and poetic inspiration.

Although the Cisne de Apolo is a treatise on poetry in general, it contains several passages of particular importance to the development of Spanish dramatic theory. Comedy is defined as "vna imitacion de la vida, espejo de costumbres, ymage[n] de verdad" (II, 14). Tragedy does not differ from comedy in its disposition and form since it is composed of the same principal parts: "... las quales llaman en Griego Prothesis, Epithasis, y Catastrophe, q[ue] son como en todas las cosas humanas la ascendencia, esistencia, y decidencia" (II, 19). But the substance of tragedy is different from that of comedy because it ends in sad and lamentable circumstances, having begun happily, and ordinarily the characters of tragedy are

"personas eroycas y famosas abatidas por la fortuna, como de su diffinicion consta, que esta tragedia est eroycae fortunae comprehensio" (II, 31).

In order to expound his conception of the function of drama, Carballo has Zoylo state the familiar objections to plays so that they can be refuted by enumerating the positive benefits of drama. By way of specific criticism, Zoylo points out that plays seem to provide more entertainment than instruction, that they destroy rather than reform standards of conduct, and that they consume a great deal of time that might better be employed in more constructive pursuits. He continues:

> ... y se dan los hombres al ocio y passatiempo, y tienen ocasion los hombres de comunicar sus voluntades con las mugeres, y con los malos exemplos que se representan se inflama[n] y encienden los animos juueniles, y con los torpes meneos y habitos deshonostos se incitan los malos pensamientos, por lo qual justamente fueron vedadas antiguamente y en nuestros tiempos prohibidas. [II, 24.]

In response to this catalog of the bad effects of drama, Caruallo declares that the presenting of plays is approved by both human and divine law since they afford periodic relaxation for mankind from the physical and spiritual pressures of daily work. And as for plays providing the occasion for men to communicate to women their lewd desires, Caruallo suggests that "lo mismo si quieren ser malos pueden hazer en las Iglesias, donde con menos nota les pueden

hablar'' (II, 25). He also denies that plays favorably depict ''malos exemplos'' or ''deshonestos habitos, ni meneos.'' Instead of indulging in invidious criticism, society should be profoundly grateful for the many benefits derived from plays:

> ... pues alli se alaba y ensalça el bueno, para que sea imitado, y el vicioso se vitupera para que nayde le imite, alli se leen los varios sucessos y acecimiento de nuestra miserable vida: alli se conocen los desastrados fines y subcessos de los viciosos, y los prosperos de los virtuosos, alli se halla much bie[n] que imitar, y mucho mucho mal que euitar, alli como espejo se hecha de ver la ignorancia del niño, la cria[n]ça del muchacho, el prouecho del estudio, la vanidad del moço, la auaricia del viejo, la liuiandad de la muger, el engaño de la ramera, la constancia de la valerosa, al fin es espejo de todas las hedades, de todas las costumbres, de todas las naciones, y de todos los estados, es catedra donde se leen todas la facultades, todas ciencias, todas artes, y todo lo necessario para viuir sin peligro de la vida. ... [II, 25–26.]

If the dramatist is to be taken seriously as the arbiter of social behavior, by what means is the reliability of his dicta to be measured? The answer to this question is to be found in Carballo's conception of the nature of the poet. To begin with, the poet is a person of superior intelligence and insight whose knowledge of the world encompasses a wide range of disciplines. If the poet undertakes to write about a subject in which his knowledge is meager, he should consult experts in that field in order to avoid absurd mistakes. However, an informed intellect is only a preliminary condition of the poet's nature. The essential requisite of his genius

is a creative imagination which transmutes real or feigned experience into a work of art. If a writer does not possess an active and subtle imagination, he will be incapable of achieving great effects in poetry, even though he may know all of the precepts of the art. "Y quanto mejor y mas sutil ymaginatiua tuuiere, sera mas excelente Poeta. Porque inuentara mas sutiles y subidas cosas, mas raras y admirables" (I, 74).

In addition to having superior intelligence and a powerful imagination, the poet must also have "vn afflato y espiritu, y como diuino furor y vna alentada gracia, y natural inclinacion" (II, 184), which are gifts freely bestowed upon him by God and nature. Without this quality of divine inspiration, the poet "no podra hazer ninguna poesia, ni la armonia de sus ca[n]tos recreará nuestros animos" (II, 184). In order to emphasize its importance, Carballo repeats this idea in quoting from Tully:

> Que ninguno puede ser buen Poeta sin vna imflamacion de los espiritus sin cierto soplo, como de furor. ... Y el Poeta restriua en la propria naturaleza, y obra con las fuerças de su entendimiento, y ser inflamado con vn quasi diuino espiritu. [II, 186.]

Carballo's insistence on the necessity of suprahuman inspiration in the creative process is the basis of his defense of poetic truth. In the first place, the poet as an artist is not restricted to describing verifiable historical events; on the contrary, the principal

business of the poet is to "fingir o ymaginar" and when his invention is developed artistically, "conforme a cierta orden, y limitacion, no es mentir, antes es loable officio del Poeta, y tan proprio suyo, que Aristoteles dize no tiene cosa que mas le conuenga." As Lectura goes on to explain, "la materia del Poeta son todas las cosas de q[ue] quiere tratar, verdaderas, ò fingidas" (I, 80). Further, of the fictions invented by the poet, there are two types: "verisimiles y fabulosas." The "verisimiles" stories are those which relate events that might have happened or could happen, and these should bear a close resemblance to factual truth, avoiding fantastic or impossible episodes that might arouse disbelief. This semblance of truth is desirable aesthetically:

> Porque esta suerte de fictiones tiene su sal y gusto en el proceder y successo de las cosas, y siendo disparatado, mas suele enfadar que deleytar, y assi entiendo yo, que lo quiso enseñar Oracio en este verso.
>
> Conforme a verdad sean las fictiones. [I, 81.]

The "fictiones fabulosas" are those which neither happened in the form in which they are related, nor can be represented realistically. The "fictiones fabulosas" are in turn subdivided into two groups: the "fabulas visibles" such as those of Aesop and the Metamorphoses of Ovid, and the "fabulas intelectuales, ò Metaphisicas" such as the personification of virtues or vices. The conclusion to be drawn from these distinctions in terms of the truth of

poetic composition is this: No matter whether the poet elects to treat "cosas verdaderas o fingidas," the true significance of his poem or play becomes evident only through allegorical or metaphorical interpretation. As Lectura observes, "conuiene mucho en las sagradas letras, y en los Poetas considerar no solo las palabras, mas las cosas juntamente" (I, 97). And if the prudent reader or spectator focuses his attention on the subtle aspects of the dramatist's story, not immediately suggested by the apparent meanings of words, he discovers

> que siempre estan ascondidas y encubiertas cosas diuinas: ... Mas quando alguno vuiesse tan ignorante, y necio que entendiesse que el fin del Poeta, no se estendio a mas de aquella fiction. No por esso se infiere que el Poeta fue tan vano como el ignorante imagina, que su ruyn y ratero pensamiento, no ha de poner tassa al sutil y leuantado del Poeta, que en realidad de verdad, los que dizen que mienten los Poetas, es por no los entender. [I, 99–100.]

In regard to the techniques that the dramatist should employ in order to achieve appropriate artistic and psychological effects in his work, Carballo resorts to the concept of decorum as the informing principle of poetic creation. Decorum is defined as "vna decencia y consideracion que se ha de tener a toda la obra, y a cada parte della, a las personas, cosas, y palabras" (II, 114). By decorum Carballo means that not only must the use of language be adapted to specific episodes and emotions, but also that characters

must conform to the standard psychology of their types. The following excerpts indicate the circumscribed range of qualities which Carballo allows in the development of different characters.

> De la adolescencia guardaremos el decoro, pintado el mancebo desseoso de libertad, que lleua pesadamente la sugecion de los padres, y maestros, que se recrea con caualleria, caça, y ca[m]po facil para los vicios, difficil de recogerse, que lleua de mala gana las reprehensiones, que aborrece a los que le corrigen, ... Al viejo que ya passa de los cincuenta, pintaremos padeciendo muchas miserias, enfermedades, y trabajos, auariento quexoso, malacondicionado, y todo su cuerpo sin prouecho ni agilidad. ... [II, 118.]

> Carua.:
> Y como pintaremos la muger?
> Zoylo.:—Esso dire yo muy bien, inconsta[n]te, mudable, ya muy affable y amorosa, ya con rigor y aspera, ya senzilla y facil, ya demasiado de mentirosa, y embustera, ya graciosa, y triste, ya fauorable, ya desdeñosa. [II, 119.]

> ... los Africanos por la mayor parte son astutos y temerosos. Los Alemanes atreuidos. Los Franceses mohinos, los de Creta mentirosos, los Iudios de aspera condicion, los Italianos inuentiuos, los Españoles soberbios. [II, 122.]

It is to Carballo's credit, however, that his observation of human conduct and his sense of theater led him also to allow for exceptions to the general types. He points out that all young boys are not capricious, nor old men mature, nor women fickle, nor every servant obedient, nor every Spaniard proud. And if the necessity of the poet's context demands the presentation of individualized personalities, "... aunque sea contra el decoro ... es licito entonces al Poeta significarlo algunas vezes ansi" (II, 123–24). Here, and

elsewhere, when discussing the relative importance of innate genius as opposed to knowledge of the laws of art, Carballo justly elevates the imagination above the intellect—the aesthetically appropriate above the strictly rational—the true poet above the common versifier. "Los Poetas nacen, y los Oradores se hazen."

Of special interest in understanding the kind of play that became typical of the teatro nacional is Carballo's description of the tension and excitement generated in contemporary comedy. This is accomplished by expanding, in terms of their dramatic function, the definition of the three principal parts of a play. The first section of a play, Prothesis, initiates the entanglement of an apparently unstructured plot in such a way that it is impossible to imagine the end of the action. The second division, Epithasis, continues the development of the plot with unexpected complications in episodes and relationships "procurando tener siempre el animo de los oyentes suspenso, ya alegres, ya tristes, ya admirados, y con desseo de saber el fin de los sucessos, porque quanto esta suspension y desseo fuere mayor le sera mas agradable despues el fin" (II, 19). The third division is the Catastrophe in which all of the complications of intrigue are swiftly disentangled "por modos muy differentes y extrahordinarios, de lo que imaginarse pudiera, ... yra sucediendo todo en cosas de gusto y contento, y en agradables, fines,

los quales tanto mas lo seran quanto en los principios ayan sido dusosos y rebueltos, como el sol despues de la tempestad parece mas claro ...'' (II, 20). Carballo adds that the argument, summarizing the main themes of the plot, was little used in Spain precisely because such prior knowledge of the events of the story robbed the audience of the titillating delight of a surprise ending. It is evident from the foregoing that the dynamism, intrigue, and romantic treatment characteristic of early seventeenth-century Spanish drama ran counter to the classical principles of unity.

Cervantes was the first major figure among Golden Age writers to raise his voice in protest against the romantic extravagances of the new comedia, which he compared to the novels of chivalry. The following extracts from the Quijote indicate his critical position in 1605.[1]

> [Defects of books of chivalry]
> It is my opinion that those so-called books of chivalry are harmful to the well-being of the state. And while it is true that, out of idle curiosity and a false sense of pleasure, I have read the beginning of nearly all that have been printed, I have never been able to read any of them from beginning to end, for it seems to me that they are all more or less the same and one is worth about as much as another. As I see it, this species of writing and composition is in the same class with what are called

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[1]Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quixote de la Mancha, trans. Samuel Putnam (New York, 1958). Subsequent citations to this translation will appear in my text.

Milesian fables, which are nonsensical tales designed solely to amuse and not to instruct, in which respect they are unlike those apologues which afford entertainment and instruction at one and the same time. Granting, even, that the chief purpose of such works is to amuse, I do not see how it can be achieved when they are so full of monstrous nonsense.

For that beauty which the soul conceives must come from the beauty and harmony that it beholds or contemplates in those things that are presented to it by sight or by the imagination, and nothing that is ugly or inharmonious can give us any pleasure whatsoever. Well, then, I ask you, what beauty can there be, or what proportion of parts with the whole or of the whole with its parts, in a book or fable in which a seventeen-year-old lad slashes a giant tall as a tower and cuts him in half as if he were a sugar-pastry? And when they go to depict a battle scene for us, although we may have been told that there are a million fighting men on the enemy's side, nevertheless, let the hero of the book be against them and of necessity, whether we like it or not, we have to believe that the knight in question carried off the victory single-handed, by virtue of his mighty arm.

Then, what shall we say of the readiness with which a hereditary queen or empress throws herself into the arms of an unknown knight-errant? Could any person, save one with a barbarous and uncultivated mind, find pleasure in reading that a great tower filled with knights goes sailing over the sea like a ship with a favoring wind and is tonight in Lombardy and tomorrow morning in the land of Prester John of the Indies, or in other domains such as Ptolemy never discovered and Marco Polo never laid eyes on? And if you should answer me by saying that those who write such books offer them to us as fiction and hence are not obliged to observe the fine points of the truth, I should reply that the falsehood is all the greater when it appears in the guise of truth, and that as fiction, the more it contains of the pleasing and the possible the more it delights us.

For in works of fiction there should be a mating between the plot and the reader's intelligence. They should be so written that the impossible is made to appear possible, things hard to believe being smoothed over and the mind held in suspense in such a manner as to create surprise and astonishment while at the same time they divert and entertain so that admiration and pleasure go hand in hand. But these are things which he

cannot accomplish who flees verisimilitude and the imitation of nature, qualities that go to constitute perfection in the art of writing.

Never have I seen any book of chivalry that held the body of a story completely with all its members so that the middle was consistent with the beginning and the end with the beginning and the middle. Rather, they are made up of so many disparate members that it would seem the author's intention was to create a chimera or a monster rather than a well-proportioned figure. In addition to all this, they are crude in style, unconvincing in the exploits that they relate, lascivious in the love affairs that they portray, uncouth in their efforts at courtliness, prolix in their descriptions of battles, absurd in their dialogue, nonsensical in their accounts of journeyings, and, finally, destitute of anything that resembles art; for which reason it is they deserve to be banished from the Christian state as not being of public utility. [pp. 425–26.]

[Why the Canon decided not to complete his chivalric novel]

But what did most to stay my hand and even caused me to give up all thought of finishing what I had begun was an argument that I put to myself, drawn from the comedies that are now being performed. It ran as follows: All of these pieces, or the greater part of them at any rate, whether purely fictitious or historical in character, are obviously nonsensical, without head or tail, yet the public takes pleasure in witnessing them and regards them as worthy productions, though they are far from good. And the authors who compose them and the actors who perform them tell us that plays have to be of this sort, since the public wants precisely that kind of thing and nothing else, whereas those pieces that have a plot and develop the story in an artistic fashion will appeal only to a handful of intelligent persons who are able to understand them, while all the others will fail to perceive the art that is in them. This being so, they—the authors and actors—prefer to gain their bread with the many rather than subsist on the good opinion of the few. In which case, my book, after I should have scorched my eyebrows in an attempt to observe the precepts I have mentioned, would meet with the same fate as other works of merit, and I should end up by being the tailor of Campillo.

Although I have a number of times endeavored to persuade the actors that they are wrong in the view they hold, and that they would attract more people and win more fame for themselves

by producing comedies that follow the rules of art than they do by performing in these silly ones, they are so firmly set in their opinion that no amount of reasoning or evidence will convince them that they are wrong. [pp. 428–29.]

[The Priest on the abuses of plays]

By touching upon this subject you have awakened an old grudge of mine against the comedies of today, one that is equal to that which I hold against books of chivalry. For, according to Tully, a comedy should be a mirror of human life, an example of manners, and an image of the truth; yet those that we see now are mirrors of nonsense, examples of foolishness, and images of lasciviousness. In connection with the subject of which we are speaking, what could be more absurd than for a character to appear as an infant in Act I, Scene 1, and in the following scene step out as a full-bearded man? What more out of place than to depict for us an old man parading his valor, a youth who plays the cringing coward, an eloquent lackey, a page wise in giving counsel, a king turned porter, or a princess serving as a kitchen wench?

And what shall I say of the attention that is paid to the element of time in connection with the action that is represented? I may merely tell you that I have witnessed a comedy in which the first act takes place in Europe, the second in Asia, and the third in Africa—and if there had been a fourth act, the scene would have been laid in America and thus they would have encompassed the four quarters of the globe. If fidelity to life be the principal object which a comedy should have in view, how is it possible for the most mediocre intelligence to find any satisfaction in one where the action is supposed to take place in the time of King Pepin or Charlemagne, yet which has for its leading character the Emperor Heraclius entering Jerusalem with the Holy Cross and recovering the Holy Sepulcher like Godefroi de Bouillon, when there is a vast stretch of time between the two monarchs? Or in one which, essentially fictitious, makes a pretense at historical accuracy by mingling odds and ends of various events that happened to different persons at different times, and this with no attempt at verisimilitude but with obvious errors that are utterly inexcusable? And the sad part of it is, there are ignorant ones who say that this is the perfect thing and all the rest is affectation. [p. 430.]

At the time of the publication of the first part of the Quijote, Cervantes' views on dramatic composition appear to have been strongly classical and therefore in opposition to the kind of play then in vogue. He did not to any great extent inveigh against the new comedia on moralistic grounds, although he believed that drama for the sake of amusement alone was inferior to that which both amused and instructed at the same time. The main force of his attack was directed against those innovations of the comedia which violated classical aesthetic principles. He accepted a stereotypical classification of persons and personal traits which severely limited the possibilities of individual variation. His restrictive attitude toward the concept of decorum in characterization led him to condemn as ridiculous the representation of a valiant old man or a young coward or a king as poor as a common laborer. He considered it equally ridiculous and unacceptable to scramble together in the same play many different times, places, events, and personages —both historical and fictitious—with no attempt to organize the whole in accordance with the principle of verisimilitude. In this connection, the composers of sacred plays were especially to be condemned for not strictly adhering to historical truth, since they often attributed the miracles of one saint to another and knowingly invented miracles solely for the dramatic effect they produced on

the audience. And when it was urged that the principal social function of drama was merely to entertain the public and to purge the ill-humors engendered by idleness, and that a play could achieve this purpose whether or not it observed the classical rules, Cervantes countered by affirming that the social purpose of drama could be incomparably better achieved by good plays rather than bad ones, because the audience would leave a well-ordered and artfully constructed play "alegre con las burlas, enseñado con las veras, admirado de los sucesos, discreto con las razones, advertido con los embustes, sagaz con los ejemplos, airado contra el vicio y enamorado de la virtud."[1]

The basis of Cervantes' early opposition to the practices of contemporary dramatists was his conception of artistic beauty. For him, the sense of beauty consisted in the contemplation of appropriate arrangement and harmony as perceived by the reason. But due credit was given to the crucial importance of the unifying power of the imagination, in El Rufián Dichoso,[2] published near the end of his career. At the beginning of the second act of this play, Curiosidad

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[1]Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Don Quijote de la Mancha, ed. Martín de Riquer (Barcelona, 1950), p. 506.

[2]Miguel de Cervantes, El Rufián Dichoso, Los Rufianes De Cervantes, ed. Don Joaquin Hazañas y la Rua (Seville, 1906).

and Comedia, two allegorical characters, discuss the changed techniques of popular plays since the turn of the century. Curiosidad wants to know why the traditional costumes are no longer in use, why the number of acts have been reduced from five to three, and by what license it is possible to represent hasty changes in time, place, and action without any explanation, to which Comedia answers:

Los tiempos mudan las cosas
Y perficionan las artes;
Y añadir á lo inventado,
No es dificultad notable.
Buena fuí pasados tiempos,
Y en estos, si los mirares,
No soy mala, aunque desdigo
De aquellos preceptos graves,
Que me dieron y dejaron
En sus obras admirables
Séneca, Terencio y Plauto,
Y otros griegos que tú sabes.
He dejado parte dellos,
Y he también guardado parte,
Porque lo quiere así el uso,
Que no se sujeta al arte.
Ya represento mil cosas,
No en relación, como de antes,
Sino en hecho, y así es fuerza
Que haya de mudar lugares.
Que como acontecen ellas
En muy diferentes partes,
Vóyme allí donde acontecen:
Disculpa del disparate.
Ya la comedia es un mapa
Donde no un dedo distante
Verás á Londres y á Roma,
A Valladolid y á Gante.
Muy poco importa al oyente
Que yo en un punto me pase
Desde Alemania á Guinea,

Sin del teatro mudarme
El pensamiento es ligero;
Bien pueden acompañarme
Con él, doquiera que fuere
Sin perderme ni cansarse.[1]

In this passage, Cervantes advances the quite unclassical idea that no set of literary precepts is immutable. Each age must be free to discover for itself those aesthetic principles and modes of expression which best satisfy its particular sensibilities. The artistic tradition of past epochs, however, should not be rejected outright; rather, it should serve as the foundation upon which succeeding generations may build—accepting some principles, modifying others, eliminating still others. The result of this process is the creation of a new constellation of ideas that reflects the spirit of the times in which it evolves.

Moreover, Cervantes now seems to be saying that the maintenance of the Unities does not confine the dramatist to portraying a limited segment of time within a limited locale. The old practice of describing by means of dialogue events that occur in places remote from the main setting of the play has given way to the practice of actually representing such places and events on the stage. Unity is achieved not by restricting the scope of the dramatist but rather

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[1]Cervantes, op. cit., pp. 126–27.

by expanding the scope of the audience's imagination. The imaginative faculty of the mind is swift and agile; it has the capacity to unify a disparate variety of times, places, and actions into a single meaningful experience.

The inconsistency between the attitudes expressed in the Rufián Dichoso and the Quijote makes it difficult to determine which represents Cervantes' true critical position. It is evident that the tenor of the Rufián Dichoso passage approximates modern thinking concerning dramatic unity. Perhaps for this reason critics have sought to minimize the importance of the strictures of the Quijote. In the first place, it is argued that the obeisance paid to the Greco-Roman literary heritage in the Quijote was more the result of habitual respect than the reflection of personal conviction on the part of the author. Secondly, Cervantes' own plays indicate that he never intended to establish Seneca, Plautus, and Terence as the exclusive models for Spaniards to imitate. Furthermore, his comments on the unities of time and place were not put forth as absolute artistic criteria; rather, they were aimed chiefly at reforming the absurd confusions and distortions of time and place common in early-seventeenth-century plays. It has also been suggested that the Quijote passages are not to be taken seriously as dramatic theory, since they were probably conceived in disappointment and

bitterness toward the new school of playwrights which supplanted the group to which Artieda, Juan de la Cueva, and Cervantes himself belonged. Finally, Cervantes' abiding concern for the moral goals of the theater moved him to censure the more extreme practices of his contemporaries. These are the main arguments which Cervantes' apologists have advanced to explain away his inconsistency, although the problem may be resolved by simply conceding that between 1605 and 1615 Cervantes shifted his position regarding the inviolability of the classical unities and, in fact, accommodated himself to the prevailing dramatic conventions of the period.

In the year of the publication of the Quijote and in the following year, two works appeared which form a bridge between the classicism of Carballo and the triumph of the new school of Lope de Vega. The first of these was the Discursos, epístolas y epigramas (1605)[1] by Andrés Rey de Artieda. The Discursos, epístolas y epigramas contains the short essay on drama entitled "Carta al illustrissimo señor Marques de Cuellar sobre la Comedia." In language reminiscent of Carballo and Cervantes, Artieda defines comedia as a mirror of life which reflects those vices and virtues that man

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[1]Andrés Rey de Artieda, Discursos, epístolas, y epigramas de Artemidoro (Barcelona, 1955). Subsequent references to this work will be in my text.

should either avoid or embrace in order to achieve the golden mean in his personal life. The moral lessons of drama are concretized by providing the audience with a set of imitable models of conduct:

> Sepamos: la Heconómica ¿no es ciencia?
> pues la comedia, ¿que otra cosa enseña?
> Oygame, y tenga un poco de paciencia:
> La gravedad que ha de tener la dueña,
> la ley que ha de guardar, firme y constante,
> el hombre que su fe y palabra empeña;
> zelo y amor del padre vigilante:
> de los hijos, el miedo y el respeto
> que han de guardar teniéndole delante;
> del que es galán, el término discreto;
> la vergüença y valor de una donzella,
> quando se ve en confusión y aprieto;
> el fin de una justissima querella;
> la muerte arrebatada de un tyrano
> que por su gusto todo lo atropella.
> Esto enseña al discreto cortesano,
> para que la virtud moral abraze
> y de lo pernicioso alce la mano. [p. 179.]

Recognizing that unadorned ethical instruction often goes unheeded, Artieda continues:

> Y como a secas la verdad no aplaze,
> es necessario que el poeta sabio
> con artificio lo disponga y traze. [p. 179.]

In order to participate with wisdom and integrity in the moral re-education of society, the playwright must be a poet-philosopher.

> La causa que llamamos efficiente
> no es menos que un filósofo poeta,
> sagaz de ingenio claro y eloqüente.

El que no fuere tal, no se entremeta
en lo que es apurar moralidades,
porque requiere habilidad perfeta
para pintar conforme las edades,
el vicio y la virtud que predomina,
y enxerir las mentiras con verdades. [p. 175.]

It is worthy of note that Artieda does not justify the poet as a guide in human affairs on the usual Neoplatonic grounds that he has superhuman insight, by virtue of divine inspiration. Inasmuch as a poet's knowledge of life, like that of other men, is acquired through experience of the natural world, Artieda ridicules those pretenders who imagine themselves to be "mucho mas que hombres y oraculos de Dios." And, with sardonic understatement, he concludes:

jamás me aventuré a llamar poeta,
ni entiendo con que espíritu se atreven
a pensar que lo son niños de teta. [p. 180.]

Much of Artieda's dramatic theory deals with the usual classical explanations and definitions. He defines the subject matter of comedy as the representation of involved and ominous events that miraculously end in happy marriages for the principal characters. The themes of tragedy, contrariwise, represent the rapid change of fortune from pleasure and happiness to misery and suffering. He observes that drama, as an art, is impeccable and that the licentious abuses of the art are the fault of bad dramatists. Lewd insinuating

dances should be banished from the stage since they are not an essential part of drama. Drama should not be condemned because of the irregular lives of the actors.

But not all of Artieda's observations are as lacking in originality as the foregoing. For example, although he agrees that actors should be punished whenever their conduct exceeds the limits of conventional morality, he makes it clear that in his view the personal lives, however irregular, of the players do not affect their acting ability nor their effectiveness as performers.

> Y quando bien se apure y adelgaze
> el comediante, quando representa,
> ¿es Pablos quando a Pablos contrahaze?
> Si quando rey, como señor se assienta,
> si cobra, quando Cid, tantos azeros,
> que al parecer emprenderá a cinqüenta,
> ¿es a dicha Morales o Cisneros,
> o es la triste Belerma, Mariflores,
> quando a llanto y passión puede moveros?
> Claro es que no son ellos, pues, señores,
> ¿qué importa a la comedia que sean malos
> si para recitar son los mejores? [p. 178.]

Then, too, there is the bold suggestion that drama need not always serve as a teaching medium:

> puedes oyr comedias a mi cargo,
> y más si una passion al alma llega
> y el día sobra o te parece largo.
> Que Tarrega, Aguilar, Lope de Vega,
> aligerar con sus escritos pueden
> la ansia y passión que te desassossiega. [p. 182.]

Artieda's most significant contribution to Spanish dramatic theory, however, is his commentary on the meaning of illusion in the theater. He rejects the demand that all stage action must bear a close resemblance to real life in order to allay the audience's disbelief. He explains that the audience imaginatively accepts the make-believe of the stage and willingly enters the world of "let's pretend," fully aware of the fact that the loves, battles, births, and deaths there represented are merely symbolic imitations of the real world.

> Los palos que se dan allí, ¿son palos?
> A los que como simples los reciben,
> el entremés fingido ¿afrentarálos?
> ¿A dicha los que mueren no reviven
> y, si es que lo requiere la maraña,
> los que lo fingen, paren o conciben?
> Sola la vista y opinión se engaña,
> y assí el vicio y virtud dellos no offende,
> ni a la comedia en un cabello daña. [p. 178.]

Juan de la Cueva, the other important figure of the transitional period of Spanish dramatic criticism, covered essentially the same ground as did Artieda, although he is somewhat more explicit regarding his break with classical tradition and his sympathy for the methods of the new school of Lope de Vega. He reveals his critical position in the Third Epistle of the Ejemplar Poético.[1]

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[1] Juan de la Cueva, El infamador, Los siete infantes de Lara, y el Ejemplar poético (Madrid, 1924), Clásicos Castellanos. Subsequent citations to the "Third Epistle" of this work will appear in my text.

There he assumes the role of the defender of current Spanish modifications of classical dramatic practice. The familiar complaints against his fellow playwrights which Cueva wishes to explain away are the charges that Spanish dramatists never observe the laws of unity or decorum and that they mingle the affairs of kings and commoners with indifferent regard for the disparity in social rank. Cueva himself had been accused of being the first to bring kings and deities into the comedy, of reducing the number of acts from five to four, and of altering the format of the acts.

Cueva justifies these changes by arguing that principles of drama are relative, and that standards of composition gain acceptance in a society to the extent that they serve the special aesthetic needs of that society. This does not mean that the dramatist and the critic of every age must forever begin at some pre-Aristotelian point of departure. But it does imply that the creative minds in each society must develop a unique synthesis of aesthetic ideas within which the artist's impulse to create and society's willingness to experience are happily reconciled. It is against this background that Cueva claims for his generation untrammeled freedom to work out new principles of art that will release the unique creative spirit of the new age. He denies that the dramatists of his day fail to observe the practices of antiquity either because of ignorance of

those practices or because of ineptitude in imitating them. On the contrary, changes in dramatic technique, occasioned by the changed aesthetic needs of the times, were being deliberately effected by men of taste and talent:

> Y no atribuyas este mudamiento
> a que faltó en España ingenio y sabios
> que prosiguieran el antiguo intento.
> Mas siendo dinos de mojar los labios
> en el sacro licor aganipeo,
> que enturbian Mevios y corrompen Babios;
> huyendo aquella edad del viejo ascreo
> que al cielo dió y al mundo mil deidades
> fantaseadas de él, y de Morfeo;
> introdujimos otras novedades,
> de los antiguos alterando el uso,
> conformes a este tiempo y calidades. [p. 239.]

To further support his contention, Cueva points to the school of Seville dramatists, who consciously patterned their plays after classical models. Although they achieved some degree of success, the full potential of their creative ability, in his opinion, was stifled by their subservience to ancient and inapplicable dramatic precepts.

> Ya fueron a estas leyes obedientes
> los sevillanos cómicos, Guevara,
> Gutierre de Cetina, Cozar, Fuentes.
> El ingenioso Ortiz, y aquella rara
> musa, de nuestro astrífero Mejía,
> y del Menandro bético Malara.
> Otros muchos que en esta estrecha vía
> obedeciendo el uso antiguo fueron
> en dar luz a la cómica poesía.
> Y aunque alcanzaron tanto, no ecedieron
> de las leyes antiguas que hallaron
> ni aun en una figura se atrevieron. [pp. 239–40.]

Although expressing the customary respect of the Renaissance for the art and learning of the ancients, Cueva maintains that Spanish genius has invented new refinements of dramatic technique, especially in the area of plot construction, which, in his view, make contemporary plays superior to those of other eras. "Mas la invención, la gracia y traza es propia a la ingeniosa fábula de España ..." (p. 241).

The variety and interest supplied by broad humor and an inimitable manner of resolving the complications of an intricate plot are aspects of Spanish drama that account for its consummate appeal to the audience for which the plays are intended. The prudent observer readily perceives that the skill of Spanish dramatists, in over-all craftsmanship as well as in the achievement of unusual effects, is not limited to a single dramatic form.

> En sucesos de historia son famosas,
> en monásticas vidas ecelentes,
> en afectos de amor maravillosas. [p. 242.]

Although he himself has asserted the necessity of artistic freedom, Cueva cannot resist the temptation to indulge in some prescriptive criticism. His advice to the dramatist, although employing the neoclassic concepts of decorum as the guiding principle, nevertheless urges the importance of individual creative integrity. Above all, the dramatist should strive to be original in the arrangement of

the episodes that lead to an unexpected denouement. He should endeavor to keep his work secret until the time of presentation to avoid pirating by others. He should also seek to achieve the unexpected in figurative language.

In composing his play, the dramatist, submitting himself only to the laws of art, should not yield to the pressures of the actors who may desire to have a speech or part extended to a degree not warranted by the context of the play, nor should he yield to the wish of the audience to have worked into the plot some favorite but inappropriate bit of stage business—although to do so might draw a bigger house.

Cueva's advice on characterization follows the standard typing of individuals commonly advocated by critics of his day:

> Al viejo avaro, envuelto en desventuras,
> al mancebo, rabiando de celosos,
> al juglar decir mofas y locuras.
> Al siervo sin lealtad, y cautelosos,
> a la dama amorosa o desabrida,
> ya con semblante alegre, ya espantosos.
> A la tercera astuta y atrevida,
> al lisongero envuelto en novedades,
> y al rufïan dar cédulas de vida. [pp. 242–43.]

However, he does allow for purposeful deviations from the pattern when the context of the story requires that a character appear other than typical, for dramatic effect: "Los efetos aplica a las

edades, / si no es que dando algún ejemplo quieras / trocar la edad, oficio y calidades" (p. 243).

The principle of decorum determined the style of speech, the selection of particular verse forms, and the simplicity or subtlety of the imagery which would be appropriate to a given character. Moreover, the same character in varying relationships would express himself differently as he relates to changing settings and contacts with other characters of the same or different social levels.

Finally, the dramatist should abstain from sprinkling his dialogue with such foreign words and far-fetched expressions as "sclopetum" for "escopeta," "famélica curante" for "dieta," and "público alojamiento del festivo" for "la casa común de la vil gente" (p. 225). Such mechanical straining after excellence usually results in unintelligible bombast.

It is apparent that Cueva's comments on decorum represent little more than a banal repetition of the same ideas which Carballo and Artieda expressed on the subject. Of greater interest, in terms of later critical opinion, is his suggestion that the pleasure of the audience should be a decisive consideration in all aspects of dramatic composition: "Porque debes tener conocimiento / que es la comedia un poema activo, / risueño, y hecho para dar contento" (p. 243). Here there is no equivocation over whether a play should

instruct and delight, or delight in order to instruct. Cueva simply states that plays are written for the purpose of giving pleasure.

For his statement on the importance of pleasure in drama, and his advocacy of the right of his generation to cast off the stultifying yoke of Greece and Rome, Cueva merits a secure place in the history of Golden Age criticism. In fact, the demand for national artistic independence, first championed by Artieda and Cueva, became the perennial justification of the new comedia, after the triumphant success of Lope de Vega. Although the idea is found in one form or another in all sympathetic commentary on the drama, it received perhaps its most forceful exposition in an essay by Alfonso Sánchez which appears in Expostulatio Spongiae (1618):[1]

> The laws of art are derived from nature; they are not imposed upon her. Through experience and the process of reasoning, man gradually invented the arts, but they remained imperfect and unrefined, for succeeding generations to attempt to perfect, for it would stifle creativity if the arts should remain eternally static. If it is true, as Aristotle has said, that art imitates nature, then the greatest artist would be he who most closely approximates nature herself. If in the mechanical arts it is permissible—and we see it happening every day—to add new dimensions to what has already been invented, why can we not do the same in the fields of science and the fine arts? Did not Aristotle break away from his teacher, Plato? We Spaniards were created by God from the same stuff as other mortals. . . . We too are men, we too are heirs of Rome and claim the same

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[1]Cited by Menédez y Pelayo, Obras Completas (Santander, 1947), II, 305–7.

> rights that Horace enjoyed. Can it be said therefore that we have no basic artistic tradition with which our precepts should accord? Who can doubt that we do? We indeed have our own artistic tradition, we indeed have precepts which govern us, and the most fundamental precept is to imitate nature, because the works of poets express the nature, the customs and the genius of the age in which they were written. Solely from modesty, Lope declines to claim for himself the title of creator of a new art, although he has succeeded in formulating precepts with the same authority as Horace. But I do not hesitate to grant him what nature has bestowed upon him. He apologizes for having written his plays in the fashion which had proved to be popular with his countrymen, breaking away from the example of the ancients. But what do the ancient dramatic laws matter to you, great Lope, in view of the fact that single-handedly you have given to our age better plays than all those of Menander and Aristophanes? You have added many things beyond the scope of the laws of the ancients but not contradictory to those laws. Antiquity merits respect, because it was first, and because what is old engenders veneration. But let them retain the glory that is theirs; present and future ages will confer on you your own everlasting glory. . . . And if in your works we find something that appears to contradict the laws of poetry, we should silently respect your judgment, because your perception of nature is superior to ours. . . . And is it not possible for [Lope] to invent a new art of poetry? Nature demands it, the conditions of our age demand it. Since nature shuns the old and follows after the new, let us follow the example of nature in order not to fall behind. . . . If the Spanish drama were to adapt itself to the rules and laws of the ancients, it would go against nature and against the fundamentals of poetry.[1]

Sánchez obviously considers Lope de Vega the exemplification of the spirit of artistic independence, but instead of examining at this point the place of "great Lope" in Golden Age dramatic

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[1]Alfonso Sánchez, cited by Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., pp. 305–7. My translation.

criticism it may be instructive, first, to summarize the main critical issues which continued to be expounded in the second and third decades of the seventeenth century. In this way, the discussion of his Arte Nuevo can be set against the background of the aesthetic ideas preceding and following his statement of dramatic principles. From this perspective, the assessment of his contribution becomes more meaningful.

In the mature period of Golden Age criticism, the most eloquent and incisive treatment of dramatic principles is to be found in a discourse entitled "Invectiva a las Comedias que prohibio Trajano, y Apologia por las nuestras" (1622), by Francisco de la Barreda.[1] In appraising the range, the depth, and the clarity of Barreda's essay, Menéndez y Pelayo asserts that it exhibits a sharper delineation of the common aesthetic problems of the period than is to be found anywhere else:

> No se escribió mejor poética dramática en el siglo XVII. Todos los argumentos de Tirso, de Ricardo del Turia, de Alfonso Sánchez, se encuentran recogidos y enlazados por Barreda, y esforzados y subidos de punto con propia y varonil elocuencia y con espíritu racional y sistemático en media de sus mayores audacias.[2]

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[1] Francisco de Barreda, El panegírico de Plinio con diez discursos (Madrid, 1787). Subsequent citations to this work will be in my text.

[2] Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. 316.

Thus a summary of Barreda's poetics constitutes a summary of the poetics of his day.

The one essential concept of Barreda's dramatic theory is that poetry is an art of imitation. Unfortunately, to the confusion of the creative artist, the term "imitation" has acquired several distinct meanings with ambiguous implications. Does imitation connote the following of the dramatic precepts of the ancients, or of their dramatic practices? If the former, how can the precepts which were evolved in a remote and foreign milieu be updated and assimilated into the native Spanish tradition? If the latter, how can the dramatic conventions which were appropriate to a non-Christian and relatively primitive theater be adapted to conditions of dramaturgy in contemporary Catholic Spain? Or is the dramatist to understand that imitation implies the imitation of nature or life? If so, is he to imitate nature and life as reflected in the plays of the ancients or as perceived through his own experience of the world about him?

Barreda comes to grips with these questions by stating another fundamental tenet of his critical system. For him, aesthetic precepts are derived from the attentive observation of precedents, refined by the wisdom of experience and reduced to the method and majesty of laws. The most productive attitude toward the influence of classical drama is to regard it exclusively as a source of

inspiration, in the course of creating a contemporary national drama. Thus the Spanish dramatist should endeavor to emulate the creative spirit of the ancients—not the incidental minutiae of their style. To imitate their words and expressions, their figures and numbers, their gods and beliefs, is but to imitate the outward trappings of their art, and not its essence.

> Como si yo llamára al signo de Aquario, Garzon de Ida; disculpado quedára quien no me entendiese. ¿Pues los antiguos no le llamaban así, porque pensaron que Ganimédes (un hermoso mancebo de Ida) fue transformado en aquel signo para servir la copa á Júpiter? No importa; que aquellos le pudieron llamar así, porque era vulgar entre ellos la fábula y patria de aquel Garzon; no será pues acertada la imitacion de aquel perifrasis. No quiero yo negar que son de provecho las fábulas; bien sé que contienen algunas, grandes secretos de la Filosoffa; lo que digo es, que no saben aprovecharse de ellas algunos Poetas imitando sus alusiones, como piensan que las imitan. [pp. 283–84.]

The essence of classical art, so Barreda appears to believe, lies in the fidelity of the reflection of life which it provides:

> ¿Quál será, pues, el arte de las comedias ... ? Un precepto solo basta, que los ciñe todos: Saber que todo poema es imitacion. Aquel, pues, será perfecto sin mas leyes, que imitáre la accion que retratáre con puntual propiedad; esto ha hecho España excelentemente: luego guarda el arte. [p. 293.]

Barreda extends his discussion of the imitation of life in drama to justify tragicomedy, which had been an established tradition in Spanish literature for more than a century. His reasoning on this point is typical of the Renaissance interpretation of Horace and

Aristotle on painting and imitation. He maintains that a poem is like a painting—both belong to the art of imitation. The artistic merit of both poetry and painting depends upon the accuracy of the resemblance between the art object and the object imitated. Since drama imitates life, it should do so in all its variety and inconsistency, in order to be true to art. Inasmuch as the tragic and the comic are often intermingled in the real world, is it not the obligation of the dramatist to represent faithfully in the world of art the juxtaposition of these contraries?

> Es la poesia, dice Horacio, como la pintura; ó porque peleemos con sus armas, Aristóteles concisamente la define, diciendo que es imitacion. Para ser perfecta una pintura bástala ser fiel; hay, pues, acciones entre los hombres que mezclan serenidad y borrasca en un mismo punto, en una misma persona. Juega la fortuna con nosotros; somos teatro de su gusto; y no se tiene por bien reverenciada y temida, si no está dando á cada instante muestras de su poder. El poema, pues, que retratáre esta accion fielmente, habrá cumplido con el rigor de la Poesia; esto hacen nuestras comedias con suma atencion: luego son perfectísimas. El norte de la poesia es la imitacion; mientras nuestra comedia imitáre con propiedad, segura corre; no hay mas arte; no hay mas leyes á quien sujetar el cuello; esta es epilogo de todas, que imite; en obedeciéndola, cumple con todas. ¿Por qué no se han de mezclar pasos alegres con los tristes, si los mezcla el cielo? ¿Esta Comedia no es retrato de aquellas obras? pues si es retrato, claro está que ha de referir su imagen. [pp. 261–62.][1]

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[1]Among other champions of the tragicomedy is Ricardo Turia, "... ninguna comedia de quantas se representan en España lo es, sino tragicomedia, que es un mixto formado de lo cómico y lo trágico, tomando déste las personas graves, la acción grande, el

On the unity of action, Barreda's view is that unity is not necessarily maintained by dramatizing only the acts of a single protagonist. Certain stories, because of their nature, may actually require the portrayal of different aspects of the protagonist's life, and diverse acts of several other characters as well:

> Una accion se debe entender un caso solo; y esto obedecen los que aciertan en España; este caso puede tener muchas personas casi de igual cuidado en el poema; como son dos competidores de un Reyno; dos amantes de una dama; pues si sucede que en un caso haya muchas personas que con igualdad intervienen; ¿por qué la comedia que retrata ese caso, no le retratará con esas personas igualmente? La impropiedad fuera no retratarle asi. [pp. 262–63.][1]

On the unity of time, Barreda seems to believe that Aristotle preferred the play that represented actions that happened within one

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terror y la conmiseración; y de aquél, el negocio particular, la risa y los donaires, y nadie tenga por impropiedad esta mixtura, pues no repugna a la naturaleza y al arte poético, que en una misma fábula concurran personas graves y humildes." "Apologético de las comedias españolas," Norte de la Poesía Española (1616), in Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., p. 309.

[1]It is interesting to compare these lines with the following: "Haveis de de entender, que se dice la cosa una de dos maneras, o quando es por sí sola y separada de las demas o quando es compuesta de muchas, y reducida en una. Del primer modo no se puede llamar la fabula una: porque si constára de una sola accion, totalmente libre de otras, vendria a ser por estremo breve y concisa: de donde resultaria un absurdo, que no sería de conveniente grandeza. Del otro modo, se dice la fabula una, siendo compuesta de varias acciones encaminadas a un fin, y de tal manera entre sí conformes, que vengan a hacer una sola accion." Francisco de Cascales, Tablas poeticas (Madrid, 1779), p. 32.

revolution of the sun—or, better yet, within the span of time that it took to present the play on the stage. By resorting to the time-honored comparison of poetry to painting, Barreda then elaborates his own view, which is somewhat more advanced than the simile might suggest. In a single painting, many things may be represented, and since a poem is like a painting, many things may also be represented in a single dramatic poem:

> Esto es decir que en un naype no se puede retratar un gigante; puede retratarse un esquadron de ellos. Segun eso, ¿quién impide que en dos horas de la representacion se pinten largas historias? ... [p. 263.]
>
> Digánlo ó no lo digan los antiguos, ¿los sucesos no han menester tiempo? pues imitémoslos como sucedieron, sea breve ó largo. [p. 264.][1]

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[1]The ut pictura poesis theme in Spanish criticism dates from the very early period of the Renaissance. One of the first allusions to the theory is made by Francisco de Holanda, Quatro dialogos da pintura antiga (1538), in Menéndez y Pelayo, op. cit., pp. 451–52. "Pero hablando sólo de la poesía, no me parece muy dificultoso mostrar cuán verdadera hermana sea de la pintura. Cualquiera diría que no para otra cosa estuvieron trabajando los poetas, sino para enseñar los primores de la pintura, y lo que se debe huir o seguir en ella, con tanta suavidad y música de versos, y con tanta eficacia y copia de palabras que no sé cuándo se lo podréis pagar los artistas.

. . . . . .

Los poetas mismos confiesan que pintan y llaman a la poesía pintura muda."

As might be anticipated, Barreda supports the popular thesis that artistic forms are gradually modified with the passage of time. He makes a detailed survey of Greek and Roman playwrights, to prove that most ancient authors did not restrict themselves to following a fixed set of dramatic precepts. Quite the contrary, they frequently introduced fresh innovations and elaborations:

> Crece el arte con el tiempo; él le alienta, él le cria; él sobre sus ombros le pone en la cumbre de la perfeccion; deposita sus tesoros en el atrevimiento. [p. 273.]

> Mas permitamos á algunas de las antiguas el título de acertadas; y tanto, que pudiesen establecer leyes al arte con su exemplo. Aun no nos obligará á su observancia; porque es ley de la ley que se mude y borre con el tiempo. [p. 276.]

Barreda's conviction that, from the standpoint of art, drama should imitate life is frequently and clearly stated. His opinion on the social function of drama is not so immediately apparent. There are indications throughout the essay, however, which support the conclusion that in Barreda's mind the primary objective of plays was not to instruct, though he does not reject altogether the goal of moral benefit to the audience. That his basic concern is for the pleasure of the audience is implied most strongly in his remarks regarding the inappropriateness of the old plays, or of slavish imitations of them, for contemporary representation. The chief point

of his argument is that the old plays no longer provide delight and entertainment, and therefore do not merit presentation or imitation:

> ... no pueden con razon pedirnos que les sigamos los pasos. No merecen que los imitemos para el deleyte y entretenimiento; porque aunque confesemos que en sus tiempos fueron de gusto aquellas comedias y tragedias suyas, ... hoy no lo fueran. ... Salga hoy al teatro la mas graciosa ... comedia de Plauto ... reducida á nuestra lengua y ... la acusarán todos ... de poco entretenida. ... [p. 274.]

The inference that there is no excuse for presenting a play unless it does provide entertainment can be quite clearly drawn from the foregoing. So far as the function of teaching is concerned, he feels that there is no great necessity "que el teatro se haga tribunal ó púlpito, en siglo que es tan dichoso en lo uno y en lo otro" (p. 276). A bit of friendly advice will be quite enough.

With his defense of tragicomedy, his modern definition of imitation, his imaginative interpretation of the unities and his assertion of the inevitable evolution of artistic principles, with its corollary emphasis on pleasure in the theater, Barreda's work constitutes a valuable compendium of the aesthetic principles of the new comedia, earlier described in theory by Carballo, and refined to perfection in practice by Lope de Vega.

Before taking up the appraisal of Lope's contribution as a dramatic critic, some preliminary observations are in order. As has already been suggested, Lope's fame in Spanish literature is

based on his enormous creative output. He is reputed to have composed over five hundred plays, running the gamut from low farce to high tragedy. As a result of the numerous innovations which he introduced, and the inexhaustibility of his creative imagination, he is often credited with having been the founder of the teatro nacional. The unquestioned brilliance of his mind, however, was not oriented toward sustained objective analysis. His genius was that of the creator, the innovator, the poet. His Arte Nuevo[1] is so enveloped in poetic imagery, classical allusions, double-entendre, and subtle satiric barbs that it seems doubtful that it is intended as a serious exposition of dramatic theories but rather as a tour de force of wit.

This doubt is increased when we consider the occasion which prompted the essay, which was written for presentation before the members of the Royal Academy of Madrid. Lope would have been less than human if he had not been influenced to some extent by a desire to make a good impression before such an august body, by catering to their special prejudices. This may well account for his having cloaked his true beliefs in scintillating ambiguity. Certainly his knowledge of the theater and his experience as a dramatist would

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[1]Lope de Vega, "The New Art of Making Comedies" (1609), in Literary Criticism: Plato to Dryden, ed. A. H. Gilbert (New York, 1940), pp. 540–48. Subsequent citations to this work will be in my text.

have prevented his taking seriously some of the statements made in the essay. He could not have believed, for example, that it was appropriate dramatic technique to confine the complexity of the dialogue to the intellectual level of the illiterate mob (p. 542).

Many of Lope's remarks may be categorized as innocuous banalities—as in his advice to the dramatist on the mechanics of writing a play (p. 545). His comments on the unities (p. 544), decorum in dialogue (p. 546), rhetorical figures (pp. 546–47), and affectations in diction (p. 546) are mere parrotings of classical precepts.

Lope's most penetrating observations are tossed off in casual remarks relating to two aspects of the audience's enjoyment of the play. In these, he reveals first of all a conviction that the author must of necessity write plays which will gratify the desire of the audience to be amused, else he will have no audience. His allusions to the necessity for pleasing the crowd are in a rather sardonic vein and very possibly do not disclose the true motivation behind this conviction, but of the sincerity of the conviction there can be no doubt. The popularity of his works makes that obvious. Though his own independent spirit probably was responsible for his departures from tradition, his contention is that he was forced by circumstance to compromise with classical beliefs:

> . . . many untutored writers . . . worked for the public according to its own rude ways, and thus insinuated themselves into favor to such an extent that whoever now writes plays with art dies without fame or reward. . . . It is true that occasionally I have written in accordance with the art that few know, but later when from others I saw proceed monstrous things full of theatrical apparatus, to which the crowd . . . came running, I returned to the barbarous manner. . . . [pp. 541–42.]

A statement such as this, in an essay entitled The New Art of Making Comedies, suggests that, for Lope, the rules of that art were to some extent at least shaped to the demands of pleasure. And he defends the products of the new art on the grounds that if they had "been better in another manner, they would not have found the favor they have . . ." (p. 548).

His justification of tragicomedy is not on the familiar grounds that it more faithfully mirrors real life, but that the contrast and the "variety gives much delight" (p. 544). More subtle understanding is displayed in his explanation of the appeal of enigmatic phrasing:

> To trick with truth is a device which has seemed good. . . . Equivocal speech and the uncertainty arising from the ambiguous has always held a great place with the crowd, for it thinks that it alone understands what the other man is saying. [p. 547.]

And, recognizing the contrary nature of man, he makes the shrewd comment that "sometimes that which is contrary to correctness for that very reason pleases the taster" (p. 548). As an objective analytical critic, Lope has little new to offer. Only when he forgets

precepts for a moment and looks with perceptive insight at human nature does he display the originality that made him great.

CHAPTER IV

PARALLEL ISSUES AND ATTITUDES IN ELIZABETHAN AND GOLDEN AGE DRAMATIC CRITICISM

On the basis of the evidence presented in the preceding chapters, two conclusions may now be stated regarding the development of dramatic criticism in England and Spain during the Elizabethan period and the Golden Age: (1) The course and content of dramatic criticism during the period under study reflect continuing preoccupation with the same critical issues in the two countries. (2) With few exceptions, there was remarkable similarity in the attitudes and the language which characterized the treatment of the critical issues involved.

As was demonstrated in the first and third chapters, dramatic criticism in both England and Spain received its initial stimulus from the attacks launched on secular plays by religious reformers of the day. In both countries, the popular appeal of the itinerant acting companies, and the success of the first permanent theaters, aroused the envy and invective of religious zealots, who viewed with alarm the loss in attendance which the church suffered because of the

greater lure of the playhouse. Whether Puritan or Dominican, they condemned the public theater as the workshop of the devil, and the players as the minions of hell.

It is interesting to observe the similarity of language used and feeling expressed by the English to those of the Spanish, by comparing the following excerpts from comments previously quoted:

> . . . in their playes you shall learne all things that appertayne to craft . . . you will learne howe to bee false and deceyue your husbandes . . . howe to playe the harlottes, to obtayne one's loue, howe to rauishe, howe to beguyle, howe to betraye, to flatter, lye, sweare, forsweare, howe to allure to whoredome . . . howe to disobey . . . to moou to lustes, . . . to bee ydle, . . . how to mocke, scoffe, and deryde. . . .[1]

> ... En ellas se representa ... cómo ha de armar traiciones la muger casada á su marido. ... A la doncella la incitan á que ... desee lo que no entiende. ... Enséñanla ... á fingir en lo público, á perder los temblores en lo secreto. ... A los mozos, libertades, atrevimientos y insolencias ... y cómo en todos los sucesos se han de portar ... se representan torpezas, deshonestidades, mentiras ... sólo se quedó pegado en la memoria lo malo. ...[2]

The criticism of the theater advanced by the clergy may be summarized by enumerating their four basic allegations: (1) The cozy atmosphere of the public playhouse afforded both time and opportunity for the innocent and the bold to initiate illicit love affairs. (2) The

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[1]John Northbrooke. See page 5 above.

[2]Fray Jerónimo de la Cruz. See page 46 above. Subsequent references to previously quoted material will appear in my text.

immoral episodes found in most plays tended to undermine the ethical standards of the audience in two ways; first, they represented sinful conduct in an attractive light, and second, they taught the techniques of imitating such conduct. (3) The glamorous but often wicked lives of the players contributed to the moral delinquency of others, at times by example and at times by direct association. (4) The dramatist as a poet was, by nature, incapable of instructing the audience in matters of truth and virtue, since he did not possess the necessary insight into the purposes of divine law.

The immediate practical results of this criticism were slight. In both England and Spain, periodic attempts were made to close the theaters; and, indeed, dramatic performances were prohibited for brief intervals, only to be resumed again and greeted with even greater popular enthusiasm.

With the passage of time, significant refinements in dramatic themes and techniques were effected, although it is impossible to judge whether this was solely the natural consequence of a maturing art or a direct result, to some extent at least, of the rabid religious attack. In any case, the theater continued to acquire increased artistic complexity and public esteem, so that by 1600 it was an integral part of the cultural life of London and Madrid.

The influence of the clerical attack on creative dramatic criticism was profound, since it triggered the serious examination of aesthetic principles. The fact that the theater had been challenged on moral grounds to a great extent decided the issues and arguments used in its defense. The debate which ensued revolved around the implications posed by two thorny questions: (1) What was the appropriate social function of drama? (2) What were the appropriate dramatic precepts that should give shape to the contemporary theater?

In regard to the problem of the social role of drama, the defenders of the theater at first accepted the thesis of their opponents that drama should contain moral lessons and should exhort the spectators to apply these lessons in their personal lives. In granting this proposition, which was later modified or rejected outright, they faced the consequent difficulty of finding some philosophic justification for according the dramatist the authority of an ethical teacher. This justification they found in their interpretation of poetic inspiration. The interpretation as expounded by Sidney was that the dramatist composed under divine fiat, inasmuch as the creative process of art was of the same essence as the creative process of God. Therefore, the dramatist as an ethical teacher was not subject to error because the truth in his ethical teaching was fixed by a power

beyond himself (page 11). Carballo and Artieda justified poetic truth in a somewhat different way. Although Carballo, too, certainly stressed the element of divine inspiration in creative art, in addition, he emphasized the importance, in the creative process, of the dramatist's knowledge acquired from the workaday world (page 51). Artieda dropped altogether the supernatural aspect from poetic truth, and affirmed that the dramatist should be accredited as an ethical guide because of his superior intelligence alone (page 67).

Another problem posed by the acceptance of drama as an instrument of moral instruction was the necessity of accounting for the delight that it accorded. If a play was to convey a message, would it not be preferable to strip it of adornments, and eliminate the pleasurable elements that blur the clarity of the message? By no means! Here Sidney (page 12), Jonson (page 16), and Cervantes (page 62) were of the same opinion. The pleasure-giving elements of the drama were there precisely for the purpose of furthering the ethical message, by disguising the harshness of its truth. But again—what if the sugar coating of pleasure were so enticing and the ethical message so disguised that no useful lesson was obvious in the play? In such a case—and there was critical support for this stand among English (page 14) and Spanish (page 54) alike—the spectator was concentrating on the wrong thing.

He should have directed his attention toward the hidden allegorical meaning, for which the superficial delight was but a mask.

Thus the early defenders of the theater rationalized the enjoyment the audience received from plays by interpreting this delight as an aid to instruction. This became the standard view in England, although Marston, Dekker, Middleton, and others tended to place pleasure above profit (page 22). In Spain, on the other hand, the didactic justification of the theater never obtained the general sanction that it acquired among Elizabethan critics. It is true that Carballo and Cervantes favored the mingling of some instruction with the amusement, but after Artieda, concern for the pleasure of the audience became one of the dominant themes in Golden Age criticism. This emphasis on the audience's enjoyment was an important basis for the seventeenth-century rejection of the old precepts, in favor of new ones that satisfied the contemporary taste.

This motive for the rejection of the classical precepts was implicit in the criticism of Cervantes (pages 63–64), Artieda (page 69), Cueva (page 75), and Barreda (page 85), but its most forthright advocate was Lope de Vega (page 88).

Despite their claim to the right to formulate their own dramatic principles, Spanish critics continued to analyze the techniques of dramatic composition in the language of classical precepts.

Carballo (page 55), Cervantes (page 60), Artieda (page 67), Cueva (page 74), and even so imaginative an artist as Lope (page 87) all persisted, as did their Elizabethan counterparts, in describing decorum in character in terms of the stereotypical conventions which they deduced from Horace. In regard to the discussion of verisimilitude, however, greater originality was evidenced.

The first Spanish critics used the principle of verisimilitude to justify the maintenance of the unities, but very early in the Golden Age opinion on this point shifted. Critics came to identify "unity" as the feeling of unity achieved through the organizing power of the audience's imagination, and not through the formal organization of the play (pages 63–65, 83).

English critics also used the principle of verisimilitude to justify the maintenance of the unities, but with quite different consequences. For them, a play was an imitation of life, for the purpose of teaching moral lessons. Hence, there should be no discrepancy between life in the real world and life in the play, in order not to vitiate the ethical effect. This led to the identification of verisimilitude with the rational rather than the imaginative faculty of the mind (pages 37, 39).

In the defense of tragicomedy by reason of its faithful reflection of life and its contribution to the pleasure of the audience,

English and Spanish critics of the period were on common ground. The tendency in both countries was toward the approval of pleasure as the intrinsic raison d'être of the drama.

A panoramic view of the aesthetic issues faced by the critics of the era studied, and of their attempts to resolve these issues, shows the universality of the eternal struggle to reconcile the practical and artistic aspects of drama. These problems with which the Europeans of the Renaissance had to contend were also faced by the Greeks and Romans—and continue to be a live issue today.

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