

POETRY AS PLAY



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María Cristina Quintero

Poetry as Play

MARÍA CRISTINA QUINTERO

POETRY AS PLAY
Gongorismo and the Comedia

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For my mother and father

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Preface

I. PRELIMINARY COMMENTS

An aspect of the Spanish Golden Age *comedia* that makes it particularly appealing to modern critical sensibilities is its consistent engagement with problems of language. The plays produced during this era display a penchant for isolating language, putting it on display, and parading it before the critical eye of an audience, whether it be the seventeenth-century playgoer or the reader of posterity. Thus, while the *comedia* is paradigmatic of the rich panoply of historical, social, religious, and ethical concerns that we associate with the Baroque, the plays of the Golden Age demonstrate a parallel and equally profound preoccupation with problems of their own discourse. Indeed, the concern with language is indistinguishable from the thematic context of the plays. Often, the elaborate rhetorical constructs that reflect on the ambiguity and duplicity of language in general are at another level meditations on the instability of reality and the polemics of existence. The important dialectic between the language of the *comedia* and its thematic concerns provides the framework for our analysis. At the forefront of the present study, however, is a more concrete focus: the deployment of poetic language in the *comedia*, in particular the *culto* tradition that culminated with the poetry of Luis de Góngora y Argote.

This study began some years back with a reading of the plays written by Luis de Góngora, *Las firmezas de Isabela* and *El doctor Carlino*. These two remarkable texts (the second one unfinished), composed by the most difficult, and arguably the most important, poet of the Golden Age, led to a consideration of the complex relationship between poetry and drama during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Poetic and dramatic genres influenced each other considerably during this period. The study of poetry can, therefore,

elucidate the aesthetics governing the *comedia*; and conversely, an analysis of dramatic language and conventions can illustrate some of the artistic presuppositions affecting poetic practice. Although these genres were viewed as independent forms governed by separate precepts and conventions, they necessarily became engaged in a dynamic intertextual exchange that was to transform both modes.¹ In the following pages I propose to explore the multiple points of contact between lyric poetry and drama in the Baroque, in particular where the controversy over Góngora's poetry and poetics is concerned. The idiom that we have come to associate with Góngora would be dramatized within the *comedia* time and time again.

While the poetic dimension of the *comedia* is generally acknowledged in critical studies and literary histories, it has been frequently considered secondary to its thematic structure. Often, the poetry of even the most acclaimed plays is summarily overlooked. Margaret Wilson in her history of Golden Age drama went so far as to state that "the *comedia*, although written in verse, is seldom poetic, and its language, whether in the naturalistic or elevated style, is not easily memorable."² Wilson's attitude is only the most extreme manifestation of a critical tendency to disregard the poetic dimension of Golden Age plays in favor of a thematic approach. Most importantly, her comments are indicative of the critical stance that separates the dramatic and poetic production of the time as if they were mutually exclusive practices.

Diametrically opposed to Wilson's approach is the work of critics who tend to privilege the poetic dimension of the *comedia*. E. M. Wilson in an article published forty years ago, "Images et structure dans *Peribáñez*," suggested that Golden Age plays should be approached as if they were primarily poetry. More recently, David Gitlitz has stated that the structure of the *comedia* is poetic: "Los dramaturgos del siglo de oro se consideraban ante todo poetas. No sólo escribieron su comedias en verso, sino que las compusieron en cierta medida como si fuesen poemas."³ Bruce Wardropper has studied how Golden Age playwrights use the means of lyric poetry to enhance dramatic effect and to intensify meaning: "the main techniques used [in the *comedia*] were adaptations to drama of techniques familiar to lyric poets and the use of other techniques which, being unsuited to lyric poetry, were nevertheless related to the very essence of poetry."⁴ In the intertextuality of genres, according to Wardropper, we can identify what he calls the implicit craft of the *comedia*. Wardropper convincingly demonstrates the determining function of poetic metaphor in the development of plays such as *El médico de su honra*, *El*

caballero de Olmedo, and *El burlador de Sevilla*. Wardropper's work on the imagery of the *comedia* is among the most suggestive of the many fine studies of the poetry of particular plays. Because Pedro Calderón de la Barca is considered the most accomplished craftsman of Golden Age drama, many more stylistic studies have been dedicated to the language of his plays. These studies elucidate the *comedia's* able use of poetic imagery to convey a range of dramatic functions: the characterization of the protagonists, their motives, the tone of the play, and of course its theme.⁵

My study is at least initially indebted to Wardropper's belief that classical Spanish plays assimilated techniques of lyric poetry to forge an effective dramatic discourse. His study of the manner in which Golden Age plays turn metaphors into acts on the stage has also been influential in the development of my own theories on the deployment of Gongorine language in dramatic works. Nevertheless, whereas Wardropper concentrates on certain metaphors and images that become literalized in specific plays, I am more interested in how the *comedia* enacted poetic practice in general and Gongorine language in particular. There have been no studies that examine the wider implications of the *comedia's* dual status as both poetic and dramatic text. It is this dialectic between dramatic and poetic discourse within the poetics of the *comedia* that permits us to claim for it an additional function, that of critical text. At one level, the *comedia* can be analyzed as secondary text, one that becomes a critical reflection of the practice and development of poetry during the Renaissance and the Baroque. In fact, the *comedia* often incorporated an acting-out of the theoretical polemics surrounding poetic language during this era. I intend to show that there were characteristics and strategies inherent in the poetic practice of the Golden Age that made the incorporation of poetry into drama a logical process. In the discussion of the use of poetry in the plays of the Golden Age, the texts will be analyzed both as reflections of contemporary poetic practice and as theatrical events that transform poetic language into a singularly successful dramatic code.

An objection that is easy to anticipate is that a study that deals with the incorporation of *culto* language in the *comedia* privileges disproportionately a literary and poetic approach to the *comedia*. This is indeed one of the pitfalls that await any critic studying the poetic dimension of Golden Age drama. Because the possibility for analyzing any *comedia* as a presentation upon a stage is extremely limited, it is easy to forget that the words on the page were meant to be the verbal component of what was conceived as a theatrical

experience. It is not surprising, therefore, that the plays of the Golden Age have been analyzed (and are taught) primarily as literary texts. Because we have neither the actors nor the stage before us, only the language of the play, and because this language is in verse form, Golden Age drama is quite naturally experienced by a reader as poetry. The spatial, temporal, visual values of this drama elude us, allowing for only a partial appreciation of its aesthetics. Nevertheless, to analyze the language of these plays as one would the language of a poem would be a betrayal of genre. We cannot forget that we are dealing with a dramatic form that imposes a specific set of conventions and expectations. All drama, as Antonin Artaud reminds us, requires a particular language: "the stage is a concrete physical space which asks to be filled, and to be given its own concrete language to speak."⁶ More recently, Roland Barthes speaks of the theater as an extremely dense semantic act that transcends the linguistic dimension: "One can even say that the theater constitutes a privileged semiological object since its system is apparently original [polyphonic] in relation to that of language [which is linear]."⁷ Even if the verbal component of a play is poetic, the discourse of drama must assume characteristics that accommodate the temporal, spatial, and performative demands peculiar to the stage. As J. L. Styan has suggested, "A play is poetry, something made; it is drama, something done; and theatre, something *perceived*" (emphasis in original).⁸ The multiplicity of functions needs to be taken into account when studying the linguistic dimension of the *comedia*. Its dramatic language is charged with significance since the possibilities and limitations of the stage require that verbal exchanges reveal a wealth of information (about characters, their motives, the tone, the theme) and determine the audience's perception of these.

Recent studies of Golden Age theater, particularly of Calderón's works, have rightly emphasized the theatrical/performative dimension of theater. Within the context of the excellent work by Shergold, Varey, Greer, and Amadei-Pulice (among others), my study may seem to be harking back to a purely textual approach to these plays. This is not my intention, since I depart from the premise that the *comedia* is both theater (in the wealth of connotations that the term implies) and poetry. The poetry is dramatized and the codes proper to theater—the aural and visual—complement the linguistic component. If we think of drama as being made up of two texts, the written and the represented text, then the poetry anticipates not just the spoken language on the stage, but also the entire structure of theater; and in turn, the performance continuously transforms poetry into an equally theatrical/performative code.

II. ORGANIZATION

The study begins with an analysis of the *comedia* as a form that reflects and dramatizes the different poetic currents prevalent during the Golden Age, from the traditional *romancero* to the Italianate and *culto* lyric. The vigorous poetic activity of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Spain was characterized by an intense self-conscious experimentation with language and a serious questioning of imposed poetic conventions, particularly Petrarchism. There is a discernible struggle to find an authentic poetic voice while still profiting from tradition. The richly polyphonic *comedia* incorporated these concerns and polemics into its own dramatic idiom and often enacted the controversies surrounding poetic language. Indeed, poetry at times seems to become reified on the stage in plays by Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca. We find in the *comedia* both the respectful incorporation or reiteration of certain poetic codes and a critical and ironic approach to the viability of the same conventions. Through the parody and transformation of poetic formulas, the *comedia* permitted an open meditation on the poetic practice of the time.

The discussion in Chapter 2 of the theatrical and dramatic qualities already inherent in the poetry of the Golden Age deals, first of all, with the conditions of reception and the important oral dimension that characterized the poetry of this era. Even *culto* poems were frequently experienced as oral poetry through readings in literary academies and through their presentation as part of public events such as the *certámenes poéticos*. Language and poetic practice become spectacle, experienced both visually and aurally. The internal constructs of the lyric also promote a dramatic experience of the poems. For one thing, the fiction of the speaker in lyric poetry is a powerful one, and in the plays of the Golden Age we discover the dramatization or literalization of the lyric voice. Of particular interest is the manner in which the poets of the time assume certain dramatic masks or personas, thereby consciously fashioning poetic identities. The chapter ends with an overview of the function of metaphorical language as it relates to theatricality and spectacle in the poetry of the seventeenth century. Particular attention is paid to Baroque treatises dealing with the theatrical dimension of Baroque metaphor.

The interrelationship of poetic and dramatic genres had a curiously symbolic manifestation in the literary rivalry between Lope de Vega and Luis de Góngora, especially in the light of modern theories of imitation, influence, and parody. Because the two writers spearheaded the two most important artistic innovations in the Golden Age, their ambiguous rivalry provides, in Chapter 3,

an appropriate introduction to a comparison of the aesthetics of Góngora's poetry with the aesthetics of the *comedia* as formulated by Lope. The textual wars between the two authors led to the refinement of parody as an instrument of transformation in both poetry and drama. In addition, a consideration of the controversies that surrounded Lope's *comedia nueva* and Góngora's poetry reveal that there were many points of contact. Although the artistic presuppositions governing both forms have traditionally been viewed as diametrically opposed to each other, both were in fact innovative "modern" forms that challenged the traditional canon and orthodox notions of literary decorum. The accusations, defenses, and apologies generated by the debate on Lope's *comedia* and Góngora's poetic practice make up an important corpus of literary history and criticism. These secondary texts significantly contribute to our understanding of the relationship between poetic and dramatic discourses during the Renaissance and Baroque.

At the center of the study, Chapters 4 and 5 represent a detailed consideration of Góngora's own experimentation with the *comedia* form. His two plays, *Las firmezas de Isabela* (1610) and *El doctor Carlino* (1613), have until recently been virtually ignored by critics. These texts provide a unique conscious hybridization of complex poetic language and dramatic conventions by the most controversial poet of the Golden Age. Written at the height of Lope's popularity and during the period in which Góngora produced his most important poems, the plays represent daring experiments with poetic idiom and dramatic form. *Las firmezas de Isabela* both incorporates and deviates from the formula provided by Lope and becomes a serious meditation on his rival's dramatic practice. The unfinished *El doctor Carlino* is an anomalous play that openly parodies the thematic and linguistic conventions of the *comedia*. In it, Góngora hybridizes the most vulgar humor with the obscure metaphoric language typical of his most notorious compositions. Because Góngora's theater makes up a surprising one-fourth of his total literary production, the two *comedias* contribute also to our understanding of Góngora's poetry, particularly his manipulation of parody. Furthermore, the plays anticipate the dramatic function Gongorine language would acquire in the works of more successful playwrights such as Calderón de la Barca.

In the development of Lope de Vega's dramatic style, we can trace a conscious quest for appropriate or effective dramatic language through the exploration of poetic phenomena. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, many of his plays dramatize the polemics surrounding poetic practice, from the

transformation of the *romance* to the crisis of Petrarchism and the controversy surrounding *gongorismo*. Plays like *Angélica en el Catay* and *El capellán de la Virgen*, which dramatize stories previously adopted by Góngora in his poetry, openly criticize the style associated with the author of the *Soledades*. The parodic deployment of *gongorismo* in Lope's *comedia* centered on the opposition between clarity and obscurity. The concept of clarity in poetry is, however, a period-bound phenomenon; and we discover that for Golden Age poets and theorists alike, clarity was a complex rhetorical strategy. Upon close examination, Lope's views on *claridad* were not antithetical to the characteristics associated with Góngora's lyric practice. In addition, Lope's attitude toward Góngora's poetry was nothing if not ambivalent, oscillating between begrudging admiration and open scorn. In later plays such as *Las bizzarrías de Belisa* and in the hybrid *La Dorotea*, Lope recognized the dramatic and theatrical potential of his rival's poetic innovations. Indeed, in many plays Lope incorporated the same poetic techniques and structures in nonparodic contexts. Whether through parody or honorific assimilation, Lope's dramatization of Gongorine language became a self-conscious representation of the act of imitation and of the growing interdependence between poetic and dramatic genres.

Calderón de la Barca's plays represent the culmination of Góngora's influence on Golden Age theater, as the playwright forges the structures and techniques of Gongorine discourse into a singularly effective dramatic language. The final chapter of my study deals with the ingenious manner in which Calderón incorporated Góngora's poetry and poetics into his dramatic masterpieces. By the time Calderón composed his plays, the *comedia*'s conventions had become so codified as to inspire an ironic stance on the part of the playwright toward his own texts. Similarly, throughout his poetry, Góngora had displayed a tendency to call attention to his texts in order to expose and undermine the conventionality of forms. Calderón would make full use of the self-parodic possibilities of *gongorismo* in thematizing the artificiality of dramatic and poetic conventions in his plays. Furthermore, Calderón's dramaturgy fully exploited the astonishing innovations in stagecraft, special effects, perspective, and music that characterized Baroque theater. His plays constitute a new dramatic form in Spain that can be called truly theatrical, so much so that his works were known as *comedias de teatro*. Within the wealth of extralinguistic theatrical codes, the theatricality inherent in Góngora's metaphoric language would become a particularly

appropriate idiom for the stage. *Gongorismo* in these plays ceases to be isolated phrases and images that echo the poet's idiom, and becomes instead a perfect hybrid, functioning simultaneously as poetic discourse and as dramatic convention. With Calderón, Góngora's idiom becomes a rich theatrical and performative code.

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Versions of parts of Chapter 4 have appeared in print: "Luis de Góngora and the *comedia de enredo*," *Symposium* 39.4 (Winter 1985-86): 268-83, and "Dramatic Convention and Poetic Discourse: Dialogue, Monologue, and Aside in Góngora's Theater," *Bulletin of the Comediantes* 37.2 (Winter 1985): 225-48. The brief discussion in Chapter 7 of *No hay burlas con el amor*

appeared in a different form in “Demystifying Convention in Calderón’s *No hay burlas con el amor*,” *Romance Notes* 27.3 (Spring 1987): 247-55. I thank the editors of *Romance Notes* for permission to reprint the material here.

The *Comedia Nueva* and Poetic Practice in the Golden Age

I. INDETERMINACY OF GENRE IN THE *COMEDIA NUEVA*

The *comedia*, written almost exclusively in verse, has from its origins invited polemics on the question of genre. During the Renaissance, drama was considered, along with the epic and the lyric, one of the branches of poetry. Indeed, the staunchest Aristotelians, whose theories on the nature of poetry were based on the concept of imitation, took the position that comedies and tragedies should be considered poetry primarily.¹ This is true for Spanish theorists as well; for example, Francisco de Cascales, in his *Tablas poéticas* (1617), establishes a distinction between three literary genres: “La poesía se divide en tres especies principales: Épica, Scénica y Lírica” (Newels 41). Cascales further clarifies the second category by saying that “lo scénico siempre es dramático.” Other theorists such as Antonio López de Vega (1641) also speak of three “sendas poéticas,” with “la dramática” referring to that which is “representable” (Newels 52). Plays belonged therefore to the category of dramatic poetry, distinct in theory from the lyric and the epic, but not exclusive of them in practice. Theorists and playwrights recognized some overlapping of the three genres, and both Cascales and Alonso López Pinciano state that even the lyric may manifest itself in three “actitudes”: the epic, the dramatic, and the lyric proper.

This lack of rigid determinacy in genres may explain the facility with which Golden Age playwrights incorporated poetic modes into dramatic art. In addition, there were pragmatic reasons for using poetry in the *comedia*. For one thing, poetic discourse had the function of defining a play, of demarcating it from ordinary speech. According to Charles Aubrun, the use of verse

may have been necessitated by the primitive conditions of stagecraft during most of the sixteenth century, with its all-purpose costumes and almost bare scenery: “el verso acentúa el efecto de distancia entre la realidad y la ficción, entre la sala y la escena, entre la vida y su transposición a lo bucólico, a lo caballeresco o a la aventura dramática” (31-32). Verse forms helped the audience identify the social category of the character, i.e., the *criado* who spoke in *redondillas* and the noble who used *culto* language. Furthermore, the poetic language of the *tablas*, particularly the use of metaphors, helped create a “recognizable dramatic artificiality” signaling a departure from everyday spoken language.² Lope and his followers were very conscious of the dramatic possibilities of verse forms and mined poetic traditions to forge a successful discourse for the stage. The break with classicist dramatic precepts permitted the flexible incorporation of diverse forms within the same dramatic space. The epic and the lyric traditions contributed both form and content to the *comedia*. The heroes of many *comedias* are resurrected from the epic tradition; and, in the multiple *comedias* that deal with love and honor, attitudes toward women are often dramatizations of Petrarchan conceits propagated through poetry. Traditional popular forms such as the octosyllabic *romance* enter into dialogue with the *culto* Italianate meters of the sonnet and the *canzone*. The *comedia*'s polymetry, frequently touted as one of the distinguishing features of this dramatic form, firmly attests to its hospitable accommodation of various currents and genres. Lope, as the codifier of *comedia* conventions, is profoundly aware of the dramatic functionality of poetic genres, as indicated by this oft-quoted passage from the *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo*:

Acomode los versos con prudencia
a los sujetos de que va tratando;
las décimas son buenas para quejas,
el soneto está bien en los que aguardan,
las relaciones piden los romances
aunque en octavas lucen por extremo,
son los tercetos para cosas graves,
y para las de amor las redondillas.³

The *comedia* thus gathers within its space the spectrum of contemporary poetic practice, from popular songs to a more erudite tradition that included the pastoral and the epic. We find that playwrights often displayed their

virtuosity by taking a motif and developing it in various poetic registers. There are many examples of this procedure. One particularly eloquent example can be found in a love scene from Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla's *Del rey abajo, ninguno*. The scene that develops the relationship between two lovers, Doña Blanca and Don García, begins with a popular *cancioncilla* that offers a play on words with the *dama*'s name:

Esta es blanca como el sol,
 que la nieve no.
 Esta es hermosa y lozana
 como el sol,
 que parece a la mañana
 como el sol, . . .
 con quien es la nieve negra
 y del almendro la flor.
 Esta es blanca como el sol,
 que la nieve no.⁴

There follows an exchange between the two main characters in two sonnets that could function independently of the play and that abound in *culto* language and imagery associated with pastoral poetry. In the sonnets, the motifs of whiteness and the sun associated with the lady are taken up once more: "No quieren más las flores al rocío, / que en los fragantes vasos el sol bebe, / las arboledas la deshecha nieve, / que es cima de cristal y después río . . ." (61). Later in the scene, the same amatory imagery is repeated in yet another register through the parodic *redondillas* spoken by the rustics Bras and Teresa: "Pues están Blanca y García / como palomos de bien" and "Desde que te vi, Teresa, / en el arroyo a pracer, / ayudándote a torcer / los manteles de la mesa . . ." (61-62). This scene, one of a myriad of possible examples, gathers microcosmically the varied range of poetic practice that is characteristic of the *comedia*.

The polyphony of verse forms offered by scenes such as this permits the *comedia* to function simultaneously as both dramatic and poetic text. Indeed, the two modes cannot be separated, for the contribution of lyric and epic traditions went beyond the formal to include subject and theme. Theater therefore gives body to the multiple elements (traditional forms, imagery, themes) that characterize poetic practice. The dialectic between dramatic and poetic discourse presents the *comedia* as a critical reflection of the structures and

traditions that informed the poetry of the Renaissance and Baroque. The *comedia*, then, has a tendency to inscribe into its text an open acknowledgment of previous texts that determined its development. As a typical example, we can take the following scene from Lope's *Lo que pasa en una tarde*, which incorporates a brief history of the development of European poetry:

- GERARDO: Bárbara un tiempo yacía
 en España la poesía;
 ya está en lugar eminente.
- DON FÉLIX: Poetas latinos tuvo
 insignes, no castellanos.
- DON JUAN: Sin versos italianos
 muchos siglos se entretuvo
 con sus coplas naturales.
- GERARDO: El segundo rey don Juan
 las escribió, que hoy nos dan
 de su estimación señales.
- DON FÉLIX: En loor de Petrarca vi
 versos con mucha elegancia
 de Francisco, rey de Francia.
- DON JUAN: Querría imitar así
 al César Otaviano,
 que en alabanza escribió
 de Virgilio.

(*Lo que pasa* 305a)

Paul Julian Smith has recently suggested that the *comedia* represents a “rhetoric of inscription.”⁵ In this brief scene, Lope inscribes and acknowledges the poetic origins of his dramatic form. The playwrights of the Golden Age repeatedly and consciously engage within their dramatic texts the literary sources that constitute their discourse, and thus announce their participation in the ongoing experimentation that characterized contemporary poetic practice.

II. POETIC *RENOVATIO* AND ITS IMPACT ON THE *COMEDIA*

As an introduction to the primary focus of this study—the incorporation of *culto* language in the *comedia*—it would be useful to begin with a brief review of certain aspects of poetic practice and the manner in which they were

assimilated by drama. The Golden Age of Spain represents a period of tremendously varied and prolific poetic activity. We witness a fusion of various traditions and practices, a thirst for variety and a taste for the hybrid form. Together with the continuation of Hispanic tradition—both the popular oral poetry of the *romancero viejo* and the more cultured vein of the *cancioneros*—we encounter the powerful influence of Italian poetry, particularly through the imitation of Petrarch. Petrarchism, as a system adopted by the Italian poets of the Renaissance, played a crucial role in the development of Spanish Golden Age poetry. Underlying the Italianate fashion was the enthusiastic rediscovery and emulation of classical poets such as Virgil and Ovid. Again, most poetic texts produced during this time were determined by a multiplicity of literary codes. The *comedia*, which reached the height of its popularity in the last decades of the sixteenth century, reflected this polyphony of poetic discourse and chronicled the fortunes of certain poetic codes.

A. THE *ROMANCERO* AND THE *COMEDIA*

As the most convenient example, we turn first to the importance of the *romancero* in the development of the *comedia* form. The evolution from the *romancero tradicional* to the *romancero nuevo* has been amply studied, most recently by Antonio Carreño in his outstanding work on Góngora and Lope.⁶ Carreño chronicles the transformation of the *romance* from an anonymous, popular, oral form to one cultivated by the most refined poets of the Baroque. These poets incorporated sophisticated rhetorical constructs into the popular but rigid metrical structure of the ballad. Although the *romancero antiguo* had its origins with epic poems celebrating historical and heroic events, it soon became closely associated with lyric poetry. Thus, the *romance* evolved from being dismissed by the Marqués de Santillana as a form too lowly to be seriously cultivated to one readily embraced by the poets of the “generación de 1580,” which included Lope, Liñán de Riaza, Salinas, Lasso de la Vega, Ledesma, Valdivielso, and Góngora. Even the older Cervantes had experimented with the new *romance artístico*. In spite of being what Mikhail Bakhtin would call a monoglossic form, one strictly governed by certain formulas, in the hands of the new architects of the *romance*, the form became a rich polyphonic genre.⁷ Valdivielso and Ledesma cultivated the religious ballad; Liñán de Riaza’s lyric *romancero* represents an ironic transformation of pastoral motifs. Lope cultivated pastoral, Moorish, religious, and

philosophical ballads; and Góngora virtually invented the *romance burlesco*. In *Sobre la génesis del Quijote*, Juan Millé y Giménez says that “ningún género literario sobrepasa en estos tiempos el auge del *Romancero*, el cual constituye una verdadera crónica poética de España” (37). The cultivation of the *romance* by these poets was often an ironic meditation on popular poetic practice of the past. Many of the *romances nuevos*, particularly those by Góngora, display a polemical attitude toward traditional forms and conventions such as Petrarchism. The transformation undergone by the *romance* signals a change also in its audience. Traditionally associated with a popular audience, the *romancero nuevo* created a new audience that included even the most cultured poets and listeners.

There is a special affinity between the *romance* and the *comedia*, as critics such as Ramón Menéndez Pidal and Antonio Carreño have demonstrated. We can in fact trace the parallel evolution and fortunes of the *romancero nuevo* and the *comedia nueva*. The application of the terms *nuevo* and *nueva* emphasizes an awareness that these art forms were somehow breaking with established poetic and dramatic tradition. Both the *comedia* and the *romancero* borrowed heavily from older genres but transformed them to create innovative forms. There are other basic similarities between the *romancero* and the *comedia*. From its earliest manifestations, the *romance* itself was dramatic in essence, “dramatisch-illusionistische,” as Spitzer characterized the form.⁸ For one thing, the ballad had a long tradition of being performed in front of an audience in circumstances that were very similar to that of spectacle. Like drama, the *romances* frequently incorporated other performative codes such as music and dance. The rhetorical structure of the *romance* often included dramatic exchanges through the use of dialogue, apostrophes, interrogation, and persuasion, techniques that have the effect of encoding an audience within the balladic text. As a narrative form, the ballad sought to isolate an episode and highlight it in a new dramatic light. According to Carreño:

el romance . . . abre el camino a la comedia. Ambos crean un espectáculo: el romance imaginativo, épico-lírico, interior; la comedia, visual, representado, externo. Ambos se convierten en crónicas del sentir popular, en “moldes” genéricos a donde van a parar “todas las lavas en que hervía la literatura a finales del Siglo XVI.” (*Romancero lírico* 43-44)

Critics have credited Lope with being the initiator of the *romance nuevo*, and it is not surprising that he launched his career as a dramatist by turning to

the ballad tradition in what is believed to be his very first play, *Los hechos de Garcilaso de la Vega y el moro Tarife* (1579-83?).⁹ He dramatized well-known traditional *romances* and *romancillos* in plays such as *La bella malmaridada* (1596?) and in his masterpiece, *El caballero de Olmedo* (1620-25). In other plays, Lope introduced characters he himself had created in his *romances*. Characters, such as Belardo, that first appeared in the ballad were fleshed out and made three-dimensional through their incorporation into a dramatic performance.¹⁰ The *romance*, with its dramatic structure already built in, found a natural extension on the *tablas*. Many of the *romances* were so well known that individual verses became proverbial in the language of the *comedia*. For example, in Lope's *El capellán de la Virgen*, the character describes his feelings of being trapped in Seville by glossing lines from the well-known ballad "Que por mayo era":

si estoy en esta prisión
con tanta melancolía,
que ni sé cuándo es de día
ni cuándo las noches son.¹¹

Playwrights exploited the audience's familiarity with the *romance* tradition to entertain their audience, and often to establish dramatic irony by engaging a shared knowledge of literary tradition. Of particular interest is the fact that many of Góngora's *romances* became tremendously popular as dramatic and theatrical inspiration for dramatic works. According to Miguel Herrero García: "el último y más rotundo éxito de los romances de Góngora fue la dramatización que algunos sufrieron para ser puestos en escena" (184). Some of Góngora's ballads were subjected to repeated dramatization by being used as the source of a plot, made into dances, *sainetes*, or *loas*, or incorporated directly into the text of the plays. According to Rita Goldberg, Góngora was "el poeta que más parece haber inspirado a los autores de bailes" (60).

Finally, just as the *romancero* provided the subject, tone, and meter for many *comedias*, so did these plays enrich the *romancero* tradition. Many ballads written specifically for particular plays gained independence from their original dramatic context as they began to be sung and popularized on their own. Because it is easy to identify the most famous ballads, the *romancero* offers the most obvious incorporation of poetic form into the *comedia*. We turn now to a poetic phenomenon dramatized by both the *romancero nuevo* and the *comedia nueva*.

B. PETRARCHISM AND AMATORY POETRY IN THE *COMEDIA*

Petrarchism as a poetic phenomenon is more difficult to define and encapsulate than a specific form such as the *romance*. At its most general, the term refers to the imitation of themes, motifs, and meters of Petrarch's *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*, better known as the *Rime sparse* or the *Canzoniere*. In 1525, Pietro Bembo, in his important poetic treatise entitled *Prose della volgar lingua*, establishes Petrarch as the model and authority in the correct usage of the vernacular. The poetry of the *Canzoniere* would become the structuring model for much of the poetry produced throughout the European Renaissance and Baroque. Although we cannot speak of the same type of direct and parallel influence in the development of Spanish drama as we see in the *romancero*, Petrarchism became necessarily an integral part of the *comedia* due to the prevalence of this discourse in the poetry of the Renaissance. Although echoes of Petrarch's poetry had first penetrated Hispanic letters through the verses of the Marqués de Santillana and the *cancioneros*, it was not until the sixteenth century that we witness the consecration of Petrarchism as a powerful literary code in Spain. Petrarchism became a unique signifying system with clearly recognizable features that would be repeated and imitated. For many literary critics and historians, the best Spanish Renaissance poetry begins with this imitation of the distinctive characteristics of Petrarch's poetry and that of his Italian imitators. Petrarchism in sixteenth-century Spain signaled a period of innovation and the culmination of the cultural project that sought to give *castellano* prestige, by showing it capable of the highest poetic expression. Specifically, Petrarch's *Canzoniere* provided a great model for amatory poetry, with its rich repertoire of lyric situations: the absence of the loved one, the eternal lament and frustration of the weeping poet, the desire to conjure the beloved through poetry, the effect of memory, the pain and pleasure (*dolendi voluptas*) of love and writing. These lyric situations were expressed through the repetition of certain images and tropes: antithesis, paradox, duplication, oximorons (e.g., *dolce nemica*), parallelisms, wordplay based on the lady's name, among others. Perhaps the most suggestive aspect of Petrarch's *Canzoniere* was the attempt to displace the drama of desire (for Laura) away from the sexual into the sphere of language. Laura was emblematic of both the idealized poetic subject and of the self-fashioning of the poet in his quest for the laurel of fame and immortality.¹² Although it seems paradoxical, it was through the imitation of Italian models that some of the most original poetry in *castellano* flourished. Encouraged by Juan Boscán, who himself imitated

the Italian meters, Garcilaso de la Vega took the conventions associated with Petrarchan poetry and created the first poetic masterpieces of the Spanish Renaissance. Garcilaso's sophisticated understanding of the poetic ideal of *imitatio* led him to transform the Petrarchan repertoire into a most original Spanish voice, as Anne J. Cruz has recently demonstrated:

La innovación y el éxito de Garcilaso se deben a la manera en que imita sus fuentes grecolatinas e italianas—en su aprehensión del petrarquismo como un acto conscientemente creador. . . . En la transformación y recreación de las múltiples resonancias, de los variados ecos de las fuentes implícitas y explícitas en su poesía, el petrarquismo proporciona a Garcilaso una nueva voz poética que se impone a las demás—la suya propia. (*Imitación y transformación* 122)

Petrarchism as a form of imitation underwent varied transformations in the hands of Renaissance and Baroque poets. The vast majority of the poets were content with a mechanical repetition of imagery and topics of the *Canzoniere*, although the better poets, like Garcilaso and Herrera, understood the complexity of the Petrarchan model as a means of consciously examining poetic practice. Indeed, we may speak of different Petrarchisms according to each poet's manipulation of the received model. One can almost trace the passage from the Renaissance to the Baroque in the diverse guises that the imitation of Petrarchism assumed in Spain. Like all poetic traditions of lasting impact, Petrarchism began to be viewed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as both nurturing and tyrannical. The poetic discourse that had been embraced and appropriated by Garcilaso and Herrera soon entered a period of crisis. The systematization of tropes and motifs associated with Petrarchism had led to facile, almost mechanical, repetition by lesser poets. The iteration and reiteration of this poetic code led to its "instalación en la lengua literaria como una nueva *normatividad*, con el carácter de una *ley* . . . de obligado cumplimiento" (emphasis in original), according to Andrés Sánchez Robayna.¹³ Petrarchism indeed became a system so powerful that it functioned as a gauge by which to measure a poet's originality as he establishes his independence of and equality with the model.¹⁴ The poets of the Baroque who were in search of a new poetic voice took a decidedly ironic stance vis-à-vis the formulas provided by Petrarchism. Unable and unwilling to discard the Petrarchan model completely, we encounter in the same poet both honorific imitation and parody. Lope is a good example of the poet who concurrently embraces

Petrarchism and an anti-Petrarchan stance. Much of his love poetry, particularly the *Rimas humanas* with its quasi-*Canzoniere* organization, represents a continuation of Petrarchan conventions. Nevertheless, in his *Rimas de Tomé de Burguillos*—also structured as a type of *canzoniere*—we have an overt questioning and parodic presentation of the same conventions, as the protagonist eschews the laurel tree for *tomillo* and, instead of the idealized Laura, he praises a *lavandera* whose name is Juana.¹⁵ The same ambiguity can be found in many of Góngora's sonnets, a notable example being the remarkable "No destrozada nave en roca dura" where it is the poetic "I" who flees an amorous nymph. Góngora's anti-Apollo and anti-Daphne are presented in the two tercets in the following manner:

como yo, Amor, la condición airada,
 las rubias trenzas y la vista bella
 huyendo voy, con pie ya desatado,

de mi enemiga en vano celebrada.
 Adiós, ninfa crüel; quedaos con ella,
 dura roca, red de oro, alegre prado.

(*Sonetos* 129)

In this sonnet, Góngora clearly subverts the quintessentially Petrarchan scenario of Apollo (a double for the poet) chasing Daphne (Laura), who is converted into a laurel tree (a symbol both of his frustrated love and his fame as a poet).¹⁶ The poetic "yo" unceremoniously refuses to participate in the expected poetic *mise en scène*: "huyendo voy . . . de mi enemiga en vano celebrada." In Quevedo, we also find the ambiguous continuation of Petrarchan conventions in the serious repetitions of certain commonplaces, together with the cruelly humorous subversion of the same.¹⁷ Parody during the Baroque would become an important variation of the Renaissance ideal of imitation. In their manipulation of the Petrarchan system of motifs and style by the major poets of the Golden Age, we discern both the continuing impact of established poetic models and the vigorous quest for an original poetic voice through the open parody of the same models.

The fortunes of Petrarchism are enacted indirectly in the *comedia*. We could say that drama provided a testing ground for the validity of certain poetic images belonging to this tradition. The dramatic incorporation of this "system" contributed to the open questioning of Petrarchan conventions, at times