

CERVANTES' OBLIQUE POETICS OF THEATER: LA ENTRETENIDA

ISIDORO ARÉN JANEIRO

State University of New York — New Paltz

Title: Cervantes' Oblique Poetics of Theater: *La entretenida*

Abstract: This article presents a reading of Cervantes's *La Entretenida*. It illustrates his mastery and experimental theater as he refuses to conform to the new trends of the *comedia*, and to the demands of the *vulgo*. It theorizes how Cervantes interjects his own experimental precepts to confront those of the *comedia*. His aim is to transform them into his vision of theater by taking the conceptual model in another direction.

Key words: Experimental Theatre. *Arte Nuevo*. *Comedia*. Lope de Vega. Poetics of the Theatre. *La entretenida*.

Miguel de Cervantes' failure in the world of the theater, truncated by the triumph and mastery of Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (1609), as he stated in the prologue to *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos, nunca representados* (1615), did not deter him from leaving his work for future generations to judge and, perhaps, stage. He was very much aware of the nature of the beast: the stage and the spectator who demanded innovation with each new play. In his plays, he presented not only his own renderings of Aristotle's *Poetics*, but those of Lope's *Arte Nuevo*, and transformed them to counter the new demands imposed by the clamoring "*vulgo*", the force behind the renovation of the classical precepts.¹ This article theorizes how Cervantes interjects his own experimental precepts to confront those of the *comedia*. His aim is to transform them into his vision of theater by taking the conceptual model in another direction.²

The power of Cervantes' theater lies in its energy to engage the spectator and provoke an emotional response, which is induced by the mimetic

¹See Antonio Maravall (1986), Rogelio Miñana (2004), and E. Michael Gerli (1989).

²See José María Díez Borque (1978), Anthony Close (2003), Edward H. Friedman (1981), Rinaldo Froldi (1968), Melveena McKendrick (1989), Jesús Maestro (2000), and Vern G. Williamsen (1982).

performance of human action, his ability to suspend reality, the capacity to include the onlookers in the performance, and to transform them into actors playing a role. It is what makes his theater experimental. Its success depends not only on the quality of the dramatic text, but on the actors' skills in bringing to life an imagined world from the confines of the page to the stage, as well as the director's ability to direct.³ But, by no means is the power of the dramatic text to be dismissed, which is the focus of the discussion on Cervantes' unsuccessful venture.⁴

La Entretenida presents a spoof of the typical *comedia*, where the action is multilayered, and it takes the reader or the spectator into a fast moving play. The characters are weaving their own web of lies, which is the premise of the play. They create their own script as they proceed from one scene to the next, and the underlying discourse is the one performed in the theaters, that of the *comedia*. But, in this case, the protagonists are not bound to the high class; the low-class have a role in the play, as they also dwell in the consequences of love. The action revolves around Cristina's disdain for her suitors Ocaña, Quiñones and Torrente, and her constant refusal to give in to their pretensions; Marcela de Osorio, who never enters on stage, and her suitors Don Antonio and Don Ambrosio; and Marcela de Almendárez and her suitors Cardenio and Don Silvestre.

The action is manifold, there is not one main protagonist, and all characters have a presence on the stage. At the same time, the reader or spectator finds himself or herself enthralled in a fast moving sequence of scenes; like a revolving door, the action does not stop. The reader and the

³Peter Brook (1996) discusses this important facet in *The Empty Space*: "The director must sense where the actor wants to go and what it is he avoids, what blocks he raises to his own intentions. No director injects a performance. At best a director enables an actor to reveal his own performance, that might otherwise have clouded himself" (p. 109). Also see Paul Woodruff (2008).

⁴As Felipe B. Pedraza Jiménez (2006) points out, the paradox of Cervantes' inability to bring his texts to the stage in his own time does not reflect the reception afterwards.

spectator must keep up with the different storylines, that are taking place at the same time, are parallel to each other, and in some way are interrelated to each other. As such, the action does not stop at the confines of the stage, but as soon the characters leave, and new set come on stage, all are left in suspense and want to know what is going to happen to the ones that just left, while they watch yet another story unfold.

La Entretenida induces its audience and readers to question the *comedia*'s skewed formulaic nature, as Cervantes presented in the first part of *Don Quijote* in chapter XLVIII. This objective aligns itself with the violent nature of the performance, which is a destructive and transformative act of interpretation, whereby the antecedent's meaning is eradicated forcefully by displacing its original intention, and shifting it towards current needs. Since performative texts exist on a continuously transformational plane, their very nature diminishes their performance; therefore they need to be infused constantly with meaning in order to be functional. Oftentimes, this process is vicious and destructive, which results in the need to discard the original text, reuse the framing, recharge its parts with new energy, and realign them to function within a new significance. At the end, all that is left is the frame, the chassis of the former structure, where the parts are rendered meaningless until a new implication is infused. The need to refurbish the *comedia* is a consequence of its performative condition. It is a process of transformation that makes the script meaningful for the spectator once more. The reframed structure seen by the spectator or reader is a re-coded script.

La entretendida is considered to be Cervantes' response to Lope's *Arte nuevo*, and as Antonio Rey Hazas (2005), Esther Fernández (2007), and Eduardo Vasco (2005) agree, parodies the *comedia* genre. Rey Hazas (2005) states that *La entretendida* “[es una] parodia de la comedia de capa y espada de Lope de Vega” (p. 28). Along these lines, Fernández (2007) points out that

it has “ecos patentes de las comedias urbanas y de enredo del Siglo de Oro” (p. 181), and as Vasco (2005) affirmed, it is “un ejercicio de estilo de fina inteligencia transgresora entre la norma vigente en los escenarios y la propia poética del autor” (p. 17). Fernández (2007) classifies it as: “obra atípica dentro del panorama dramático del Siglo de Oro, y del propio repertorio cervantino, fue una de las últimas comedias surgidas de la pluma de Cervantes con la intención de parodiar el género de capa y espada y, a su vez, dotar a los criados de una independencia y libertad inconcebible en la Comedia Nueva” (p. 180). It speaks to the subversive nature of Cervantes’ theater, and the power that it carries four hundred years later. Francisco López Alfonso (1986) reiterates that it is a parody of Lope’s formula. It is the preferred form utilized by Cervantes to reveal the cracks in the genre, as he had done with regards to the chivalry novel in *Don Quijote*.

The double edge of Cervantes’ oblique theater requires prior knowledge and familiarization with the *comedia*; otherwise, the implicit intent of *La entretenida* will not be easily discerned.⁵ The very nature of Cervantes’ play is dependent on the reader’s knowledge of the *comedia*. It requires a close acquaintance with Lope’s formulaic theater, and an understanding of the precepts derived in the *Arte nuevo*. As established, the genre of the *comedia* became the driving force behind the production of theater during his lifetime. As has been stated by most scholars, the clear objective is to mock Lope’s theater, while others suggest that he was expanding or using it to introduce his own experimental approach. In the same manner that Cervantes’ concern for everyday realism resulted in *Don Quijote*, his theater is a response to this same preoccupation, which prompted the documented break with Lope and his theater.

⁵López Alonso (1986) explains: “Si no se conservasen las obras dramáticas de Lope, *La entretenida*, por el contrario, no podría apreciarse como parodia. El lector, o el espectador, si a dicha se representase, podría apercibirse del carácter irónico de la obra, pero no del paródico, sin que por ello dejase de ser digna de elogio” (p. 196).

Cervantes' daunting task is to work the *comedia* into a new performance that will enthrall the audience. Undoubtedly, this transformative act is violent, since in order for the new text to survive, any reference to the predecessors must be stripped away. He is aware that for a performative text to render any genuine originality, the old must be wrought into a new one, which is achieved by peeling away all traces of the pretext. For its success, he must find new paradigms that will posit new energy on the stage. Cervantes has to reach out to the audience sitting within the confines of the theater and produce an emotional reaction, and, as a playwright, must make the spectacle of the human condition worth watching again. The success of the reframing rests on the power of the performance, and ability to refurbish the semiotic codes by making them effective once more for the spectator.⁶

Cervantes confronted this uncertainty in a world in constant flux, where what was once deemed innovative is soon discarded as old and ineffective to produce the original performative outcome. He saw the need to redefine his vision of theater by transforming its core elements to relate to the new demands imposed by the *vulgo*, as much as he detested this facet. He recognized that he had to appeal to different entities, on one hand, the clamoring *vulgo*, the market, and, on the other, the theater critics. This was a preoccupation shared through the priest in *Don Quijote*. As Rogelio Miñana (2004) states, there is no doubt that “[él] comprendió la importancia del monstruo en la teoría teatral (y en la personalidad literaria misma) de Lope de Vega [. . .]” (p. 391). Nevertheless, differing from the scholarly debate, his venture into the theater is not prompted by his criticism of Lope, but rather: “Más que movido por la crítica a Lope, Cervantes desarrolla su propia noción proteica, cambiante, atrevida de un teatro en permanente evolución” (p. 393). Cervantes' approach is experimental, but overshadowed, ironically,

⁶See Alberto Sánchez (1992), Antonio Rey Hazas (2005), and Stanislav Zimic (1992).

by him, since the publication of his masterpiece *Don Quijote* placed him in a typecast role that he could not overcome.⁷ Fortunately, he made the choice to allow future generations to cast a critical look at his theater, therefore securing its reception by sending it to the printer:

Algunos años ha que volví yo a mi antigua ociosidad y, pensando que aún duraban los siglos donde corrían mis alabanzas, volvía a componer algunas comedias, pero no hallé pájaros en los nidos de antaño; quiero decir que no hallé autor que me las pidiese, puesto que sabían que las tenía; y, así, las arrinconé en un cofre y las consagré y condené a perpetuo silencio. (Prólogo, p. 363)

La entretenida, written between 1612-1614, and staged in 2005 for the first time, not only presents a spoof of the typical *comedia*, but a clear example of how Cervantes embodies Lope's *Arte nuevo*.⁸ His double edge and performative power is dependent upon the reader or spectator's acquaintance with the genre and familiarity with its semiotics and poetics. There is a double edge in the plays produced during his time, a facet that is evident in *La entretenida* as a parody of the *comedia* genre. In the same manner as William Egginton (2003) concludes that "language is always parasitic, always not serious, because it depends on the citation of previous uses and contexts for its comprehensibility" (p. 17), so is the nature of Cervantes' theater. The reader or spectator must be able to recognize the pretext, that is, they have to be able to identify the genre that feeds Cervantes' work: the *comedia*. As one reads the text, there is an immediate recognition of the themes that are being parodied, mistaken identity, as Marcela thinking that her brother, Don Antonio, is in love with her:

⁷Cervantes's theater was overshadowed by his works in prose, and as Jesús G. Maestro (2000) affirms: "El teatro de Miguel de Cervantes apenas fue considerado como un discurso de interés literario hasta bien entrado el siglo XIX. Había sido objeto de menciones, más o menos desafortunadas, en el ámbito de la erudición, mas no en el terreno específicamente literario, y aún menos en el genuinamente dramático o espectacular" (p. 11).

⁸See A. Cotarelo (1915), J.B. Avalle-Arce (1959), Joaquín Casaldueiro (1966), J. Canavaggio (1977), E.H. Friedman (1980), Jesús G. Maestro (2000), and S. Zimic (1992).

MARCELA

¿Siquiera no me diras
el nombre dessa tu dama?

DON ANTONIO

Como te llamas, se llama.

MARCELA

¿Como yo?

DON ANTONIO

Y aun tiene más:
que se te parece mucho

MARCELA

(*Aparte*) ¡Valame Dios! ¿Que es aquesto?
¿Si es amor este de incesto?
Con varias sospechas lucho.
¿Es hermosa?

DON ANTONIO

Como vos,
y está bien encarecido.

MARCELA

(*Aparte*) El seso tiene perdido
mi hermano. ¡Valgale Dios!
Entra Don Francisco, *amigo de* Don Antonio.

DON FRANCISCO

¿Andan hinchadas las olas
del mar de tu pensamiento?

DON ANTONIO

Entraos en vuestro aposento;
dexadnos, hermana, a solas;
retiraos, hermana mia.

MARCELA

¡Dios tus intentos mejore! (Jornada primera, pp. 11-12)

The spectators or readers of the play are drawn into the action as accomplices, who on one hand are entertained by the different acts performed by the protagonists, and on the other are aware of the play's aim, since

they recognize the original text. They can foretell what is going to happen because they are familiarized with the genre, which adds to the comic relief, but they do not yet know how the performers will react once they find out how absurd their meanderings were.

Cervantes' experimental nature defines his oblique theater, which aims to present an explicit criticism of his nemesis' poetics. At the same time, it enables him to present his own subversive theater.⁹ This process characterizes the baroque art form in an epoch where the genre of the *comedia* is a self-feeding entity, enthralled in an endless mirroring process. Its overproduction accentuates the necessity to reformulate the structures, and to retool the genre's inner-workings, something that Cervantes clearly knew and had accomplished with regards to the chivalry novel. His fictional worlds and characters stem from the very literature that he mocks and parodies. But this is not the only motive to move away from the established reigning precepts.¹⁰

La entretenida is referential in form and forces the spectator or reader to go beyond the text or performance in order to understand how it transforms the genres premises. His theater, neglected until the nineteenth century, is innovative and tentative, in such a way that is consistent with contemporary theatrical theory, as Maestro (2000) declares: "En muchas de las piezas teatrales de Miguel de Cervantes, desde su tragedia hasta las comedias

⁹See Castillo and Castillo (1998) who sum up the different theoretical and critical approaches on Cervantes's work in the last century, and present arguments on its double interpretive edge.

¹⁰His intent is to break away from the influence of Lope, so as to establish himself on his own merit, as Linda Hutcheon (2000) explains: "Perhaps parodists only hurry up what is a natural procedure: the changing of aesthetic forms through time. Out of the union of chivalric romance and a new literary concern for everyday realism came *Don Quijote* and the novel, as we know it today. Parodic works like this one — works that actually manage to free themselves from the backgrounded text enough to create a new and autonomous form — suggest that the dialectic synthesis that is parody might be a prototype of the pivotal stage in the gradual process of development of literary forms" (*The Theory of Parody*, p. 35).

más experimentales, subyacen, de modo más o menos intenso y explícito, cualidades formal y funcionalmente determinantes de la dramaturgia de la Edad Contemporánea” (p. 11). Cervantes inscribed a skewed view of the world in all his works, where fiction and reality intersect, capturing the condition of the baroque subject trapped in a world of theatricality, of mirrors. He revealed the truth hidden behind the mask of the *comedia*, as Castillo and Castillo (1998) suggest: “[presenta una] segunda perspectiva, [o] perspectiva oblicua, donde se nos revela lo auténtico, la verdad de las cosas, su temporalidad” (p. 498). But in order to bring to the stage the fictional and illusory of the baroque, he must mimic life’s theatrics on stage, where the world is a theater and the actors perform a role.

La entretenida presents how the real, the authentic, and the truth hide behind the *comedia*’s distortions. It is not until the end of the play that the reader or spectator realizes the intent behind the performance. From the start of the first act, they are introduced to the theme of the play, marriage, where all the protagonists are seeking a bride or groom, and will employ every method of deceit known in the *comedia* to accomplish their objective:

CRISTINA

Gran predicador estás;
mas tu doctrina condena
a tus lasciuos intentos.

OCAÑA

Lauantasles testimonio:
que al blanco del matrimonio
asestan mis pensamientos. (Jornada primera, p. 8)

It is not until the characters’ plots and subplots fail at the end of the third act that the audience realizes that this is not about marriage, but a criticism of the nature of the world portrayed on the stage. None of the protagonists marry. Their aims are thwarted by the fact that their pursuit was nothing but a game for them:

DOROTEA

Sin Marcela, don Antonio,
se entra amargo el corazón.

(Éntrase.)

DON SILVESTRE

Y yo sin dispensación.

(Éntrase.)

CRISTINA

Cristina sin matrimonio.

(Éntrase.)

CLAVIJOS

Yo seguire de mi amigo
los pasos, medio contento.

(Éntrase.)

DON FRANCISCO

Yo alabaré el pensamiento
de don Antonio, a quien sigo.

(Éntrase.)

MARCELA

Yo quedaré en mi entereza,
no procurando imposibles,
sino casos conuenibles
a nuestra naturaleza.

(Éntrase.)

OCAÑA

Esto en este cuento passa:
los vnos por no querer,
los otros por no poder,
al fin ninguno se casa.
Desta verdad conocida
pido me den testimonio:
que acaba sin matrimonio
la comedia *entretenida*. (Tercera jornada, pp. 114-115)

It is precisely at the end that one captures Cervantes' ironic edge, or at the very least, its premises based on false assumptions framed the world of the self-making entity: the *comedia*. The distorted sense of the real, of "what is" and "what is not" is Cervantes' foundation. This oblique perspective forces one to see and read the play through a prism, where the vanishing background is brought to the center stage "[...] la mirada cervantina [que] abre nuevas perspectivas [y] que nos permiten vislumbrar la arbitrariedad de los códigos culturales que definen esa 'normalidad'" (Castillo and Castillo, 1998, p. 499). Cervantes' experimental theatrics, where one is thrown into a world of deceit, defies their perception and reception of the *comedia*. The "*baciyelmo*" aesthetic of theater, borrowing Castillo and Castillo's (1998) term, transforms itself, challenging any attempt to maintain a clear identification or interpretation, and creates a spherical theater that encompasses the self and life's theatrics.

La entretenida's protagonists shape their own performance and identity via their misreading of the *comedia*'s semiotics, and the cultural codes that define their view of their own selves. This act invites the reader to witness the monstrosity of the sublime, on one hand challenging the socio-political discourses presented on the stage, on the other entertaining the audience. It captures all the elements that encompass the *comedia*. It is a reflection that includes its precepts, and illustrates the pivotal nature of theater as spherical, overarching, and overpowering. The same occurs with Lope's *Arte nuevo*, since it is in the center of the world of the stage.

Lope dominated without a doubt. His formula was ever present in the minds of theater-going audiences, the *vulgo*. It is this peculiarity that illustrates Cervantes' failed efforts to distance himself from his influence, an anxiety and frustration documented through different characters in his works. He admits to Lope's overreaching presence on the stage, and could not escape his "spherical mirror;" wherever he turned, there he was, vital to

the current production of theater, immovably the focus of the world's stage. In order to swerve from the “*monstruo de la naturaleza*”, he formulated his own oblique poetics of theater. Cervantes not only appropriated his precepts to escape from Lope's prominent position embodied his theater; so as to no longer see it, he rendered it with his specific performative objective. He created his own “spherical mirror” by remaking Lope's formula. His oblique theater becomes a central point for understanding the production of theater and history of the stage in his time.

La entretenida swerves from the “backgrounded text”, the *comedia*. This skewed reflection is pivotal in the rendering of his *comedia*, and is a crucial element to consider when theorizing about Cervantes' own production of theater during his time.¹¹ The formulation of his oblique poetics of theater can be lost because of its dependency upon a familiarization with the precepts postulated by the genre of the *comedia* itself. Cervantes intended to transmit through the language of the *comedia* his criticism of its formulaic nature. Its performative power lies in whether the readers or spectators are acquainted with the genre. In the case of his theater, it is dependent upon ones knowledge of the semiotics of the *comedia*, which feed meaning into his own plays.¹²

Cervantes' theater is not only experimental, it is highly subversive, and aims to dismantle the discursive theater of power by presenting the

¹¹As argued by López Alfonso (1986): “Por otro lado, el entremés enmarcado se nos muestra como una teatralización de la ‘realidad,’ es decir, de la comedia. Pero no debemos olvidar que la comedia *La entretenida* es una parodia de la comedia nueva y, en tal sentido, metateatro [...] De este modo, no estamos ante un caso de teatro en el teatro, sino metateatro (el entremés está construido sobre un material teatral ya dado, el de la comedia *La entretenida*) en el metateatro (la parodia de la comedia nueva, *La entretenida*)” (p. 202).

¹²This reception can be explained by Hutcheon's (2000) claim that this is a century where: “[a]rt forms have increasingly appeared to distrust external criticism to the extent that they have sought to incorporate critical commentary within their own structures in a kind of self-legitimizing short-circuit of the normal critical dialogue [...] The modern world seems fascinated by the ability of our human systems to refer to themselves in an unending mirroring process” (*A Theory of Parody*, p.1).

cracks within an overreaching genre, whose formula was losing its energy, force, and agency. His oblique theater is a statement pivotal on the need for change given the saturation of the formulaic *comedia*. It is crucial for examining the formulation of the *comedia*'s precepts, and for the study of the history of theater in Early Modern Spain. It is a task he accomplished through the chivalry novel with his publication of *Don Quijote*, and now attempts with the *comedia* that had become commonplace.¹³ The issue at hand is not whether Cervantes disliked the *comedia* or not; obviously he did, or he would not dwell on the world of theater and, as he said, he had some success on the stage. At the same time, the concern for Cervantes is about what is performed on the stage, and the models imitated. On one hand, there is the idealized world order, as portrayed in most *comedias*, where, generally, all ends with a logical and agreeable resolution where society's chaotic state returns to a harmonious end.

In contrast, Cervantes did not fashion a reflection of life's theatrics, where not everything is so rosy, or has such predictable solutions or endings; nor are the social lines clearly outlined. The dilemma, for him, lies in the fact that what is performed is problematic because it is based on false assumptions postulated by the *comedia*'s discursive ends, and life's own theatrics.¹⁴ Cervantes questioned whether his contemporaries related to the

¹³In essence, as Peter Brook's (1996) concludes in *The Empty Space*: "In everyday life, 'if' is a fiction, in the theater 'if' is an experiment [...] In everyday life 'if' is an occasion, in the theater 'if' is the truth. . . . When we are persuaded to believe in the truth, then the theater and life are one. This is a high aim. It sounds like hard work. To play needs much work. But when we experience the work as play, then it is not work anymore. A play is play." (pp. 140-141).

¹⁴Lope, as Zimic (1992) points out, "se empeña en crear un mundo dramático a base de una visión idealizada del individuo y de la sociedad, mientras Cervantes la ironiza, destacando su relatividad o falsificación" (p. 22). Cervantes questioned the function of art as an escape from reality, as Zimic (1992) states: "Con el arte se pretendía, entre otras cosas, hacer olvidar la realidad. Cervantes se atreve a cuestionar esa versión falsificada de la vida y de la felicidad. Cuando la verosimilitud así lo dicta, muestra que los empeños humanos pueden acabar en frustraciones o en muy efímera felicidad" (p. 26).

action imitated in the *comedia* when performing a supposed imitation of human action, and whether the line between fiction and reality is stretched too thin, as he does in the *entremés* within *La entretenida* performed in the third act. He raises a valid concern because we learn by imitating and replicating each other's behavior, by observing and mimicking what others do, and by replicating their conduct. The problem lies in the fact that if what is imitated is morally or ethically flawed, it can be detrimental to the formation of a fully functional member of society. For the spectator who sits comfortably in his seat, he is protected from the action and is merely a passive bystander, with nothing to worry about. He is only witnessing an image, a fictional situation that carries no danger to his or her well being; or does it? This is the question that Cervantes poses. The aim of the *comedia*, for him, is not just purely entertainment; in a sense, there is an underlying social norming purpose. For a few hours, the spectator is not only watching a play, he or she is receiving a series of discourses that eventually he or she will mimic or avoid, depending on the outcome. There is a duplicity in this mimetic act that the spectator recognizes as having similar qualities to those that he or she experiences outside the theater, which consequently, he or she will try to emulate, or not.¹⁵ According to Cervantes, the *comedia* crossed the line and created a fictional world based on an idealized, imagined one that fashions a romanticized social order where the discourses performed on the stage portray a harmonious society, contrary to the truth.

La entretenida questions what is being mimicked: the "if" world of the *comedia*. As a result it produces an anti-performative act with the purpose of inducing the audience to inquire what is being performed on the stage, to force the audience to demand a more plausible imitation of human

¹⁵Cervantes' theater expresses "verosímilmente la complejidad y la autenticidad de la vida real," as Maestro (2000) affirmed, "atenta a la existencia humana en momentos decisivos de su evolución, tal como era posible una percepción de este tipo desde la experiencia histórica de los siglos XVI y XVII" (p. 12).

action. He is advocating for an experimental theater where the spectators can relate to a shared experience on the stage as active participants. However, in order to achieve this effect, the audience must recognize what is being mimicked, that is, the referential codes that are set forth by Lope's conceptual *Arte nuevo*. Cervantes' concern is, indeed, the mimetic effect of the *comedia*. First, one must take into account that the *comedia* has a pre-determined propagandistic agenda, postulated and disseminated from the spheres of power, which aims to induce a mimetic effect by duplicity. The audience is implicitly instructed to duplicate the actions staged, either by pleasure or complicity. All are somehow aware of the lack of foundation of the action performed, but choose to ignore it. Second, the *comedia* was a strong tool used for social conditioning and norming, that is, education by modeling. For Cervantes what is imitated has to be taken into account, as well as the desired outcome of the performance. In his plays it is the "if," the fiction of the genre crossed over and a challenged reality. But, from a critical point of view, what is troublesome for him is the idea of the discourses that determine their actions, in other words, the social rules that condition the self and interactions between characters fashioned on the stage, which can be easily misconstrued as being the norm outside the theater.¹⁶

La entretenida diverts this implicit intention to a hidden anti-performative outcome, that is, to create an illusion where, on one hand it seems that he has accepted the *comedia*'s premises. He abides by its formulaic nature, which is obvious in the structural elements. Yet, on the other hand, he presents a series of events that distort its very nature, essentially introducing a seed of discord.¹⁷ There is undoubtedly an explicit and implicit intention

¹⁶Along this line of argument, Gerli's (1989) study of the *Retablo de las maravillas* concludes that there is a definite attempt on Cervantes' part to formulate an "*Arte de deshacer comedias*." Much like what he presents in *La entretenida*, a clear attempt to imitate and parody the *comedia*.

¹⁷This is a theater of experience, or using Maestro's (2000) terminology, a process of transduction: "El término transducción es el término culto en romance del vocablo latino

behind any *comedia* produced in the *Siglo de Oro*, to portray the values of the society as dictated from the spheres of power, and to formulate expected outcomes that delineate how the members of the social group should behave. Indirectly, the *comedia* had a political function, that of presenting the idealized world, one where the status quo is not questioned, and if it is, there is always a way to restore order. For Cervantes, the problem lies in the fact that the *comedia* fabricates a fictional world that does not relate to the real experience, and is created under the rigid formula that dominates the theater. Like Lope, he sees the need to take classical precepts of theater one step further when formulating his characters who contrast with the familiar ones in the *comedia*, have more autonomy, and write their own performance on the stage, which comes with consequences.

Nonetheless, once the reader or spectator disengages the theatrical text, it is then that he or she comes to the realization that these are not simply imitations of the *comedia*; ironically, they are looking right into a distorted reflection produced by Cervantes' oblique theatrics. Cervantes does not believe in the impression fostered upon him by the genre, and questions the characters and actions performed on the stages, and *corrales*. He refutes the attributes that these claim to possess. For this reason, his intention and objective is to present not only the faulty reasoning of the *comedia*, but brings forth his own experimental theater. His own spherical mirror of theater conditions Lope's *Arte nuevo*. Now, as one approaches

transductio, transductionis, el mismo que da lugar en lengua vulgar a la palabra 'traducción.' El concepto latino es composición del prefijo *trans*, proposición que expresaba la idea de mediación (a través de...), y del verbo *ducere*, con el sentido de guiar, conducir: el resultado es claro, al designar una operación de conducción (*transmisión*) de algo (*objeto*) a través de (*trans*) un medio que, por el hecho de relacionarse con el objeto durante su transmisión, provoca claves de transducción: transmisión (de sentido) y transformación (del sentido que se transmite)" (p. 95). The container, the dramatic text, serves to hold the mutating agent within its genetic make-up, one that will eventually mutate into a new paradigm of theatrical poetics, that is, Cervantes' own poetics of theater, which by default truncates Lope's *Arte nuevo*.

his work, one sees Cervantes' implicitly skewed view of the genre in *La entretenida*, as it presents, in raw form to the theater-going audience, the semiotics of the *comedia* through his oblique theater.

WORKS CITED

- AVALLE-ARCE, Juan Bautista (1959), "On *La Entretenida* of Cervantes", *MLN*, 74.5, pp. 418-421.
- BROOK, Peter (1996), *The Empty Space*, New York: Touchtone.
- CANAVAGGIO, Jean (1977), *Cervantes dramaturge: Un theater a naitre*, Presses U. France.
- CASALDUERO, Joaquín (1966), *Sentido y forma del teatro de Cervantes*. Madrid: Gredos.
- CASTILLO, David (1996), "Subjects in the Making: Comedias, Sermons, and Religious Theater in the Early Modern State", *RLA* 8, pp. 392-396.
- CASTILLO, David, and Moisés Castillo (1998), "La perspectiva curiosa; Cervantes y la otra modernidad", *RLA* 10.2, pp. 496-502.
- CERVANTES, Miguel de (1915), *La entretenida*, Ed. Rodolfo Schevill and Adolfo Bonilla, Madrid: Imprenta de Bernardo Rodríguez, Tomo III, pp. 5-115.
- CERVANTES, Miguel de (1998), *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, Ed. Francisco Rico, Crítica: Barcelona.
- CERVANTES, Miguel de (2010), *Entremés del retablo de las maravillas, Miguel de Cervantes: Obras Completas*, Ed. Juan Carlos Peinado, Vol. II, Cátedra: Madrid, pp. 1085-1095.
- CERVANTES, Miguel de (2010), "Prólogo al lector", *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos, nunca representados, Miguel de Cervantes: Obras Completas*, Ed. Juan Carlos Peinado. Vol. II, Cátedra: Madrid, pp. 361-364.
- CLOSE, Anthony (2003), "La idea cervantina de la comedia", *Theatralia*, 5, pp. 331-349.
- COTARELO VALLEDOR, Armando (1915), *El teatro de Cervantes*, Madrid: Tip. de la "Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos".
- DÍEZ-BORQUE, José María (1996), *Teoría, forma y función del teatro español de los siglos de oro*, Barcelona: Oro Viejo.
- DÍEZ-BORQUE, José María (1978), *Sociedad y teatro en la España de Lope de Vega*, Barcelona: Bosch, Casa Editorial S.A.
- EGGINGTON, William (2003), *How the World Became a Stage? Presence, Theatricality, and the Question of Modernity*, Albany: SUNY P.
- FERNÁNDEZ, Esther (2007), "En busca de un teatro comprometido; *La entretenida* de Miguel de Cervantes bajo el nuevo prisma de la CNTC", *Comedia Performance: Journal of the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater*, 4, pp. 179-198.
- FRIEDMAN, Edward H (1981), *The Unifying Concept: Approaches to the Structure of Cervantes' Comedias*, York: Spanish Literature Publication Co.
- FRIEDMAN, Edward H (1980), "Double Vision: Self and Society in *El Laberinto de amor* and *La entretenida*", *Cervantes and the Renaissance*, Ed. Michael D. McGaha, Newark: Juan de la Cuesta, 1980.
- FRIEDMAN, Edward H (2003), "The Comic Vision of Cervantes's *La entretenida*", *Theatralia*, 5, pp. 351-359.
- FROLDI, Rinaldo (1968), *Lope de Vega y la formación de la comedia*, Madrid: Anaya.
- GERLI, E. Michael (1989), "El retablo de las maravillas: Cervantes' 'Arte nuevo de deshacer comedias'", *Hispanic Review*, 57.4, pp. 477-492.
- HUTCHEON, Linda (2000), *A Theory of Parody: The Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms*, Chicago: U. of Illinois P.
- HUTCHEON, Linda (1994), *Irony's Edge: The Theory and Politics of Irony*, New York: Routledge, 1994.
- LÓPEZ-ALFONSO, Francisco (1986), "La entretenida, parodia y teatralidad", *Anales cervantinos*, 24, pp. 193-204.

- MAESTRO, Jesús G. (2000), *La escena imaginaria: Poética del teatro de Miguel de Cervantes*, Madrid: Iberoamericana.
- MARAVALL, Antonio (1986), *Culture of the Baroque: Analysis of a Historical Structure*, Trans. Terry Cochran, and Foreword Wlad Godzich and Nicholas Spadaccini, Minneapolis, U. of Minnesota P.
- MCKENDRICK, Melveena (1989), *Theatre in Spain 1490-1700*, New York: Cambridge UP.
- MIÑANA, Rogelio (2004), “‘Veréis el monstruo’: La nueva comedia de Cervantes”, *Bulletin of Comediantes*, 56.2, pp. 387-409.
- PEDRAZA-JIMÉNEZ, Felipe B (2006), *Cervantes y Lope de Vega: Historia de una enemistad y otros estudios cervantinos*, Barcelona: Octaedro.
- REY HAZAS, Antonio (2005), “Cervantes y el teatro”, *El teatro según Cervantes*, Ed. Antonio Rey Hazas, Madrid: Egraf, pp. 21-99.
- SÁNCHEZ, Alberto (1992), “Aproximación al teatro de Cervantes”, *Cuadernos de Teatro Clásico*, 7, pp. 11-30.
- VASCO, Eduardo (2005), “El teatro según Cervantes”, *El teatro según Cervantes*, Ed. Antonio Rey Hazas, Madrid: Egraf, pp. 17-18.
- VEGA, Lope de (2009), *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, Ed. Enrique García Santo-Tomás, Madrid: Cátedra.
- WILLIAMSEN, Vern G (1982), “The Comedia: A Question of Genre”, *The Minor Dramatists of Seventeenth-Century Spain*, Boston: Twayne Publishers.
- WOODRUFF, Paul (2008), *The Necessity of Theatre: The Art of Watching and Being Watched*, Oxford: Oxford UP.
- ZIMIC, Stanislav (1992), *El teatro de Cervantes*, Madrid: Castalia.
- ZUBIETA, Mar (2005), “Entrevista a Helena Pimentel”, *Compañía nacional de teatro clásico*, pp. 28-34.

recibido: mayo de 2013
 aceptado: marzo de 2014