

DARK LAUGHTER: LIMINAL SINS IN QUEVEDO'S ENTREMESES

by

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Praise the bridge that carried you over.

(George Colman, *The Heir at Law*, 64).

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DEDICATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation investigates two areas rarely treated in Early Modern studies. First, it explores the origins, functions and importance of the *entremés* as a performance genre historically relegated to what Victor Turner has called the “liminal” spaces of social and scholarly discourse. These marginalized places of ambiguity in between one space and another provide the artist with a less restrictive creative setting in which to explore the otherwise difficult and even unmentionable social themes. Literally placed in between acts of the *comedia* performance experience, as well as chronologically placed in between the medieval pageant theater and the emerging early modern theater houses, the *entremés* serves as an entertaining breed of performance monster, building upon a thematic foundation “betwixt and between” acceptable and objectionable forms of theater.

Second, the dissertation examines in detail the 12 lesser-known *entremeses* of Francisco de Quevedo as examples of liminality in the development of early modern theater practices. Specifically, the study analyzes these theater pieces as they subscribe to three categories of cardinal sin: desires of the ego (pride, wrath and sloth); desires of ownership (greed and envy); and desires of the body (lust and gluttony).

As a result, this work hopes to demonstrate the aesthetic value of the interlude and the ways in which Quevedo’s various manifestations of this liminal genre, based heavily on the construct of sin, both complement and contradict the model of the *entremés* as established by his predecessors.

CHAPTER 1: FRANCISCO DE QUEVEDO AND THE ENTREMÉS

De los farsantes que han hecho
 farsas, loas, bailes, letras,
 son Antonio de Morales,
 Grajales, Zorita, Mesa,
 Sanchez, Rios, Avendaño,
 Juan de Vergara, Villegas,
 Pedro de Morales, Castro,
 y el hijo de la tierra,
 Caravajal, Claramonte
 y otros que no se me acuerdan.

(Augustin de Rojas. *Viaje Entretenido*, Libro I)

It is a simple fact of life that *middle* often plays synonym to *trouble*. Middle children habitually acquire a reputation for enduring the hardest knocks of family dynamics. Consumers cut costs by avoiding the price-hikes introduced by middle-men. History shows how emerging middle classes upset socio-political establishments. It dubs the Middle Ages “Dark” and the mid-life a time of crisis. Even in linguistic variation, the *mean* attitude of a schoolyard bully’s teasing can be as frustrating as teasing out the mathematical *mean* in a cluster of values, and both unpleasant experiences can leave the defeated subject feeling stuck between a rock and a hard place. From politicians straining for swing votes in the Midwest to disgruntled drivers exchanging hostile gestures on the freeway, even God appears offended by intermediacy: “So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:16). Given this negative reaction toward the middle, it is no wonder that, in the above quote, Rojas’s recollection of Golden Age Theater’s middle slips a bit. Among the *corral*’s performance intermediaries, he forgets to include the *entremés* and

its playwrights, most notably Spain's theater giants, Lope de Rueda and Quiñones de Benavente, never mind the exquisite though lesser-known *entremeses* composed by Francisco de Quevedo. Perhaps the negative stigma associated with intermediacy clings to the Golden Age's literary middle children like a playground ruffian.

Unfortunately, Rojas was not the only person to overlook Quevedo and other writers of interludes. Theater critics and historians can similarly forget the tremendous contribution of these playwrights, resulting in a misleading portrayal of the seventeenth-century theatrical experience and rendering invisible the liminal contributions before the gaze of history and student alike. Eugenio Asensio, whose 1965 *Itinerario del entremés* continues to represent the definitive scholarly treatment of the genre, lamentably characterizes his profession's sparse attention to the *entremés* as one of "oscuridad" (*Itinerario* 12). He explains:

Ninguno de estos trabajos [...] marca los hitos cronológicos de las invenciones, ni atribuye a sus autores los descubrimientos teatrales, ni atiende al delicado juego de tradición y novedad o al permanente intercambio del entremés con los géneros literarios confinantes. Reina la mayor desorientación sobre la crisis de crecimiento que levantó el entremés a plena dignidad literaria. La modestia de un género menor que los contemporáneos no estiman digno de la historia, la falta de documentación precisa nos condena a dejar en una discreta penumbra muchos aspectos. (*Itinerario* 12-13)

Curiously, academia's suffocating silence with regard to the *entremés* contradicts the genre's history of undeniable and almost universally enthusiastic popularity, not only among audience members but, as Hannah Bergman points out, among readers as well (24). All this, then, begs the question: "why?" Asensio alludes to a possible explanation when he describes the interlude as: "un género inestable, perpetuamente buscando su

forma, zigzagueante entre la historieta y la revista, la fantasía y el cuadro de costumbres. Se apoya sin escrúpulos en todas las formas asimilables de divertimento, como el baile, la música, la mascarada” (*Itinerario* 40). As fluid works borrowing from and bouncing between the more stable and easily identified artistic forms of its day (particularly the *comedia* and the *novela*), the *entremés*s can appear difficult to categorize or even understand. In addition, its close association with the *comedia* can persuade scholars to treat the interlude as little more than a theatrical appendage of performance, what Asensio calls a “género secundario y dependiente” (*Itinerario* 40). Perhaps the key, then, to unlocking the secrets and significance of the *entremés*s, including those by don Francisco, begins with understanding briefly what it looks like, where it came from and how it changed leading up to Quevedo’s day.

In a very basic sense, Sebastián de Covarrubias’s 1611 edition of *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Espanola* traces the origin of the word *entremés* to a corruption of the Italian *intremeso*, stemming from the original Greek *episodion*, before defining its meaning simply as “una representación de risa y graciosa, que se entremete entre un acto y otro de la comedia para alegrar y espaciar el auditorio” (525). While Lope de Rueda’s understanding of the genre differed from the way Quevedo and Benavente perceived it, Covarrubias’s clearly oversimplified definition still manages to touch upon three significant characteristics that comprise the heart and soul of the *entremés*s as all of its creators unanimously understood it: it is short, it goes between acts of the *comedia* and it is funny. First, all *entremesistas* adhered to Baltasar Gracian’s famous creed regarding duration of the performance: “Lo bueno, si breve, dos veces bueno” (230). Diane Iglesias

indicates that a typical interlude includes between 125 and 300 lines and usually obeys the Aristotelian unities of time, place and action (140). Like a Saturday Night Live sketch, the interlude lasts only a few minutes in performance and restricts itself to one moment, one setting and one plot. Second, as its name suggests, the *entremés* segmented the presentation of the *comedia*, inserted between the first and second acts and often between the second and third acts as well. Third, although its theme and content usually bore no direct congruity with the *comedia* that surrounded them, interludes in general wielded humor like a rubber sword and shared a biting, satirical view of plebian Spanish society without drawing blood. Fourth, in contrast to the stylized language of the *comedia* with its monarchs and nobility, the *entremés* regularly employed doltish stock characters as the primary vehicles of the farce and preferred a distinctly common lexicon, rendering the performance both colloquial and familiar. Even by 1620, when writers of interludes unofficially adopted verse over prose, the jargon of their *figuras* remained firmly affixed to popular modes of every day speech. Lastly, action in the interlude drives toward the sensational, favoring the sensory over the cerebral and the vile over the virtuous. While *comedia* audiences often talk about “hearing” a play, the rapid-fire banter and physical humor of the *entremés* posed a whimsical, and at times bawdy, feast for the eyes. It seems likely that a genre embracing these characteristics (brief, liminal, humorous, satirical, grotesque, colloquial, visual) might appeal to the author of the picaresque *Buscón*, and the scintillating *A una nariz*.

Of course, Quevedo did not invent the *entremés* but rather inherited the genre in a lengthy tradition of farce on stage. Theater, like art and philosophy, traces its roots back

to the cradle of western thought: Greece. Nestled into the Athenian hillside and using minimal scenery and costuming, the ancient theater of Dionysus hosted an annual performance festival in celebration of the god of agriculture, wine and theater. All playwrights aspiring to see their works performed in the festival were encouraged to submit four plays: three tragedies and one comedy (Pickard-Cambridge 79). Over time the pseudo-religious pretense developed from a celebration into a full-scale competition among playwrights as city officials judiciously selected the works they deemed most stage worthy. Heightening the drama surrounding the drama, winning playwrights received special prizes and privileges beyond the ephemeral satisfaction and popularity of victory. Champions of the stage saw their names carved into a marble wall near the theater, not only assuring their place in the memory of eternity but also preserving this information for scholars of classical theater. One of the extant portions of that record, known as the Arundelian Marbles, comprises a series of stone fragments, collected largely during the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries, and housed mostly at the University of Oxford, (although similar markings are still evident on existing structures at the Acropolis). These key artifacts, in addition to numerous images and historical accounts, include detailed inscriptions listing decades of victorious playwrights, play titles and performers. In fact, as Ronald Vince (47-49) and Sir Arthur Pickard-Cambridge (71-72) point out, most of what we know about the legacy of ancient Greece's greatest playwrights comes from engravings such as these.

Beyond their usefulness as historical ciphers, artifacts such as the Arundelian Marbles become a metaphor that effectively illustrates the biased relationship that

persists between art and culture. Consider for a moment the selection process at the Festival of Dionysis. After evaluating a host of theatrical entries submitted by aspiring playwrights, the powers of socio-political governance in Athens arrived at a conscious selection of works that, in their opinion, demonstrated exemplary skill worthy of praise both present (performance and privilege) and future (addition to the historical record). These victorious plays and their playwrights presumably found favor with their judges because they somehow embodied the core values of Greek ideology in a manner superior to their competitors. Furthermore, by noting the three-to-one proportion of tragedy to comedy, for example, we can say that this ancient culture prized the former over the latter. The Arundelian Marbles also tell us that plays by Aeschylus and Sophocles achieved particular popularity, not only because their works survived the passage of time, but also because their names appear on the Victors List thirteen and eighteen times respectively, more than any other playwright. By carving this information in stone the socio-political structure literally and officially endorsed both the play's execution and its message and appropriated its values as the state's own, producing a select category of performance that I will refer to as *Hard Theater*¹. Like the firm, mandated engravings deliberately etched in stone, the Hard Theater is selective, appealing on a large scale but carefully aligned to the views of the state and, similar to the needs of the festival itself, financially consuming and lucrative. Dramatic giants such as *Oedipus*, *Antigone* and the

¹ My use of the terms "Hard" and "Soft" with regards to historical approaches to theater differs from Oscar Mandel's. While he employs the terms as a way to characterize differing reader response sympathies to the *Quijote* I will use the terms exclusively as I outline them, where the Hard Theater represents theater embraced by the social center and the Soft Theater represents performance from the social margin.

Oresteia trilogy dominate the landscape of Hard Greek Theater where, even more than two thousand years later, audiences continue to enjoy both their preservation and their performance. As documented examples supported in the present and intentionally preserved for future generations, the written history of performance favors the Hard Theater.

In contrast, naturally, we find the *Soft Theater*. These plays, though not selected for performance during the festivals, find themselves in varying degrees of opposition to ancient Greece's national values. Perhaps they demonstrated lesser technique in their composition or execution. Maybe they promoted, either explicitly, subtly or unintentionally, an ideology not in harmony with the state's. Typically not recorded on the stone tablets of history, these plays risk oblivion with the passage of time. This should not imply that the Soft Theater necessarily lacks popularity, only that it ultimately fails to garner the same degree of critical permanence as the Hard. Kept outside the main arena, and certainly esteemed in many ways lesser than its sanctioned counterparts, these plays nevertheless represent a larger, more diverse and, as its name implies, a more flexible spectrum of creative possibilities for the simple reason that one might conceivably use any number of apologies to disguise or discredit subversiveness: it's just for laughs; I didn't mean it; I made a mistake; no one will remember it anyway; etc. Seen in a more positive light, what the Soft lacks in respect it makes up for in variety. Consequently, as a broad and inclusive palate for creative exploration, the practical history of performance innovation favors the Soft Theater.

While plays like *Oedipus* evolved into poster children for the Hard Theater, ancient Greece found its Soft champion in the form of satyr plays. Half man and half goat, the mischievous satyrs of mythology possessed an insatiable appetite for food, drink and sex. Re-imagined for the stage, a satyr play appeared briefly in the closing moments of the festival's fringe to delight its audience with a bit of farce (Sutton 134). First, like the *entremés*, it was much shorter than the average tragedy, extending only a few hundred lines (Sutton 141). Second, a satyr play relied on exaggerated, even grotesque stock characters (possessing equally exaggerated genitalia), whose comic knack for fraudulent trickery served to humorously outwit the play's bothersome monster or ogre, similar to the *pícaros* and miscreants of the Spanish interlude (Sutton 138). Third, as Dana Sutton points out, satyr plays likewise distinguished themselves from the standard tragedy in their choice of "colloquial and comic diction involving un-tragic phrases, constructions, and vocabulary items" (142). The familiar language of the satyr play, combined with its controversial subject matter and peripheral inclusion in the festival, introduced enough creative distance between itself and the Hard Theater that, despite historical descriptions of their tremendous popularity, no satyr play ever received the singular honor of seeing its name carved into the Victors list. In fact, of the hundreds that must certainly have seen the stage, only one play has survived the rigors of time in its entirety: *Cyclops* by Euripides. Sutton goes on to observe that the tools of scholarship remain ill-equipped to approach this member of the Soft tradition: "[...] no study of the style of satyr plays has yet been undertaken. At this point we do not even possess a reliable and modern word-list [...]. Here, clearly, much valuable work remains for the future" (142). In the nearly

thirty years since that declaration first reached print very little research has emerged in answer to the challenge. Despite providing its audience with an entertaining burst of amusement, wit and convivial diversion, the satyr play, precursor to the *entremés*, could not overcome the negative stigma of its allegiance to the Soft Theater.

As time marched on and social preferences shifted in connection with evolving geopolitical dynamics, the Soft Theater continued to foster comic innovation in the margins of performance. The satyr play, absorbed into the Roman Empire, gave rise to the Atellan Farce (also called Oscan Games). These short, fatuous bits of risible slapstick comedy, also presented in the vulgar tongue, developed their repertoire of stock characters into what would eventually serve as inspiration for Renaissance Italy's formidable *Commedia dell' Arte* (in particular the characters *Macchus* and *Sannio*, forefathers to *Pulcinella* and *Harlequino* respectively). During the Middle Ages the embrace of Soft Theater expanded to include fragments of farce that, like the satyr play and the *entremés* both, survived by grafting themselves onto the Hard Theater. For example, mystery plays that dramatized Biblical events such as the creation of the world or the life of Jesus Christ occasionally inserted non germane scenes of comic buffoonery, such as the *Shepherd's Play*, found in the Wakefield Cycle². The Soft Theater of the Middle Ages also fostered a thriving exchange of jongleur and minstrel performances that took to streets, plazas, taverns and homes across Europe, playing music and reciting

² Included near the scene of the nativity, and the birth of Jesus Christ, the play depicts a clever thief named Mak who, along with his wife, Gill, attempts to trick a group of shepherds and steal their sheep. The ruse appears successful until Mak is discovered and comically beaten for his crime (Gassner 102-27).

stories such as *Le Garçon et l'aveugle*³, one of the oldest examples of French farse that dates to the thirteenth century. As examples of *recitative* performance, the influence of the Soft Theater even appears in the farcical adventures of Boccaccio's *Decamerone*⁴, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*⁵. In *Rabelais and His World* Mikhail Bakhtin describes the medieval relationship between the Hard Theater (what he calls "official") and the Soft Theater ("nonofficial" or "carnival") as a, "double aspect of the world and of human life" (6). Set against the more serious ecclesiastical rituals and ceremonies that dominated Medieval society, Bakhtin details a counter-culture of grotesque, comic theater in the form of feast days, ritual spectacles and linguistic expressions that, "[...] had been shaped during many centuries and that had defended the people's creativity in nonofficial forms" (72). He explains:

In the Middle Ages folk humor existed and developed outside the official sphere of high ideology and literature, but precisely because of its unofficial existence, it was marked by exceptional radicalism, freedom, and ruthlessness. Having on the one hand forbidden laughter in every

³ In a picaresque scene that predates *Lazarillo de Tormes*, the play depicts a servant boy that fools his "blind" master before beating and robbing him (193-206). As a comic example of the deceiver turned deceived the play enjoyed tremendous and widespread popularity on Soft Theater stages of medieval Europe.

⁴ Consider, for example, the *First Tale* from the Second Day. Martellino, an accomplished impersonator, pretends to be a paralytic in order to sneak his way through a large crowd and get a close-up look at the mortal remains of Treviso, a saintly and recently deceased German that the townspeople claim can perform miracle healings. The ruse grants Martellino access to the corpse but when a man from the crowd recognizes him as an actor an angry mob beats him and brings him before a judge. The prince hears news of the crime and, delighted by the mirth of its perpetrator, grants Martellino a full pardon (71-75). The plebian setting and simple plot combined with self-serving deception that ends in violence demonstrates a novelized treatment of the Soft Theater.

⁵ *The Miller's Tale*, for example, illustrates a comic scenario primed for the Soft Theater stage. Nicholas plots to consummate his lust for Alison, the young and attractive wife of John, his landlord, by tricking the man into believing the world will face a second flood. Nicholas succeeds with his intentions until Absolon, a rival for Alison's attention, interrupts the lovers and introduces a number of grotesque plot twists, including the alternate kissing and burning of persons' anuses, before chaos and commotion reveal Nicholas a deceiver and John a cuckold (114-41).

official sphere of life and ideology, the Middle Ages on the other hand bestowed exceptional privileges of license and lawlessness outside these spheres [...]. And medieval laughter knew how to use these privileges widely. (71-72)

Similar to the way the Greeks had envisioned the form and function of the satyr play, Bakhtin illustrates how the Soft or “nonofficial” Theater regularly employed exaggerated characters set in farcical situations, often using vulgar or obscene language, to provide a venue for creative expression and exploration that contrasted with the officially sanctioned forms of social comportment.

It is at this point in history, during the mid sixteenth century when carnivalesque performance exploded on stages across the continent and beyond, that the evolution of the Soft Theater reaches the Iberian Peninsula in a way that will eventually define the *entremés* and secure a pattern for its composition that directly influences both Quevedo’s interpretation of the genre and its relationship to the Hard Theater of Early Modern Spain. Yet in the brief decades before it arrives in his able hands the interlude will benefit from the perspective, tweaking and comic genius of playwrights such as Lope de Rueda, Miguel de Cervantes, Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza and Luis Quiñones de Benavente.

Lope de Rueda (1510?-1565?)

One cannot overestimate the value of Rueda’s contributions in the trajectory of the *entremés*. Modern scholars such as Alfredo Hermenegildo (19), N. D. Shergold (153), Hannah Bergman (Twayne 15), Eugenio Asensio (*Itinerario* 9) and Sharon Voros

(188), among many, many others, widely hail the theatrical skill of Lope de Rueda, often referring to him as the creator of the Spanish interlude and the father of Spanish theater. Even his contemporaries expressed their indebtedness to Rueda and his contribution to early modern theater. Cervantes, for example, in the prologue to his *Ocho comedias* showered his predecessor with praises, calling him “el primero que en España las [comedias] sacó de mantillas y las puso en tablado y vistió de gala y apariencia [...] [el] gran Lope de Rueda, varón insigne en la representación y el entendimiento [...] hombre excelente y famoso” (5). Asensio believes, as evidenced in Cervantes’s statement, that Rueda’s tremendous success and influence owes to his dual role as both actor and playwright:

La necesidad de juntar las funciones de actor y autor, el contacto inmediato con el público que abarcaba todas las clases sociales y todos los peldaños de cultura contribuyeron a la vitalidad de sus piezas cuyos espectadores resumían la comunidad nacional. (*Itinerario* 43)

Years of experience and expertise and as a stage actor provided Rueda with a keen sense of finding and fulfilling his audience’s desires, while life on the road exposed him to innovative theater techniques, particularly of Italian origin as well as others throughout the peninsula, ideas he then crafted into entertaining tales using a lens tailored to the needs of his local flair (Voros 190). This unique creative process reinvented the possibilities of comedic theater and established a mold that subsequent players would imitate for decades, if not centuries. As a result, Rueda’s plays, like seeds scattered throughout the country, fostered the development of the newly emerging Spanish performance and laid a foundation for a national theater that would ultimately produce the likes of Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina and Calderón de la Barca.

Lope de Rueda's *Pasos*, a collection of scenes published posthumously by Timoneda in 1567, represent a break with the scattered medieval practices toward the distillation of the *entremés* in three ways. First, perhaps returning to the Soft Theater's origins in the vulgar tongue, Rueda's characters spoke the local, jargon-crammed dialect of his audience. As a result, scholars, including Francisco Ruíz Ramón, credit him with the standardization of prose in the *entremés*:

Ese realismo que airea su producción dramática brota, precisamente, del lenguaje teatral [...] El realismo de los personajes es un hecho lingüístico, porque lo que los enraiza en la realidad es su palabra, no sus acciones ni su carácter. (98)

His success with prose gained followers as other performers adopted the vernacular as a linguistic approach to connecting with an audience. In fact, the uniform acceptance of prose for composing interludes marks a precedent that would not vary for more than fifty years after Rueda's death when Luis Quiñones de Benavente completes a shift to verse in 1620 (Bergman, Twayne 16). Second, during the century before him actors typically presented an assortment of traditional music, folktales, pantomime and acrobatics in banquet halls, cathedrals and city centers. Rueda's intimate awareness of audiences and stagecraft, building on the decision to use prose, produced a different kind of performance package, founded largely on unembellished comic skits taken from daily life resulting in simple and entertaining stories, easily staged by actors and easily recognized by audiences. Sharon Voros explains:

When we analyze Rueda's writing as a play text, it becomes clear that he has produced significant evidence of a dynamic acting tradition in early Modern Spain [...]. Rueda's sense of the stage and his ear for popular, witty speech patterns are perhaps his best legacy to this tradition. (194)

Third, influenced by the active and emerging *Commedia dell' Arte* in Italy, Rueda breathes new life and depth into the often vacuous use of stock characters. Instead, his characters possessed what Asensio calls “corpulencia y estado civil [...] mediante la densidad de la atmósfera y el verismo coloquial” (*Itinerario* 48). Despite the obvious touch of exaggeration applied to stock characters, Rueda’s *figuras* transcend the stereotypical façade to arrive at a healthy balance of satirical pleasure and pain, expressing just enough richness of personality to quickly endear them to audiences without seeming so real as to cause offense at feeling mocked.

Rueda’s greatest contribution to the *entremés*s may reside in the historical legacy he leaves his followers by virtue of his remarkable ability to bring validity and respect to the genre unlike anything else in the history of Soft Theater since the state-endorsed inclusion, albeit marginal, of satyr plays at the Festival of Dionysis. In Asensio’s estimation, “La invención de Rueda se ajustó de tal modo a las necesidades de su tiempo que embelesó a los menudos, agradó a críticos tan melindrosos como el Pinciano y formó escuela” (*Itinerario* 44). In his best and most popular play, *Las Aceitunas*, Rueda observes the dinner table conversation of a family of countryside fools. Toruvio, a simpleton, returns home from planting an olive shoot in the field. As he and his wife, Águeda, dream of an orchard full of olive trees and the bounteous harvest it will produce they also imagine the handsome price such a treasure will fetch for them at market. When their dimwitted daughter, Mencigüela, alternates obedience between her father’s and her mother’s wishes on the price for the as-of-yet nonexistent fruit the daydream turns ridiculously argumentative and even violent, with Mencigüela receiving the

repeated blows of her mother. Aloja, a neighbor, hears the commotion and arrives only to discover this household of idiots up in arms over fictitious fruit. With a successful and ideologically simple but new approach to staging farce, such as the family of fools in *Las Aceitunas*, Rueda sparked in his followers a renewed interest in the potential of Soft Theater.

Miguel de Cervantes (1547-1616)

Miguel de Cervantes represents an enigma in the chain of *entremesistas*, one that in many ways calls into question the validity of his inclusion among them. While he certainly participated in the writing of interludes, like countless other writers of his day, his contributions appear to have gone almost entirely unnoticed by his fellow playwrights. In all he produced only eight pieces that he published in 1615, under the title *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos*, pieces Cervantes admits in the *Dedicatoria al Conde de Lemos*, “no van manoseados ni han salido al teatro, merced a los farsantes que, de puro discretos, no se ocupan sino en obras grandes y de graves autores” (11). For a genre so intimately affiliated with a tradition of stage performance above literary publication, it is a wonder that such obscure and untested works attract any attention at all. Surprisingly, despite their humble origins, these eight works managed to graft themselves, even unceremoniously, into the highest and most prominent branches of the *entremés* family tree. History has not only admitted Cervantes into the ranks of the *entremesistas* but appears to have crowned him as its champion. Bruce Wardropper’s

anthology *Teatro Español del Siglo de Oro* (1970), like many such collections intent on providing the reader with a small taste of what the seventeenth-century Spanish stage has to offer, includes *El retablo de las maravillas* as the sole representative of the entire *entremés* genre. This trend permeates academics, performance and pedagogy alike as Cervantes's name appears in almost every discussion regarding the Spanish interlude (including this one). In fact, a quick Google search of "entremés Cervantes" receives more than 630,000 hits. Compare this to the same search for Luis Quiñones de Benavente, the playwright widely hailed as the most performed, prolific and expert of all *entremesistas*, which generates fewer than 69,000 hits, a difference of more than 900%⁶.

The reason behind this curious case of delayed success likely stems from Cervantes's dramatically different approach to the interlude, one that both elevates him above his contemporaries and precludes him from leaving a creative legacy. Lope de Rueda's theater, as we have seen, presented little more than a humorous veneer over local, stock characters engaged, perhaps even trapped, in comic situations. Like Rueda, Cervantes wrote mostly in prose and explored conventional, social themes. Yet, as Gareth Davies declares, his skilled hand as a novelist ultimately betrays the standard superficiality one might otherwise expect from an interlude: "His original contribution lay [...] in the novelistic focus he brought to the genre" (209). Using the lens of a novelist, Cervantes reinvents both the structure of the *entremés* and its characters. First,

⁶ Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza and Lope de Rueda, similarly regarded as giants in the business of interludes, do not even begin to approach these figures, receiving fewer than 9,000 and 24,000 hits respectively.

as Cory Reed explains, Cervantes imagines a “serious” depiction of farce by structuring his theater to allow for thoughtful analysis:

In his theatrical works as in his novels, Cervantes turns his critical eye inward in order to reconsider the mechanisms of plot, character, and theme: the *mythos*, *ethos*, and *dianoia* of Aristotelian tradition. As a result of changes in these internal components, Cervantes’s interludes resemble works of prose fiction in certain ways and depart radically from the accepted drama of the time. (19)

Unlike Rueda, Hurtado de Mendoza, and Quiñones de Benavente, where hermeneutic tools of breaking down the narrative structure often exposes a deficiency in weighty substance beneath the façade, Cervantes’s *entremeses*, like his *Novelas ejemplares*, not only endure such scrutiny but continue commenting on social practices and institutions in a way that sets them apart from traditional farce. This novelization of the interlude, not surprisingly, has historically fared better than those of his contemporaries who attained tremendous popular acclaim on stage. Thanks in part to Spain’s broken performance history, Cervantes’s Soft Theater managed to endure and even thrive by distancing itself from the standard interlude formula and, in particular, through its affiliation with the Hard Theater’s inscription into the written archive. Indeed, Edward Friedman recognizes that, “Although there is not a large body of commentary on the *entremeses*, readers and critics are almost unanimous in their praise of the dramatic interludes” (71). Given his literary approach to theater it is no surprise that in readers, not performers, Cervantes’s theater finds its greatest supporters.

Second, Cervantes’s interludes explore characters’ internal motivations, also by applying the principles and practices of the novel, where two-dimensional *figuras* acquire

a portion of brain and heart that stretches them into pseudo-humans of three dimensions.

Asensio explains:

Cervantes alía en el entremés la continuidad de la narración, la consistencia imaginativa de las situaciones con la variedad de personajes rápida e inolvidablemente esbozos. Frente a los nuevos pobladores del entremés, cada vez más puntualizados por una obsesión o rasgo definitorio, propone personas amalgamados de seriedad y jocosidad, contemplados a la vez desde la risa irónica y la simpatía benévola. Pinta no entes de una pieza—lo que llamo *figuras*—, sino seres con una sombra de complejidad, con una alternancia de sentimientos que con intención moderna tendríamos la tentación de llamar caracteres. (*Itinerario* 101)

This “shadow of complexity” cast by the characters on stage draws a sharp contrast with their counterparts in the works of his rivals. No longer soulless targets of ridicule, these characters bear strong enough resemblance to the audience to cause us to shift slightly in our seats with discomfort. Friedman explains, “Humor, irony, stylistic vigor, and social satire mark Cervantes’s interludes, generally considered more profound and more biting than those of his contemporaries” (69). This uncharacteristically complex brand of interlude would certainly have come as a surprise to an audience accustomed to the otherwise comfortable buffoonery of other *entremeses*. Perhaps for this reason the theater’s *autores* estimated that the plays would fail on stage chose instead not to perform them.

Unfortunately, despite its contribution to the literary treasure of the Golden Age, this more profound approach to the interlude failed to garner support from fellow playwrights. Cervantes, as he confessed, likely never saw his works performed on stage and no other *entremesistas* followed in his footsteps. Rejected by his contemporaries yet adored by history, Cervantes’s theater stands alone. Nevertheless, his most popular and

arguably best piece, *El retablo de las maravillas*, elegantly demonstrates the effectiveness of the novelized interlude, a technique Asensio describes as “la armonía de situación y caracterización, la fidelidad a la observación, la madurez reflexiva que Cervantes esconde tras la comicidad” (*Itinerario* 109-110). The play follows the exploits of Chirinos and Chanfalla, two con artists who swindle a group of ignorant townsfolk. Eager to maintain the supposed purity of their lineage, the simpletons of the village attest to “seeing” apparitions made visible only to Christians unpossessing of Jewish ancestry. One by one, rats, bulls and even biblical Samson emerge from a puppet stage the villagers falsely believe possesses magical powers. As a clear example of biting social commentary, doubly framed inside a pair of concentric stages, we might interpret the tremendous popularity today of this and Cervantes’s other interludes by recognizing them as examples, not of what the genre really was but, rather, what it might have become: an unusual matrimony of the Hard and Soft Theaters.

Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza (1586-1644)

While Asensio refers to the lesser-studied Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza as an “astro menor” (*Itinerario* 111), equal in praise and glory to the likes of Villaizán, Villamediana and Montalbán, the Biscayan poet of aristocratic blood made significant contributions to the development and appraisal of the *entremés*. Mendoza enjoyed his big theatrical break in 1617. As a seasoned poet in the court of Philip III, Mendoza participated in a royal inauguration that included a variety of celebrations and

performances where he likely composed his first piece of theater for the occasion.

Davies describes the warm reception that greeted its debut, granting instant success and a future full of opportunity to its playwright (207). Only a year later in 1618, Mendoza's now famous play, *El ingenioso entremés del examinador Miser Palomo*, would emerge as the first solo publication of an interlude in Spain. Building on this victory, Mendoza would continue writing theater and poetry by successfully courting the corridors of power in a variety of official capacities at court and even participate as a member of the prestigious *Academia de Madrid*.

Gareth Davies's book, *A Poet at Court: Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza* (1971), represents the largest and perhaps most complete biography and critical analysis of the poet's life and works to date. Davies explains that Mendoza's acceptance into theatrical circles occurred at a crucial phase in the development of the interlude. In 1615, when Cervantes publishes his *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nuevos*, two of his eight interludes appeared in verse rather than prose. The emergence of Mendoza plays a significant role in the midst of this tenuous moment of shifting approaches to theater, when playwrights began exploring and experimenting with the possibilities and definitions of this short theatrical form. Davies affirms:

Antonio de Mendoza's specific contribution to the genre was made at this point of transformation in the interlude's history. Whereas the interludists had hitherto shown a preference for prose without excluding poetry as the occasional alternative, (either sporadically or throughout), Mendoza now chose a specifically verse entremés, which he tied so delicately, yet inexorably, to lyrical expression that he set the style for subsequent practitioners of the *género chico*. (209)

With deep roots in a distinctly poetic tradition, Mendoza provided a substantial impetus toward not only the acceptance but also the standardization of verse and paving the way for Luis Quiñones de Benavente, who would eventually give closure to the debate.

Yet this was not a hostile takeover. As a personal friend of the nobility and partner with many of Spain's most popular playwrights, including Francisco de Quevedo and the great Tirso de Molina, Mendoza represented a uniquely positioned point of contact between the Hard and the Soft Theater and used his privileged status to promote the interlude and its inclusion on stage, granting it legitimacy that it had not experienced before. Asensio notes that Mendoza, together with Benavente, "ennoblecieron el género menor, ambos gozaron el favor de la corte que, sin rebajarse, pudo aplaudir el mismo teatro chico que engolosinaba al pueblo madrileño" (*Itinerario* 122). The embrace from authority similarly shaped the expectations of the public as audience members became more accustomed to viewing the *comedia*, not as a unified whole, but rather segmented and even augmented by the interlude. *Entremesistas* who followed, such as Benavente and Quevedo, owe their license of performance, where they could rub shoulders with and exert influence over the *comedia*, to the doors of opportunity opened in part by Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza.

Mendoza's best and most popular plays, his two-part series based on the *figura* of Miser Palomo, together with his *Famoso entremés de Getafe*, represent what Emilio Cotalerlo y Mori called, "otras tantas joyas de nuestra literatura" (lxxii). *Miser Palomo* depicts a series of character types at court, the *tomajón*, the braggart, the *necio*, the *gracioso*, and others, who each approach the examiner seeking his evaluation and

instruction. Using the figure of the witty examiner on stage, as both witness and judge to the unbecoming and even ridiculous attitudes at court, the play becomes a mouthpiece for the satirical observations of the playwright, himself a firsthand observer of the realities and hypocrisies of courtly life.

Luis Quiñones de Benavente (1595?-1651)

History reveals very little about the personal life of Luis Quiñones de Benavente, without question one of the Spanish theater's greatest *entremesistas*. His exact date of birth remains a mystery, although we know that he hailed from Toledo, perhaps in 1595. His parentage is also dubious. It seems unlikely that he came from high society, as his name never accompanies the typical titles of nobility, although in print it often appears with *licenciado*, a designation Cotarelo y Mori believes more likely refers to his status as a priest (lxxv)⁷. Hannah Bergman, for one, entertains the curious possibility that the poet was in fact the illegitimate son of a traveling actor, Luis Quiñones, known to have performed in plays written by Lope de Vega (20). Regardless of his origins, by as early as 1613, Benavente had already begun to demonstrate proficiency in play writing and had even won several awards for his work⁸.

As a writer of interludes, Benavente's contributions fall into three principle categories. First, the sheer volume of his work exercised a tremendous influence over the

⁷ A note on Benavente's death certificate identifies him as a *sacerdote*.

⁸ See Bergman 20-21.

theater of his contemporaries. Cotarelo y Mori estimates that over the course of twenty years Benavente may have written as many as nine hundred interludes (lxxviii), a fantastic number that Bergman concedes as at least possible, in theory, albeit unlikely. Instead, Bergman settles on 150 plays known by scholars today as belonging to the poet, a number that she describes “still far exceeds that of any other *entremesistas*” (22). This prodigious undertaking, combined with Benavente’s personal association with all of the most well-known playwrights of his day, including Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Juan Ruíz de Alarcón, would have rendered his brand of theater ubiquitous for audience and *autor* alike. Such a theatrical tour de force inspired countless other playwrights, including France’s Molière, and expanded the repertoire of social themes and introduced new comic figures, making them readily available to fellow writers. Composing exclusively in verse, he decisively expunged the use of prose in short theater. Benavente’s popularity also endured much longer than many of his associates as his plays enjoyed continuous publication well into the eighteenth century. Surprisingly, despite the trend of seventeenth-century writers to dabble in all written genres, and considering the quantity of theater Benavente actually produced, no evidence has surfaced that he ever composed even a single *comedia*, although he did write a handful of independent poems. Having discovered his mastery of the brief, comical art form, Benavente appears to have felt no need to trifle with his success in other ventures. Beloved, respected, omnipresent and committed, his name eventually became synonymous with the *entremés*.

Second, in contrast to the preferences of his contemporaries, and certainly breaking with the Soft Theater’s connection with the rollicking, phallic-driven orgies of

Greek satyr plays, Benavente rejected the use of vulgarity and scandal on stage in favor of what we might recognize as “family friendly” comedy. “While Quiñones de Benavente does not hesitate to use parody and verbal pyrotechnics,” writes Diane Iglesias, “he does not sink to a vulgar level. Stock comic characters and situations are presented in a tasteful manner, and potentially explosive situations are usually resolved with good humor as the characters come together in a final dance or song” (141).

Instead, as Bergman points out, Benavente used a carefully developed plot that exploited cleverness and surprise, to invigorate his theater:

Interludes which tell a story tend to revolve around a deception of some sort: a theft, an elopement, or, very often, a practical joke (*burla*). They celebrate the triumph of a superior intelligence. Suspense is created by ignorance, until the last moment, of which character will turn out to possess that quality. The motif of the deceiver deceived, in all its variations, is a favorite one; sometimes there is an apparent reversal, in which a fool turns out to be cleverer than the others. There are also plays in which we know from the start *who* will succeed, but are kept guessing as to *how*. (27)

This should not imply that Benavente’s plays avoid unseemly or sinful situations, such as those involving adultery, lying or stealing. These circumstances have always formed the backbone of the *entremés*. Yet Benavente withheld from engaging in the more explicit content in which his peers occasionally indulged, favoring a more affable approach to comedy that allowed him to reach a broader audience by not morally polarizing them through controversy and obscenity. As if following the recommendations set forth in Lope’s *Arte nuevo*, these interludes generate intrigue by maintaining secrets rather than exposing intimacy. Furthermore, Benavente’s sanitized approach carried the added bonus of sparing him the scorn and censure of the *Santo Oficio*, often predisposed to

reprove and crop back the theater, the *entremés* in particular. Instead, his reputation made it easier for his works to find stages and publishers eager to embrace them. In this sense, the quantity of Benavente's work, coupled with its quality, allowed the interlude to clean up its image and expand in popularity.

Third, Benavente grafted new elements onto the *entremés* formula, namely music and dance. While Hurtado de Mendoza's background as a poet helped the interlude incorporate verse into its basic makeup, Benavente's skill at composing music and lyrics further modified the artform and increased its appeal to audience members. Prior *entremesistas* typically composed only in prose and ended the event by beating or punishing the guilty parties. Regarding the incorporation of any musical elements into the performance, such as *loas*, *bailes* and *saraos*, playwrights often deferred to the prerogative or needs of the *autor*. This potpourri may have rendered the event somewhat disjointed, as the performance's various parts bore little or no thematic connection to one another beyond, perhaps, the use of the same actors in the same space. Benavente, on the other hand, blended his own song and dance into the interlude in a way that used the music to complement and reinforce the play's theme. Instead of concluding the event on a violent note, Benavente's interludes delighted the audience with a musical one.

Asensio explains how this decision altered the most basic definition of the *entremés*:

Guiado no por teorías, sino por el espíritu e instinto de su época que engendró la ópera italiana y la zarzuela española, mestiza la palabra con la danza y el canto, creando o fijando definitivamente castas nuevas en que nadie le igualó: la loa entremesada, el baile entremesado, el entremés cantado. (*Itinerario* 125)

As with Benavente's rejection of vulgarity, the hybridization of the interlude, the product of its blending with music and dance, made the play more palatable to a broader audience. It also eased the demands placed on busy *autores* by providing them with a more diverse performance package and by harmonizing the various theatrical subsets into a more cohesive whole.

Given the vast body of Benavente's work, it becomes difficult to select a single, most popular play as representative of his writing style and sensibilities. Bergman organizes her study into the following categories: plays in the realistic manner; plays in the fanciful vein; and plays for special occasions. *Gorigori* represents a fanciful comedy of intrigue involving Don Estupendo, the owner of a balcony that overlooks Madrid. With a bullfight going on in the plaza below, the house reels with excited guests, until a knock at the door informs them that the crown has made the balcony available to a visiting Italian dignitary. Unwilling to give up his choice view of the spectacle, Estupendo quickly has himself sewn into a curtain. The parodied dignitary arrives and the houseguests inform him that their host has suddenly died of the plague, leaving the entire apartment contaminated. Once the visitor flees in terror the clever guests return to the balcony, leaving Estupendo trapped inside the curtain. The *Entremés de los condes fingidos*, on the other hand, takes a more realistic approach. Pedro, and his accomplice Osuna, disguise themselves as counts in order to secure a promise of marriage from a wealthy marquise they learn has just arrived in search of a husband, only to discover that she has played a similar trick on them. Once revealed, Pedro flees the scene of the crime and Osuna, admiring the wit in this perfidious woman, agrees to marry her anyway.

Critics and scholars, both past and present, join in praise of Benavente as the king of the *entremés*. Iglesias writes, “Undoubtedly, the master of this genre in Spain is Luis Quiñones de Benavente” (140). She continues:

Professional competition and rivalry were common among the writers of *comedias* and *entremeses* in the seventeenth century. From all accounts, however, Luis Quiñones de Benavente was universally acclaimed by all. Besides his reputation as an outstanding writer of interludes, he was considered a talented musician with a pleasing personality. His brilliant wit was highly praised. He brought the interlude, as a genre, to its highest point. (142)

Yet, despite his pleasant demeanor and popular appeal, Benavente’s crown has not rested easy, if he retains it at all. His reputation as the most skilled and prolific of all *entremesistas* has instead, as we have seen, become eclipsed by the praise and attention given to his untested competitor and father of the formidable *Quijote*, Miguel de Cervantes. In fact, following their publication in the first half of the eighteenth century, Benavente’s plays received little or no scholarly attention for nearly 150 years until 1872, when Cayetano Rosell republished a 1645 collection of Benavente’s theater titled *Jocoseria*. Bergman credits this invaluable event, together with Cotarelo y Mori’s 1911 publication of all known *entremeses*, with reviving interest in Spain’s short theater and with preserving the name of Luis Quiñones de Benavente (132).

Francisco de Quevedo (1580-1645)

By the time Francisco de Quevedo approached the interlude the Soft genre had already experienced a great deal of transformation and experimentation. Greek satyr

plays of bacchanalian mischief gave rise to Roman Atellan Farces that would later develop into the Italian *Commedia dell' Arte*. As performance collided and interacted with religion during the Middle Ages, the Soft Theater learned to survive in the margins until Lope de Rueda organized, repackaged and reintroduced it to Spanish audiences. Despite proficiency in the novel, even Cervantes tried his hand at composing in the Soft tradition, benefitting future generations of theater enthusiasts. Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza would ply his skill as a poet and invite the interlude into the corral, where Luis Quiñones de Benavente would use music, dance and simple comedy to saturate the theater-going public with lively humor, leaving them hungry for more. When Quevedo enters the picture he finds a clearly-defined performance tradition offering the playwright tremendous satirical possibilities and a ready-made audience primed to accept a healthy dose of mischief on stage.

It is unclear precisely how Quevedo became interested in writing for the theater. Pablo Jauralde Pou's detailed and exhaustive biography of the man (1999) comprises nearly 1,000 pages but devotes fewer than ten to Quevedo's experience in theater, often describing it as an appendage to his work as a poet. Quevedo undoubtedly witnessed numerous stage productions in his day, both in public playhouses and private demonstrations at court. Furthermore, he is known to have employed his craft on several occasions, by request, in celebration of royal events. Maybe the unique potential of the *entremés*, as a brief development around a humorous theme, appealed to his satirical style. "El entremés tiene la clarísima función de hacer reír al espectador," writes Jauralde Pou. "Y Quevedo hace reír" (491). Bakhtin likewise identifies Quevedo literary style as

one particularly inclined to “carnival imagery” (11). Of course, as a consummate writer engaged in a variety of literary genres, perhaps he simply felt obliged or even inspired to try his hand at play writing now and again in the same way that he experimented with poetry, novels and essays. Notwithstanding his personal motivations at playwrighting, Jauralde Pou estimates that Quevedo composed interludes during two brackets of time separated by his voyage to Italy. From 1606 to 1613, Jauralde Pou believes Quevedo wrote plays largely in prose that “muestran una cierta cercanía de tema y estilo con el *Buscón* y los primeros *Sueños*” (490). After returning to Spain he continued producing theater from 1623 to 1628, this time, thanks to Mendoza and Benavente, in verse. While evidence confirms that his plays, unlike those of Cervantes, did enjoy a certain amount of performance (though nowhere near as pervasive as Benavente’s), his scant exercise in the genre suggests that Quevedo’s interest in writing for the stage remained cursory at best.

Today accepts that Quevedo wrote relatively few completed interludes (twelve total remain), a single extant *comedia*, a grab-bag of dances and songs, and a handful of theatrical fragments that never came to fruition. As a result, history understandably tends to overlook his theatrical contribution. Instead, we remember him for his wealth of *conceptista* poetry, his picaresque *Buscón*, his civic-minded *Política de Dios*, and his satirical musings in *Sueños y discursos*. On a more personal level, we remember Quevedo for his unusual appearance, his rise and fall from courtly graces and the notorious feuds with his many enemies, in particular his *culteranista* nemesis, Luis de Góngora. Unafraid to wield his pen like a sword, his fierce wit and sharp language produced more than one opponent of his work and yet, despite all the insults, criticisms

and inflammatory remarks hurled at the man, it appears that his talent for composing interludes went unchallenged. Asensio points out that, “Los enemigos de don Francisco le negaron todo menos su talento de entremesista” (*Itinerario* 9). As we shall see, Quevedo’s interpretation of the interlude demonstrated a level of praiseworthy skill comparable to that of any of his competitors. Donald Bleznick writes, “As a playwright Quevedo achieved notable success in his short dramatic pieces, the popular entremeses” (151). His unique treatment of that formula and the contributions he made to it, as well as an analysis of his surviving *entremeses*, will comprise the remainder of this investigation.

Analyzing Quevedo’s body of theater immediately presents the problem of determining which works belong to the poet and which do not. Typical for the time period, long before the establishment of copyright law, plays and their playwrights often appeared in advertisements and on stage without a formal connection linking the writer to his or her work. This discrepancy allowed lesser playwrights, hoping to eke out a living, to outright plagiarize the popular creations of another. Likewise, greedy *autores* and publishers, hoping to generate a little additional revenue for their trade, regularly advertised one poet’s play as the handiwork of another more famous one. As the volume of theater, both published and performed, grew in response to Spain’s insatiable thirst for theater, the notion of proprietorship lay buried and forgotten under a mound of hidden agendas. As a well-known and popular poet of his day, Quevedo’s oft-evoked name may present a greater hindrance to identifying his hand than the tangible discovery of authentic documents. To date, at least 21 interludes and 4 *comedias* (or fragments of

comedias) are or have been associated with Quevedo, many of which are considered by scholars as apocryphal⁹. For the purpose of this investigation, I will limit my analysis to the following 12 surviving interludes that current scholarship accepts as legitimate creations of our poet: *Diego Moreno*, *Bárbara*, *La destreza*, *La polilla de Madrid*, *La vieja Muñatones*, *El Marión*, *El marido fantasma*, *La venta*, *El niño y Peralvillo de Madrid*, *Los enfadosos*, *La ropavejera* and *Los refranes del viejo celoso*¹⁰. In an effort to sort the accredited from the imposters I provide the following outline, that alleges to synthesize more than one hundred years of research into the question of authorship regarding every play bearing Quevedo's name.

Interludes positively attributed to Quevedo:

Diego Moreno, *Bárbara*, *La destreza*, *La polilla de Madrid*, and *La vieja Muñatones*

These five plays did not emerge into the light of scholarship until 1965 with Eugenio Asensio's *Itinerario del entremés*. As he explains in the Prologue, Asensio found himself working in a large library in Portugal when he came across Quevedo's name included on a list of authors and their works in the *Catálogo dos manuscritos da Bibliotheca Pública Eborensis*, published by Joaquim Heliodoro de Cunha Rivara

⁹ Asensio believes Quevedo likely wrote more than 21 interludes but that many of these works were lost (*Itinerario* 177).

¹⁰ Among the available editions of Quevedo's theater I will refer to José Manuel Blecua's Castalia edition, published in 1981, as the basis of my textual analysis. It represents, in my opinion, the most thorough, accurate and complete edition presently available to the reader.

(Lisbon, 1868). He describes that the sight caused him no emotional rush of discovery, for while he did not recognize six of the seven titles, “no escasean las copias de obras falsamente atribuidas a don Francisco de Quevedo” (*Itinerario* 7). Furthermore, he felt certain that his predecessors, Aureliano Fernández Guerra and Luís Astrana Marín, must have come across this record somewhere amid their careful and rigorous research and later dismissed them as illegitimate (*Itinerario* 7). Nevertheless, while passing through Alentejo by train, he decided to pay a visit to the library in order to examine the item more closely. In this Évora manuscript, as he calls it, he immediately identified two of the seven *entremeses* (*La venta* and *Los enfadosos*, which he knew as *El zurdo alanceador*) as belonging to Quevedo’s hand (895-913, 914-934). The remaining five plays, *Diego Moreno* (745-82), *Bárbara* (860-94), *La destreza* (935-52), *La polilla de Madrid* (953-87), and *La vieja Muñatones* (999-1018), represented convincing discoveries that “no solo debían ser entregados provisionalmente a Quevedo por la resuelta atribución, sin rivalidad conocida, de un manuscrito coetáneo, sino que los rasgos internos respaldaban su derecho de propiedad” (*Itinerario* 7-8). Upon further research, Asensio arrived at the opinion that Quevedo likely composed three of the five *entremeses* (*Bárbara*, *Diego Moreno* and *La vieja Muñatones*) between 1618 and 1620, before the genre had unofficially adopted verse over prose. The remaining two, he believed, did not appear until later, perhaps around 1624. Certain in the validity of his findings, Asensio declared, “Podemos confiadamente—por falta de otro rival y porque el manuscrito parece merecedor de crédito—dárselos al autor de la *Vida del Buscón*, cuyos chistes, tipos y situaciones reviven en variaciones teatrales en estas piezas” (*Itinerario*

199). Asensio's *Itinerario del entremés* represents one of the most important and respected studies of the Golden Age interlude, not only for its easily accessible and thorough approach to the genre and its chief playwrights, but also because in the Appendix he includes these five plays in their entirety, making them available to fellow and future scholars.

During the more than forty years that have passed since the publication of *Itinerario*, Asensio's achievement and authority have only grown in strength. In 1981, José Manuel Blecua edited a Castalia edition of Quevedo's works wherein he includes not only the seven interludes long-since associated with the poet but also Asensio's five relatively recent additions with the following affirmation:

Aunque no puede ponerse la mano en el fuego para garantizar una atribución, y más entremeseril, en este caso, tanto por los temas, lengua y estilo, cuanto por la autoridad del código (donde además se encuentran otras compilaciones ya publicadas) sí los podemos ahijar a don Francisco sin demasiadas complicaciones, al menos hasta que se demuestre que no son suyos. (15)

Like Blecua, I find Quevedo's imaginings and style at work in all five of these *entremeses* and, in the absence of any research to the contrary, convincing or otherwise, I will consider them as his authentic literary progeny for the purpose of this investigation.

Entremés famoso «El Marión» (two parts)

It seems certain that this two-part interlude unquestionably belongs to Quevedo, since every published collection of his theater includes them. Nevertheless, Cotarelo y Mori reveals subtle suspicions about the pieces in a footnote where he calls the original

edition (collected and published by Francisco Juan de Velazquez in Cádiz, 1646) as “sospechosa” (lxxiv). He does not, however, explain the cause of those suspicions and ultimately includes the plays in his collection without bothering to mention them at all in his preliminary study. Asensio perhaps clarifies Cotarelo y Mori’s uncertainty by admitting that the extant 1646 *suelta* is “corrompid[a] en extremo” (*Itinerario* 232), but he also accepts the plays as Quevedo’s handiwork. Blecua’s edition includes a note, appearing on the original, that reads “Un memorilla detestable hubo por desgracia de dictar estos dos entremeses, y diéronse a la estampa de tan lastimosa manera, que no hay media de reproducirlos mientras no aparezcan los originales” (11). While the quality of the text appears suspect, its authorship, at least in the minds of its critics, does not.

Entremés del marido fantasma

While Asensio (*Itinerario* 235) notes that the earliest known publication of this play appears in Valencia in the 1643 *Ramillete*, he admits that a superior edition from Madrid, *Las tres musas últimas castellanas* (108-16), compiled by Quevedo’s nephew, Don Pedro Alderete Quevedo y Villegas, was published in 1670, twenty-five years after the poet’s death. Scholars, including Cotarelo y Mori, Astrana Marin, Asensio and Blecua, appear to accept with certainty the contents of this posthumous edition as works belonging to Quevedo.

Entremés de la venta

This play first appears with anonymous authorship in a 1635 publication of Tirso de Molina's *comedias*¹¹, and again in 1640, this time in a collection of *entremeses* by various authors published in Zaragoza and attributed to Felix Persio Bertisio¹². While Cotarelo y Mori (lxxiii) believes Quevedo used this name as a pseudonym, scholars such as Francisco Rodríguez Marín (70) and Edward M. Wilson (126-136) believe that the name, and perhaps the text as well, belonged to a lesser poet of the day. Quevedo's actual name becomes officially connected to the play by 1670 when the work surfaces for a third time in *Las tres musas* (117-23). The series of anonymous and cloaked publications leaves Cotarelo y Mori uncertain about accepting the work as belonging to the poet: "De Quevedo no parece hallarse en el lenguaje y giros idiomáticos rastro alguno" (lxxiii). Asensio disagrees. Looking at the *jácara* that accompanies the piece, he declares that the play "es reconocidamente de don Francisco" (*Itinerario* 231). Asensio emerges convinced of the play's authenticity when it makes a surprise appearance, albeit with a few differences "de escasa importancia" (*Itinerario* 231), in the Évora manuscript (914-934) alongside the *Entremés de los enfadosos*. Blecua (117), siding with Asensio's careful and thorough scholarship, agrees and accepts the piece as belonging to Quevedo.

¹¹ *Segunda parte de las comedias del maestro Tirso de Molina*. Madrid, 1635. (See also Blecua 85.)

¹² *Entremeses nuevos de diversos autores*. Zaragoza, 1640. (See also Blecua 85.)

Entremés del niño y Peralvillo de Madrid

Originally published in *Las tres musas* (95-102), the editors of every edition of Quevedo's theater unanimously accept the play as Quevedo's. I find that while the piece strays from the typical interlude formula, and in fact bears greater resemblance to that of the auto, the language and style appear consistent with Quevedo's other examples of theater. Having thus far discovered no specific evidence to contradict the work's authenticity, I likewise consider the play as the Quevedo's own.

Entremés de los enfadosos (also known as *El zurdo alanceador*)

Blecua (123) indicates that the play first appeared in a 1628 publication by Diego Flamenco in Segovia, under the title, *El zurdo alanceador*, only to appear later in the Évora manuscript (914-34) with the new, and in Asensio's (*Itinerario* 199) estimation, original title, *Entremés de los enfadosos*, a phenomenon the critic attributes to personal preferences on the part of the publisher. Similar to the debate surrounding *El Marión*, scholars unanimously attribute the text to Quevedo even though a comparison of the language used in the two versions includes what Asensio describes as "notables variantes" (*Itinerario* 199).

Entremés de la ropavejera

Originally published in *Las tres musas* (103-107), the editors of every edition of Quevedo's theater unanimously accept the play as Quevedo's. Likewise, I find that the play reflects both Quevedo's style and his technical skill and accept the play as his handiwork.

Entremés de los refranes del viejo celoso

Research into the authorship of this play reveals a complicated and troubling past with equally nebulous conclusions. Cotarelo y Mori (lxxiv) appears to reject Quevedo's claim to the piece, citing Aureliano Fernández-Guerra who calls *Refranes del viejo celoso* a plagiarism of another *entremés*, *El cesto y el sacristán*, by Francisco de Castro (Barrera, *Catálogo*, "Teatro de don Francisco de Quevedo Villegas," no. 25). Astrana Marín, on the other hand, turns the accusation of plagiarism in reverse and alleges to have observed Quevedo's autograph on the manuscript in preparation for his 1932 Aguilar edition of the poet's works (205). Blecua describes that James O. Crosby, the actual owner of the manuscript, disputed Astrana Marín's evaluation of the autograph despite confessing that the style of the text shares enough in common with the *Sueño de la muerte* that "bien pudiera ser de Quevedo" (141). Asensio weighs in on the matter and, returning to the source of the confusion, makes the following statement:

Aureliano Fernández Guerra, arrastrado por su entusiasmo de coleccionista e incapaz probablemente de discriminar entre letras

generacionales semejantes, afirmó en el *Catálogo* de La Barrera que poseía los autógrafos de dos piezas inéditas: *Los refranes del viejo celoso* y *El hospital de los mal casados*. Estos autógrafos, después de impresos por Astrana, desaparecieron del horizonte, sin que sepamos dónde paran, ni podamos examinarlos. Por ello necesitamos recurrir a conjeturas basadas en la reproducción diplomática de Astrana. (*Itinerario* 226).

In Asensio's view, the play admittedly reveals Quevedo's imitation of Cervantes's literary approach to the *entremés* but if, in fact, we call the work a plagiary, "se ha plagiado a sí mismo elevando al tablado los fantasmas folklóricos por él evocados en *El sueño de la muerte*" (*Itinerario* 227). Ultimately, Asensio believes the text, albeit an imperfect copy from the original, most likely came from Quevedo's pen. Blecua, inclined to trust Asensio's authority and opinion, nevertheless admits certain reservations with regards to the play's connection to Quevedo: "El problema es de muy difícil solución, porque la lengua tampoco es muy quevedesca" (*Itinerario* 12-13). He eventually relents and attributes the play to Quevedo but amends his decision with the following caveat: "Yo lo incluyo con todas las reservas posibles, esperando que algún estudioso demuestre de quien es" (13). Having thus far encountered nothing in my own research that would contradict either Asensio or Blecua's attribution of *Los refranes* to Quevedo, I have likewise included the piece in this study on the grounds that at the very least, as we shall see, it bears the intellectual fingerprint of the poet if not his autograph.

Lost or fragmentary works positively attributed to Quevedo:

Caraquí me voy, cara aquí me iré (lost)

Asensio (*Itinerario* 196) barely mentions this *entremés* to declare the work “perdido,” its name having surfaced in a list of *entremés* titles¹³. To this scant appreciation of the piece, Barrera’s *Catálogo bibliográfico y biográfico del teatro español antiguo* makes reference to the *Tribunal de la justa venganza* wherein the interlude appears in conjunction with a sharply disapproving response from an audience that allegedly called the play “friísimo” and gave it a “bien siluado” (15), the dreaded hallmark of Golden Age rejection. Perhaps fortunately for today’s scholars, no manuscript or publication of the text has surfaced.

Pero Bázquez de Escamilla (fragment)

Only about two scenes long, this unfinished work thrusts its characters into the dark of night below the balcony of one Doña Ana, the love interest of Don Pedro, who, like Shakespeare’s Romeo gazing upon Juliet, showers the maiden with poetic imagery and allusions to classical gods. Naturally, even as a work in embryo, the fragment leans toward the development of a larger *comedia de capa y espada*.

¹³ Barrera y Leirado, Cayetano Alberto de la. *Catálogo bibliográfico y biográfico del teatro español antiguo*. Alicante: Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes, 1999.

Fragmento que de letra del autor estaba escrito en el reverso de una carta (fragment)

Comprising only 44 lines and, as the title indicates, composed on the back of a letter, this fragment of what the author may have envisioned as the seed of a full-length *comedia* represents a brief dialogue between Don Juan and Don Rodrigo regarding the latter's surprise at having only yesterday married a certain Doña Ana and already feeling the sinking inclinations of repentance. "Quien alcanzó lo que quiere," sighs Rodrigo, "nunca quiere lo que alcanza."¹⁴ Miguel Artigas formally published the fragment for the first time in 1927, as part of his *Teatro inédito de don Francisco de Quevedo*. The fragment has also appeared in subsequent editions, including that of Felicidad Buendía (642-43) and Astrana Marín (651-52).

Works falsely attributed to Quevedo:

El muerto fingido (also known as *El muerto*, *Entremés de pandurico*, or *Poyatos y Pandurico*)

A 1668 collection of works by various authors entitled *Verdones del Parnaso* (Madrid) lists the play as belonging to a certain Luís de Filoaga, though nothing is known

¹⁴ This quote appears in volume II of Felicidad Buendía's 1967 edition of Quevedo's complete works (643).

regarding a playwright of that name. In spite of this, both Cotarelo y Mori and Astrana Marín apparently found reason to attribute the play to Quevedo, although the former admits that it represents a foray “de poco valor” (lxxiii). Ironically, the interlude appears to have garnered great popularity with audiences and *autores* alike who reinvented and restaged the piece again and again under a variety of re-imagined titles, a fact that makes some scholars hesitant to attach its name to a single author with any degree of certainty. Asensio (*Itinerario* 196) calls the play a “refundición” falsely attributed to Quevedo, and explores the text briefly in order to demonstrate inconsistencies of form and function that alienate it from the poet’s style. Furthermore, he demonstrates (*Itinerario* 222) how its adherence to the *commedia dell’ arte* tradition better aligns the play with Filoaga’s handiwork, as the *Verdones* text suggested, and concludes “sobran argumentos externos e internos para darlo como bastardo, cuya paternidad un impresor desaprensivo colgó a Quevedo” (*Itinerario* 221-2).

Famoso entremés del hospital de los mal casados

Like *Los refranes del viejo celoso*, the *Hospital de los mal casados* claims to have won its place in the Barrera *Catálogo* as a result of an allegedly autographed manuscript, also supported by Astrana Marín, a copy that sadly, like *Refranes*, no longer exists. The owner of the manuscript, James O. Crosby (76), found that the autograph failed under scrutiny and that only the modern cover of the manuscript connected the piece directly to the poet. Asensio concedes that he observes the mind of Quevedo at work in the

Refranes but ultimately believes that *Hospital* fails to live up to Quevedo's weakest endeavors. Although he does not outright reject the piece, (in fact, he admits its possible legitimacy), given its questionable origin and incongruous execution, he feels comfortable rejecting the work, adding that Quevedo's literary legacy has little to lose in *Hospital's* absence (*Itinerario* 229). Blecua considers the evidence and ultimately rejects the play as well, saying, "Yo también me resisto a aceptarlo como de Quevedo" (10).

El médico.

Francisco Ropero first included this play in his 1643 *Entremeses nuevos de diversos autores, para honesta recreación* (Alcalá de Henares), where he credited Quevedo with its creation without any further explanation. While Buendía's edition of Quevedo's complete works similarly included the piece (549-53), numerous critics, including Armando Cotarelo (41-104), have disputed its authorship with particular vigor, calling attention to its gross lack of originality, biting social satire, wit, charm and humor, resulting in an interlude far too dull to have disgraced Quevedo's pen. Asensio, for example, believes that, "En *El médico* tenemos, a lo que sospecho, un entremés de cualquier seguidor de Benavente y no uno de Quevedo" (*Itinerario* 223). He continues:

Quien por respeto a lo impreso, acepte por buena la atribución a don Francisco, habrá de conceder que se trata de una obreja inferior, escrita distraídamente, como sobre la rodilla. Personalmente creo que debemos escardarla de sus piezas. (*Itinerario* 224)

In light of this brutal accusation, Blecua explains why he too rejects the play:

Yo sigo este parecer y me decido también por eliminarla. Si Quevedo, capaz de decir de los ojos de una muchacha «Los médicos con que miras», capaz de escribir el soneto que comienza «La losa en sortijón pronosticada», hubiese escrito *El médico*, los resultados serían mucho más regocijantes que los de este entremés. (12)

The play's poetic, as opposed to verse, structure would suggest a post-1620 date of composition and thus rule out the explanation that its disappointing lack of Quevedo-like quality stems from the author's yet unseasoned skill. Given Quevedo's infamous venom for the medical profession, the weak and unimaginative examples that *Médico* offers ultimately wilt under the heat of expectations. While every author is certainly entitled to the odd failure, it appears that Quevedo's critics agree that even on a bad day Quevedo would have failed more creatively than what *Médico* offers.

Entremés del caballero de la Tenaza

Cotarelo y Mori and Astrana Marín both accept this piece as Quevedo's own based on its first appearance in *Flor de entremeses y sainetes* (Madrid 1657), without mentioning, as Blecua (14) reveals that in the publication the play's author remains anonymous. Following suit, the great Menéndez y Pelayo (403) republished the work under Quevedo's name in 1903. Blecua, referring to Hannah E. Bergman's hesitance to accept the work as belonging to Quevedo when compared with another play, *La capeadora* by Quiñones de Benavente (Castalia 278-79), leads him to conclude, "nada pierde don Francisco con que desaparezca de su obra dramática" (15). The *figura* of the play's title, made popular in Quevedo's *Epístolas del Caballero de la Tenaza*, garnered

wide popularity among readers and no doubt inspired numerous theatrical adaptations of the character. Although these transplants naturally derive their inspiration from Quevedo's influence, the interlude, as it stands, fails to convince the reader that the similarities are more than simple coincidence.

El premio de la hermosura

This interlude represents a simple case of mistaken identity. First included in a collection of Lope de Vega's plays entitled *Comedias*, the interlude belongs to another playwright under its proper title, *Fiesta real de Lope de Vega* (Madrid 1621). Astrana Marín promptly declared the work "erroneamente atribuida a Quevedo en el ms. 15288 de la Biblioteca Nacional" (*Obra en verso* 1475). Asensio likewise dismisses the play, calling it "hijo ajeno" (*Itinerario* 196).

Entremés famoso de la Endemoniada fingida

In the same breath used to denounce *El premio de la hermosura*, Asensio also rejects *Endemoniada fingida* (*Itinerario* 196). Cotarelo y Mori (lxxiv), calling the work "apócrifo," blames Simon Machado, a Portuguese publisher, whose 1706 *Comedias portuguesas* falsely attributed the work to Quevedo even though in Cotarelo y Mori's estimation, "De Quevedo no tiene ni el más insignificante rasgo" (lxxiii).

¡Que villano es el amor!

Astrana Marín describes the play as a “Pieza satírica e inédita en un acto” but goes on to discredit its connection to Quevedo, calling its style, “ajeno totalmente a nuestro poeta. Se trata de una ficción del Siglo XVIII” (*Obra en verso* 1475).

Apparently satisfied with this estimation, neither Asensio nor Blecua choose to elaborate further.

Entremés famoso de la infanta Palancona

Blecua (11) explains how the play may have come into contact with Quevedo’s name as early as 1625 in connection with the mysterious pseudonym/poet-playwright Félix Persio Bertisio, a pseudonym similarly associated with the *Entremés de la venta* in the 1640 Zaragoza publication of *Entremeses nuevos de diversos autores*. While Asensio casually assigns the play to Bertisio (*Itinerario* 196), scholars such Cotarelo y Mori (lxxiii) reject the pseudonym theory as it applies to Quevedo and likewise reject this play belonging to the poet. Whoever he is, he is not Quevedo, at least not in this case.

Las sombras

Similar to the debate surrounding *El muerto fingido* or *El Caballero de la Tenaza*, Cotarelo y Mori (lxxiv) believes that the piece does in fact belong to Quevedo, while

Asensio (*Itinerario* 196) simply calls it a “refundición” of the poet’s previous work. Astrana Marín (*Obras en verso* 1475), on the other hand, takes a bolder stance on the play’s authorship and calls *Las sombras* an outright “plagio completo del auténtico *Entremés de los refranes del viejo celoso*,” perhaps on the part of Luis Quiñones de Benavente, and adds that Francisco de Castro likely produced a similar plagiary in his *El cesto y el sacristán*.

Comedias

In addition to Quevedo’s work as an *entremesista*, he also wrote, or collaborated in writing, at least three *comedias*. *Como ha de ser el privado* (Blecua 149-224), the only survivor among the three texts, reveals the playwright tightly confined to the demands of his circumstances. Dull and sycophantic, this thinly-veiled story of a young king and his trusted regent betrays the poet’s attempt to gain favor with his superiors at court. While the remaining two *comedias*, *Según avisos* and *Quien más miente medra más*, disappeared over time, Blecua (13-14) indicates that Quevedo composed both pieces hastily and, at least in the case of *Quien más miente medra más*, collaboratively (with the assistance of Antonio de Mendoza) in celebration of events at court.

Scholarship has produced numerous and excellent treatments of Cervantes’s interludes, including Cory Reed’s *The Novelist as Playwright* (1993), Stanislav Zimic’s *El teatro de Cervantes* (1992), as well as Armando Cotarelo y Valledor’s much earlier

work of the same title (1915). Yet investigations dedicated specifically to Quevedo's execution of the *entremés* remain sparse. Eugenio Asensio's *Itinerario del entremés* (1965) provides the most formidable of such studies and continues to represent the cornerstone for all research on the interlude. Donald Bleznick's Twayne series publication, *Quevedo* (1972), provides an introduction to the poet's theater by dedicating an entire chapter to its character, while Jauralde Pou's biography *Francisco de Quevedo* (1999), as we have seen, does the same. More often than not, unfortunately, Quevedo as playwright slips from the memory much as it did when Agustín de Rojas (*Viaje Entretenido*, Libro I) scanned over his list of popular *farsantes*. Mary Parker's 1998 biobibliographical sourcebook of 19 Golden Age playwrights, for example, includes minor dramatists such as Francisco Antonio de Bances Candamo (28-38) but not Francisco de Quevedo. If the Soft Theater has for centuries, even millennia, occupied liminal performance spaces by taking a backseat to the Hard Theater, then Quevedo, as a marginalized playwright of the Soft, represents liminal theater inside the liminal. Such a distinction does not always bode ill for the artist. As we shall see in the following chapter, liminality provides *entremesistas* with tremendous power and potential and, as a vibrant component of the Early Modern theatrical experience, the influence of the interlude's liminality does a great deal to promote the vitality and endurance of Spain's Hard Theater: the *comedia*.

CHAPTER 2: AGENTS OF SIN, THE PURGING POWER OF LIMINALITY

Midway upon the journey of our life
 I found I was in a dusky wood;
 For the right path, whence I had strayed, was lost.

(Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto I)

Life's greatest discoveries often lead the traveler away from the established, accepted paths and into the darkness and mystery of the unknown. Dante describes such a journey in the first canto of his *Divine Comedy*. Without preface or explanation the beginning lines plunge the poet into a thick and forbidding landscape. Unable to turn back and yet entirely incognizant of his whereabouts he presses deeper into the wilderness. Even the text's narrative voice, mirroring the tremendous venture of its subject, quivers with terror at the memory of the ordeal yet reluctantly perseveres in the hope of arriving at a positive outcome:

Ah me! How hard a thing it is to tell
 The wildness of that rough and savage place,
 The very thought of which brings back my fear!
 So bitter was it, death is little more so:
 But that the good I found there may be told,
 I will describe the other things I saw.
 (Canto I)

After confronting wild beasts and despairing nearly to the brink of self-destruction, the poet discovers another man in the darkness and pleads for assistance: "Help, pity me," I cried, "whate'er you are, A living man, or spectre from the shades!" (lines 65-66). The "spectre" speaks and identifies himself as Virgil, the great poet of Roman antiquity, sent

by God to lead Dante along an alternate path through the depths of hell, up the mountain of purgatory and to the gate of paradise.

As if an idea sprung into being upon the turning of the page, this quintessential man *in media res* possesses neither a prehistory nor an objective. The tale withholds commenting on the steps in Dante's life that lead him to his present condition. We know only that he is essentially a man without significant family, wealth or position. Likewise, the work concludes without resolving the poet's final moments of mortality. We learn little of the man's dreams, goals or aspirations. Instead, we see him much like a figure in a painting, frozen in the present without past or future and behold the momentary portrait of a terrified man lost in the woods. The absence of both past and future converts the protagonist into an empty space immediately available for identification and appropriation by the reader who almost certainly has, at some time, felt the dread and danger of losing sight of the path. As a result the work distinguishes itself from an autobiographical vision by transforming its tale into an "Everyman" experience wherein the reader might easily substitute himself for the wandering poet and, just as Dante succumbs to the wisdom of Virgil, accepts the literary journey as led by the voice of the narrator. This marks a crucial first step in the narrative process because the journey Dante has prepared will stretch the limits of his reader's imaginations and tread quite literally on sacred ground. He needs the reader to succumb to the discourse and surrender any resistance to the fantastic. More importantly, by constructing his narrative *in media res* Dante carefully focuses the reader's attention on the transformative qualities of the journey itself and establishes a universal *bildungsroman* of spiritual maturation by

outlining how carnal man purges the weight of sin and becomes sanctified by accepting the graces of divine providence.

Centuries later, another observer of humanity, this time a British scientist, would take his own expedition into the wilderness and, in the process, develop a model to explain and understand the changing definition of self in transformative social processes. In 1950, cultural anthropologist Victor Turner left his graduate studies at Manchester University and traveled with his wife to the African nation of Zambia. For the next four years Turner lived among the people of the Ndembu tribe and carefully observed every aspect of the tribe's cultural traditions and documented a number of unique patterns of social phenomena. During this time Turner observed a ritual of young people removing themselves either partially or completely from the village for a period of time in order to connect themselves with deity and develop into adulthood. This "coming of age" behavior, where an individual sheds his identity as "child" to take on the mantle of "man," seemed natural to Turner and he noted similar practices among tribes such as the Native Americans of the Midwestern United States that sent their young men on the ordeal of the Vision Quest (*Betwixt and Between* 100). Yet as he watched the process repeat itself Turner began to notice not only the unique steps in the experience but also the ideological shifting that accompanied both the ritual's participants and its observers. He saw that as individuals made the transition from childhood to adulthood they appeared to undergo an intermediary phase where normal social definitions temporarily dissolve, giving way to maturation in a process that imitated gestational development. Turner described this process as "growth, transformation, and the reformation of old elements in

new patterns” (*Betwixt and Between* 99), and likened this interval to the pupal phase that caterpillars undergo as they transform into butterflies.

The process intrigued Turner and later, upon returning to the university, he continued his exploration of intermediary maturation. Fueling his research, Turner came across the work of pioneering French ethnographer, Arnold Van Gennep. Van Gennep’s studies emerged during the first decade of the twentieth century from an intellectual climate of penetrating observation. This approach to hidden knowledge carved away at the natural world in order to observe and understand not only its composition but also the relationships and functions of its internal components. In 1897, for example, physicist J.J. Thomson cracked the mystery of the atom to discover the electron, quickly followed by Ernest Rutherford’s discovery of the neutron in 1909. While physicians dissected corpses to understand the interaction of internal organs, ethnographers such as Van Gennep applied scientific positivism to dissect society as a way to understand the relationships between human beings and the social constructs they promulgate. His 1908 publication, *The Rites of Passage*, begins with the following declaration:

Each larger society contains within it several distinctly separate social groupings. As we move from higher to lower levels of civilization, the differences among these groups become accentuated and their autonomy increases [...]. In addition, all these groups break down into still smaller societies or subgroups. (1)

Van Gennep observed that, like internal organs, members of a community belonged to one or more social subcategories that distinguished themselves in a variety of ways, and noted that “the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds” (1) played a

significant role in the establishment and maintenance of these divisions. Examples of these divisions include gender, race, marital status, religious associations, totems or clans, employment, social castes and even territorial units.

Nevertheless, Van Gennep recognized the transient nature of these identities as members of one subcategory often transferred their affiliations to another. Over time he also noticed a pattern emerge whereby, throughout a person's life, one moment of transition stretched into the next. In fact, the more he investigated this pattern the more regularly he observed its occurrence. This led him to declare:

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another [...]. Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings [...]. (2-3)

A single woman redefines her social status when she takes a husband in marriage. At some point every person will pass from life into death. Universally, each culture employs its own system of ceremonies and rituals "whose essential purpose," Van Gennep argues, "is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined" (3). These ceremonies "accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (qtd. in *Betwixt* 94). For example, rituals of betrothal and marriage mark the union of husband and wife while funeral services serve to bridge the gap between life and death. Public markers such as these, what he calls "rites of passage," establish provisional spaces for change as individuals shed old identities and take up new ones in their stead.

Turner devoured Van Gennep's work, in particular his ideas regarding the steps in the transitional process, including the time period after separation and before incorporation, a state Van Gennep referred to as the "liminal phase." Applying this methodology to his own experiences, Turner presented a paper at the 1964 meeting of the American Ethnological Society entitled, "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in *Rites de Passage*," that focused on the unique attributes of intermediacy and its causes.

Like his predecessor, Turner's analysis of the liminal period begins by subdividing society into "relatively fixed or stable conditions" (*Betwixt* 93). He calls these groupings "states" and includes "such social constancies as legal status, profession, office or calling, rank or degree" (*Betwixt* 93). He then identifies the empty spaces in-between states: "If our basic model of society is that of a 'structure of positions,' we must regard the period of margin or 'liminality' as an interstructural situation" (*Betwixt* 93). In a binary sense, life in the margin represents the opposite of life in the structural state. Rights and privileges provided to members of social entities, for example, often do not apply to the liminal phase. "[T]ransitional beings [...]," explains Turner, "have nothing" (*Betwixt* 98). He continues:

They have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows. Their condition is indeed the very prototype of sacred poverty. Rights over property, goods, and services inhere in positions in the politico-jural structure. Since they do not occupy such positions, neophytes exercise no such rights. In the words of King Lear they represent 'naked unaccommodated man'" (*Betwixt* 98-99).

This condition of "sacred poverty" helps to distinguish the liminal phase in society. Yet just as one removes clothing only to put it on again later, the "naked, unaccommodated

man” must make his transition back into the structure of positions. Unable to remain undefined forever, he must eventually adopt new affiliations in a process that will repeat itself throughout a person’s life.

Based on Van Gennep’s “complete scheme of rites of passage” (11), Turner refers to three phases in the transitional process. First, he identifies a phase of Separation, characterized by “symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure or a set of cultural conditions (a ‘state’)” (*Betwixt* 94). For Dante, this moment of rupture begins when he first strays from the known path through the wilderness. In society it occurs when the dying humans retire their final breaths. The history of Theater experiences it when a play breaks from the Hard Theater’s pattern of socially expected or acceptable subject matter in order to distinguish itself from its competitors and survive in a changing market. In each case tradition meets innovation when the liminal subject, like Dante, leaves one step in the structure to take one step into the margin.

Skipping ahead, the third and last phase of transition, Aggregation, represents an individual’s reincorporation into the structure in a way that mirrors her former separation from it. Turner describes this phase as follows:

The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations of a clearly defined and ‘structural’ type, and is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards. (*Betwixt* 94)

This phase marks the restitution of order and identification as the “naked and unaccommodated man” first tries on his new wardrobe of symbols. For all her exploration and freedom the liminal subject eventually gravitates back toward the structure. No

longer a fiancée, she adopts the role of wife in a marriage relationship. At the conclusion of Dante's journey through Paradise he beholds the "phantasy sublime" of angels encircling God's eternal light, and remarks, "My will and my desire were both resolved" (*canto* XXXIII). As the Soft Theater grows, the Hard Theater appropriates certain innovations and makes them part of the structure. In this sense both the structure and the margin, the Hard and the Soft, require the services of the other; the former provides financial support and security while the latter supplies innovative ideas that allow the structure to adapt with changing climates of opinion.

Yet, Turner appears primarily fascinated with the second phase of transition, the Margin or Limen. Van Gennep had insisted that every transition included an interval of estrangement. "A man cannot pass from one to the other," he claims, "without going through an intermediate stage" (1). Elaborating on this point, Turner explains that during the Liminal phase "the state of the ritual subject (the 'passenger') is ambiguous; he passes through a realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (*Betwixt* 94). Unlike the phases of Separation or Aggregation, the Liminal phase carries few, if any, clearly identifiable vestiges of its former self. The deceased body at a funeral, for example, no longer abides with the living and yet, prior to its burial, the eulogy of friends and family arrests it from complete association with death.

Faced with recognizing the foreign, undesirable, unexplainable or alien that liminal subjects represent, social structures often ignore or deny them validity and recognition by imposing any number of symbols and euphemisms in order to camouflage it from view and suppress the fear associated with ambiguity. Turner explains:

The subject of passage ritual is, in the liminal period, structurally, if not physically, ‘invisible.’ As members of society, most of us see only what we expect to see, and what we expect to see is what we are conditioned to see when we have learned the definitions and classifications of our culture...The transitional-being or ‘liminal *persona*’ is defined by a name and by a set of symbols (*Betwixt* 95).

Turner’s liminal subject, for example, physically removed itself from social associations in African tribal ceremonies, making him literally invisible to his companions. In cases such as the recently deceased, however, many societies construct linguistic barriers to obscure or make invisible the emotionally displeasing reality of death. Consider, for example, the numerous verbal euphemisms such as *to pass away*, *to kick the bucket*, *to go home*, *to buy the farm*, *to meet one’s maker*, *to depart*, *to lose one’s life*, *to perish*, *to give up the ghost*, etc. Each obscures the grim realities of death and dying by linguistically imposing a new and softer message, albeit less-transparent and even comical. In this sense, the word *entremés*, by definition, similarly reflects the reducing bias of the theater community. Sebastian de Covarrubias’s 1611 edition of *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana o Española* (later republished without alteration in 1674) defines the *entremés* in a single sentence as “[...] una representación de risa y graciosa, que se entremete entre un acto y otro de la comedia para legar y espaciar el auditorio” (525). Even into the eighteenth century the definition had not strayed from this concise meaning. The 1732 *Diccionario de autoridades* concurs with Covarrubias when it briefly describes the *entremés* as a “[r]epresentación breve, jocosa y burlesca, la cual se entremete de ordinario entre una jornada y otra de la comedia para mayor variedad o para divertir y alegrar el auditorio” (Tomo III, 519). Compare these minimalist definitions of the *entremés* with Covarrubias’s thorough and expansive description of the *comedia*:

Es cierta especie de fábula, en la qual se nos representa como en un espejo, el trato y vida de la gente ciudadana y popular; así como en la tragedia las costumbres y manera de vivir de los príncipes y grandes señores, sus buenas fortunas y sus casos desastrados, a vezes se introducen en ella las personas de los dioses. [...] con fingidos argumentos y marañas nos dibuxan el trato y condiciones de los hombres viejos, moços de todos estados, mujeres honradas, viejas cautelosas, moças, unas que engañan y otras que son engañadas. En fin un retrato de todo lo que passa en el mundo. (341-42)

Ironically, this rich explanation places great emphasis on the *comedia*'s proficiency at social commentary as one its most core characteristics, commentary that, ironically, applies with even greater force to the satirical farces of the *entremés* (as we shall see). Yet both definitions of the *entremés* strip it of its identity as a unique performance genre by making cursory mention of little more than functional attributes and, most unfortunate, by downgrading its stature as an appendage or subset of the *comedia*. Despite all it shares in common with the center its liminal performance space makes it invisible to critical appraisal.

Another factor contributing to the liminal pertains to its size in comparison to that of established social structures. It fails to attract attention and criticism because it is small or brief or somehow does not marshal a significant following. As an intermediate space not intended for permanent residence, the liminal phase naturally includes a smaller number of individuals over a shorter amount of time. Further limiting its numbers, the size of a given liminal pool also appears related to the cyclical recurrence of external social patterns already in place, such as climate change. Turner indicates:

Rites de passage are found in all societies but tend to reach their maximal expression in small-scale, relatively stable and cyclical societies, where change is bound up with biological and meteorological rhythms and

recurrences rather than with technological innovations. Such rites indicate and constitute transitions between states. (*Betwixt* 93)

Of course, since the majority of theater productions during the Golden Age occurred largely out of doors in order to take advantage of natural lighting, the changing of the seasons exerted significant influence over both the duration and the style of performances, embracing them during months of favorable weather and suppressing them during months of cold and storm. With fewer actual resources at their command, the Soft Theater's travelling troupes of street performers, who regularly mounted spaces removed from walls and roofs, exposed themselves more openly to the mercy of the elements than did their Hard Theater counterparts, who enjoyed established spaces such as banquet halls and playhouses, permanent structures able to address both wind and rain. Literally outside of many social structures, the Soft Theater typically represents performance on a smaller, limited and liminal scale, first in terms of participating numbers (either individuals or small troupes of travelling performers) and in the scope of its production values (sparse costuming and properties on either a modest pseudo-stage or without any stage at all).

Perhaps as a result of the perceived limitations of the liminal subject, Turner found, in fact, that many cultures equated liminality with negative attributes that regarded it as immaterial or, worse, undesirable. He even went as far as to describe the period as if it were a kind of social disease: "Liminal personae nearly always and everywhere are regarded as polluting to those who have never been, so to speak, 'inoculated' against them, through having been themselves initiated into the same state" (*Betwixt* 97). To this he added the observations of fellow tribal anthropologist Mary Douglas who, in her book

Purity and Danger (1966), explained that, “Transitional beings are particularly polluting, since they are neither one thing nor another; or may be both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere...and are at the very least ‘betwixt and between’ all the recognized fixed points in space-time of structural classification” (119). This description of the hybrid, “neither-nor” individual conjures images of mythological beasts that combined the human body with animals both real and imagined, often with horrific results. Consider, for example, the man-bull Minotaur that stalked King Minos’s deadly labyrinth, feeding on Athenian sacrifices, or Medusa, the woman with serpent hair that turned all who looked on her to stone. From centaurs and satyrs to harpies and sirens, liminality often twisted humanity into monsters. Bakhtin describes that during the Middle Ages, these kinds of grotesque hybridizations, “remain ambivalent and contradictory: they are ugly, monstrous, hideous from the point of view of the ‘classic’ aesthetics, that is, the aesthetics of the ready-made and the completed” (25). Similarly, though perhaps less frightening, Golden Age theater scholarship has, historically, avoided exploring its own hybridized monsters of performance. Studies involving genres such as street theater, the *entremés*, the *auto sacramental*, dances, *sainetes*, *loas*, etc., often grouped under the umbrella term “género chico,” do not begin, even in summation, to approximate the amount of research and criticism done on the *comedia*.

While liminality can appear threatening or at the very least trivial in comparison to the supposed weightier subjects of non-liminal states, Turner found his attention drawn to the effect of this intermediate step. As he considered the function of the liminal phase, in addition to its form, he discovered that these “monsters,” while at times misunderstood

or even frightening to the outsider, in fact sparked an intellectual dialogue that ultimately benefitted the individual: “During the liminal period, neophytes are alternately forced and encouraged to think about their society, their cosmos, and the powers that generate and sustain them. Liminality may be partly described as a stage of reflection” (*Betwixt* 105). This impetus toward reflection and self-analysis produced a myriad of exploratory behaviors. Momentarily suspended from social inclusion, it seemed that subjects in the liminal, invisible and ambiguous, evaded the limitations otherwise imposed them by external restraints, a phenomena that allowed for tremendous possibilities. Returning to Van Gennep’s work Turner observes:

He [Van Gennep] insisted that in all ritualized movement there was at least a moment when those being moved in accordance with a cultural script were liberated from normative demands, when they were, indeed, betwixt and between successive lodgments in jural political systems. In this gap between ordered worlds almost anything can happen. (*Dramas* 13)

No longer bound to a “cultural script,” individuals passing through the rites of passage occasionally demonstrated behaviors and attitudes that contradicted a community’s established norms and yet, to Turner’s surprise, these actions failed to generate the kind of rebuke otherwise administered to members of a clearly defined social group and, instead, cultivated a rich environment for innovation, enlightenment and progress. In essence, middleness not only makes the individual exempt, it makes him powerful. “In this interim of ‘liminality,’” he proclaims, “the possibility exists of standing aside not only from one’s own social position but from all social positions and of formulating a potentially unlimited series of alternative social arrangements” (*Dramas* 13-14).

“Liminality, may perhaps be regarded as the Nay to all positive structural assertions [...]

a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise” (*Betwixt* 97). This fragmentation of institutions and subsequent rearrangement of social perspectives and relationships provides the creative spark that quickens all artistic creations and, unlike the non-liminal, sustains the structure as a whole by serving as its primary and most potent means of adaptation and evolution.

As a scientist studying in the field of cultural anthropology, Victor Turner derived and developed his ideas in response to social patterns of behavior he observed in the plains of Africa and, building upon the theories set forth by Arnold Van Gennep, broke new ground in the field of social sciences by demonstrating the power and privilege of liminal spaces. Yet his scientific research extended into the arts and letters when he extended the application of the transitional model to include not only social ceremonies and rites of passage, but notable innovators and their creations that, in his opinion, came to fruition “betwixt and between” social circumstances:

I am an advocate not of abandoning the methods of behavioral science but of applying them to the behavior of an innovative, liminal creature, to a species whose individual members have included Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare, as well as Galileo, Newton, and Einstein. (*Dramas* 18)

Far from the tribes of the Ndembu, Turner recognizes examples of liminal spaces and the social structures that surround them abound, producing tremendous examples of art and culture as well as scientific knowledge. By his own suggestion, Dante, the lost traveler in the woods, may provide a literary map for navigating realms of liminality in creative applications. “Lead on! / May one sole will inspire us both,” charges Dante after finding his guide in the darkness, “Be you my leader, you my lord and master! / Thus did I speak; and after he had moved / I entered on the roadway deep and wild” (*Inferno*, canto II). He

may have strayed from his intended path, leaving him to wander for a season in the wilderness but, using a guide through the unfamiliar, his metaphysical journey through the liminal produced one of the chief cornerstones in Western literature, *The Divine Comedy*. Indeed, T.S. Eliot once remarked that after Shakespeare and Dante “there is no third” (225). This work, by its exemplary exercise in both literature and liminality, serves as a blueprint as we begin to apply Turner’s theories to Golden Age theater, in particular, we might use it as a guide to compare, contrast and understand the mutually beneficial relationship that existed between classical Spain’s Hard-center, the *comedia*, and its Soft-liminal, the *entremés*.

Embedded among its dramatic cousin, the *comedia*, the nimble *entremés* seems to invite the viewer on a moral vacation. Its subject matter ignores the exemplary deeds of the rich and famous in favor of the next-door gossip of the ordinary and penniless. Its ragtag parade of thieves, fools, scoundrels and seducers typically defies the dramatic style of protagonists either honor-bound or heaven-blessed and, instead, stumbles onto the stage with all the flaws and imperfections of real, albeit melodramatic people plucked off recognizable city streets. Yet, rather than degrade the refinement of the *comedia*, the maligned *entremés* serves an invaluable role in support of the larger theatrical picture. In fact, just as the center needs the liminal in order to accommodate the transformative, I believe that the *comedia* could not have reached the same heights of popular acclaim without the balance and the blessing afforded by the *entremés*. If we study the *entremés* in terms of its depiction of sin within the greater frame of *Corral* Theater, and apply Turner’s explanation of liminal spaces, we begin to notice a pattern emerge whereby

liminality gives way to sin and real world, case-study analyses of transgression occupy an intermediary phase for the purpose of creative forgiveness. Simply put, the *comedia* finds in the *entremés* its theatrical Purgatory.

Jacques Le Goff, in his book *The Birth of Purgatory*, publishes a portion of a manuscript that includes one of the earliest descriptions of Purgatory. In the sermon, Peter Comestor, a twelfth-century Parisian bishop, likened man's journey through the afterlife to the tripartite labor of stonemasons constructing the city of Jerusalem:

[...] first, with violence stones are drawn out of the quarry, with hammers and bars of iron and with much human sweat and labor; then with the burin, the double axe, and the rule they are polished, cut to measure, and squared; and third they are set in place by the artist's hand. (qtd. in Le Goff 155)

Speaking of this middle step, wherein the rough-hewn rock transforms into a piece of fine craftsmanship, the bishop goes on to describe the process as a "cleansing purgatorial" wherein the soul of a man is "examined like silver" (qtd. in Le Goff 155). Writing little more than one hundred years later, Dante incorporates the notion of a cleansing phase into what Thomas Bergin dubbed, "the greatest poem of our tradition," the *Divina Commedia* (213). In contrast to the souls of the damned, individuals in Purgatory experience a temporary period of cleansing before they eventually rise and claim their eternal reward. Once through the gate that leads up the mountain of Purgatory, Dante meets an angel that marks his forehead with seven P's (indicating *peccatum* or sin) and admonishes him to "See that thou wash / These scars away, when thou hast entered in!" (Canto IX). Dante quite literally bears the stains of sin that preclude him from the presence of God. Nevertheless, by introducing a theologically liminal space, neither in

Heaven nor in Hell but inserted betwixt the two, the author opens up a viable alternative whereby the sinful man remains a candidate for salvation in Paradise despite his present exclusion from it. The damned languish in eternal Hell, and the sanctified rest in eternal Paradise, but the gap between the two harbors a comparatively smaller group of the temporarily undecided. Whether or not man progresses, an opportunity not afforded to souls in Hell, depends upon his ability to polish, measure and square away his vices. In this sense, the real work of salvation can only happen in the unique, intermediary environment of Purgatory.

One immediately notices that the paths of both Purgatory and the *entremés* reside almost exclusively in precincts of sin. Dante finds his journey neatly segmented and the residents variously distributed into seven terraces, each terrace designated to conduct penance workshops purging the seven deadly sins: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, avarice, gluttony and lust. These seven sins not only provide the dramatic backdrop of the narrative but also emerge as the dominant trope of *Purgatorio* in that the work defines every character, event and location in relation to its correspondence or contrast with sin. Note, for example, how Virgil's introduction to Purgatory describes the place not in terms of man's progression toward holiness but rather of diminished suffering: "This mountain is so made / That at the bottom it is much more toilsome; / But as man ascends it pains him less" (IV). In this sense, Purgatory's overwhelming immersion in sin supersedes the *ad hoc* support of virtue and transports the reader to what Christian Moevs characterizes as a "web of desires, attachments, emotions, passions, and fears that are the fabric of human life and the bait of a mind that does not know itself" (88). Like Moevs,

Eugenio Asensio observes a reprobate characterization of humanity on stage in the *entremés*, where aggressive correspondence with carnality results in what he similarly calls a “selva de instintos” (36). In the *entremés* sin reigns supreme, “ya que su materia especial,” he affirms, “son las lacras e imperfecciones de la sociedad coetánea y de las mismas instituciones humanas. Si hay una moralidad, es accesoria e implícita” (39). In other words, just as Dante erects his mountain of Purgatory upon a framework of theological sin, so too the *entremés* adheres to a depiction of practical sin as the distinguishing hallmark of its ideology.

Dante’s journey up the slopes and through the terraces of Mount Purgatory repeats a basic pattern of events that guides both Dante and the reader and intensifies its didactic nature when, after identifying the sin, each terrace presents a series of “goads” or afflictions that Bergin claims, “exemplify the virtue corrective of the sin being purged” (225). The envious, for example, have their eyes sewn shut while the gluttonous march past fountains of cool water unable to drink. In each case the visual metaphor of the goad illustrates both the crime and the punishment. The envious man ought instead to keep his eye single to the glory of God (Matt. 6.22-23), while the gluttonous man learns to thirst only after righteousness (Matt. 5.6). A similar system of poetic justice governs the *entremés* for, “[i]n comedy,” Bruce Wardropper observes, “the characters get their just desserts” (4). Typically, like Purgatory, justice dispensed in the *entremés* leans toward the ironic. Consider Cervantes’ *Retablo de las maravillas*, where swindlers punish the vain and foolish townspeople by playing upon and exposing their vanity and foolishness. “Basta, que todos ven lo que yo no veo,” confesses the Gobernador, only to contradict his

own judgment and thereby earn his punishment by adding, “pero al fin habré de decir que lo veo, por la negra honrilla” (177). In Quevedo’s *Entremés de los refranes del viejo celoso*, the spirits of literature’s great thinkers return to harass the title character in retribution for his over-zealous thirst for academic citation that has, for some time, harassed them. Countless other *entremeses* punish their victims by trapping them in curiously ironic situations: thieves steal from the miserly, the chaste turn carnal, the clever plunge into foolishness, and the holy expose their hypocrisy, all as a way of directly linking the sin to negative effects in a person’s life.

Furthermore, in the case of Dante, goads often take the form of prayers or hymns that, in Virgil’s estimation, “point out to us the speediest path” (VI) and recapitulate the lesson taught. These musical morals typically conclude the poet’s visit to each terrace, such as the *Summae Deus Clementiae* hymn (God of Greatest Clemency), a wounded plea for forgiveness sung by the lustful. They also connect the imagery of the episode with music and lyrics likely familiar to the reader, thereby reinforcing both the message taught and the messenger that taught it. Advertising agencies often rely on musical jingles to jog the listener’s memory. In the case of the *entremés*, the next time an audience member heard that tune she might recall its lyrics, or the next sermon at church might remind her of its appearance in Dante’s work. The *entremés* employs a similar tactic in the way it utilizes music and dance to close the performance and summarize the play’s thesis for the audience. Quevedo’s *Entremés de Diego Moreno* follows the romantic exploits of Doña Justa, whose self-serving combination of lust and greed extracts money and favors from all men unfortunate enough to take interest in her until

she agrees to marry Verdugo. Threatening to hold her hand over the open flame of a candle, Verdugo appears convinced that Justa will finally abandon her trickery and adopt the behavior of marital fidelity. Nevertheless, a group of musicians interrupts the scene four times singing a warning that “Pedir firmeza en ausencia/es pedir al olmo peras” (53). The distillation of Justa’s philosophy into a brief and catchy musical refrain, repeated multiple times at the play’s conclusion, speaks directly to the audience in a way that both underscores the central theme and promotes the play’s permanence in the memories of its viewers.

As a counterpoint to the goads, each terrace of Purgatory also provides a series of “checks,” what Bergin refers to as “examples of the evil consequences of the sin” (225), typically in the form of Dante’s conversations with penitents recounting their sad tales. Statius, for example, confesses that the sin of avarice caused him to dwell “for many thousand years in punishment” (XXII). Marco Lombardo admits that his submission to the sin of wrath “unbent his bow” of virtue (XVI). Asensio points out that this kind of self-deprecating disclosure of character flaws plays an integral role in the crafting of *entremeses*. Describing Hurtado de Mendoza’s *Miser Palomo*, he claims:

Los examinados, en el corto espacio que con nosotros conviven, se las agencian para desvelarnos sus manías, pretensiones y pecadillos. No estamos ante un irrestañable flujo de confesión [...] sino ante un hábil recurso incorporado al entremés de figuras: el sistema oblicuo de herirse con su propia espada y condenarse con su misma defensa. (*Itinerario* 115)

These characters become the agents of their own undoing and they often voice their motives and misdeeds on stage. Consider, for example, Benavente’s *Entremes de los condes fingidos* that opens with Pedro, an admitted con man, freely declaring to his

friend, “Yo he de fingirme conde, ¡vive Cristo!” (qtd. in Cotarelo y Mori 775). Cervantes’ *Juez de los divorcios*, presents a series of offended parties exposing the personal imperfections and vices of their spouses in open court. Grajal, in Quevedo’s *Entremés de la venta*, shamelessly publishes all the dirty secrets of her innkeeper employer, including that he serves boiled boots, roasted rat and watered-down wine from his kitchen before offering his guests flea-infested mattresses on which to sleep. In these instances, like in Dante, the confession sets-up the consequences that follow. Both Statius and Marco Lombardo understand the connection between their actions and their torment. Pedro likewise confesses his less than noble intentions while the play’s series of events go on to demonstrate how those sins lead to his undoing.

Dante’s ability to evaluate and extract meaning from his experience emerges as a direct result of his detached and privileged status as traveling observer. Unfortunately, as a resident of Hell, Virgil cannot accompany his guest beyond the gates that lead into Paradise. Like Dante, *Corral* audiences observed the unrestrained actions of the play with enough critical and emotional distance for them to laugh at the character’s expense. Asensio tells us that this critical detachment developed thanks, in part, to the farcical, grotesque characterization in the *entremés* that strayed just far enough from real life so as to avoid giving offense:

El entremés da al espectador un sentimiento de superioridad sobre los personajes, con que sólo pasajeraamente se identifica en el subsuelo común de la flaqueza humana. Son personajes vistos desde una lejanía propicia a la risa, más prójimos que próximos. (*Itinerario* 39)

Dante’s vision brings him into contact with “prójimos,” people he and his readers know and recognize, but the narrative skillfully maintains a distinction between the two and

avoids integrating the poet himself prematurely into one of its many terraces or circles. Consequently, Dante regularly comments on the conditions of the people he meets, something they themselves, confined to their own punishment, never do. In the *entremés* audience members similarly observe a world very much like their own. Protected in stalls, balconies and patios, and free to leave at the play's conclusion, the *corral* audience, like Dante, observes characters reaping the wages of their sins. They may laugh at how much the play imitates their foolish neighbors, but the distortion of its figures provides a buffer zone to both comic and critical ends.

Dante journeys through Purgatory to the gates of Paradise, the culminating glory of the afterlife. Inside the *corral*, theater as an art form also embarks on its own voyage toward salvation where, as Lope's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* reminds us, satisfied applause substitutes for the celestial rewards described in *Paradiso* (45-48). But, as in Dante, before theater faces the final judgment, it retains a transitional phase in the *entremés*. Lope de Rueda's use of the word "paso" to describe this intermediary performance, a term often applied to the *entremés*, implies a kind of artistic journey stepping from one state to another, recalling Turner's definition of the liminal space this phenomenon as a period of empowered ambiguity and "a realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relationships may arise" (97). Writers of *entremeses* seem cognizant of the creative possibilities that emerge as a direct result of the play's life in the liminal state and use that potential for the purpose of engaging the audience in ways forbidden to the *comedia*. In Quevedo's *Marido fantasma*, for example, Muñoz finds himself drifting into a sleep-induced vision but embraces the

apparition on the grounds that “al entremés ninguna ley le quita / lo de «sueño me ha dado y visioncita»” (77). In Benavente’s *El barbero*, Isabel defends the venomous accusations she hurls at her father only to shrug away their social consequences saying, “Yo / hija soy de entremés, basta” (Cotarelo y Mori 749). In both cases the speaker acknowledges when he or she has reached the play’s limits of propriety. Then, citing privilege of the liminal, each crosses those boundaries in the name of good entertainment, thereby securing immunity for their playwrights against the disapproval of critics and, simultaneously, expanding the available repertoire of comic material.

Quite literally, of course, the *entremés*, as an entertaining caveat to the primary performance, also serves to mark the division, the literal “in-between,” that separates acts of the *comedia*, as Covarrubias indicated, “para alegrar y espaciar el auditorio” (525). In this way the *entremés* uses its liminal status as the public relations operative of the *corral* experience, whereby the company of actors, not unlike souls in Purgatory, struggle to polish, measure and square away the shortcomings of the *comedia* in an attempt to receive the ultimate blessing: the “delight” of the audience. One cannot easily dismiss the potency an *entremés* might have in filling its charge to win a viewer’s favor. The prologue to Benavente’s 1645 *Jocoseria* makes the following assertion:

La mejor comedia tiene hoy el peligro de los desaires que padece entre jornada y jornada, cuando la menos ajustada se alentaba en otro tiempo [...] de modo que el autor que tenía una mala comedia, con ponerle dos entremeses de este ingenio le daba muletas para que no cayese, y el que tenía una buena, le ponía alas para que se remontase; con que todas las comedias le debían: la buena, el ser mejor; la mala, el no parecerlo. (Cotarelo y Mori lxxvii)

We should note in this statement that the author's reference to *alas* bestowed by an *entremés* upon an already good *comedia* implies not only a lifting into the air, as Dante experienced in the journey through Purgatory to Paradise, but also coincides with the Christian iconography of wings on angels. This evidence seems to confirm that the salvation of the *comedia* frequently occurs during the play's humorous, pleasing and imaginative scenes of the *entremés*, and that even a poorly written *comedia* might escape a judgment of condemnation with a little help from a skillful interlude.

Turning to the *Modern Catholic Encyclopedia* we see that the *comedia* functions like a soul about to enter the afterlife. Regarding the time frame for repentance, Zachary Hayes' entry on Purgatory recognizes that the conclusion of life does not imply a final judgment: "There is purgation after death" (675). During this transitory phase, Hayes affirms that the dead can in fact benefit from the good will of the living in their quest for forgiveness: "those involved in this purgation may be aided by the prayers and good works of the faithful, particularly by the sacrifice of the altar" (675). Like the penitent man in his final moments of mortality, the closing lines of the *comedia* typically offer a standard plea for an audience's mercy. Consider, for example, this conventional farewell from Calderon's *La dama duende*:

Por no malograr el tiempo
que en estas cosas se gasta,
pudiéndolo aprovechar
en pedir de nuestras faltas
perdón; y humilde el autor
os le pide a vuestras plantas.
(III.3109-14)

Dante's tale reflects both Hayes' description and Calderón's conclusion by including numerous instances where men and women like Guido Guinicelli, engulfed in the flames of the lustful, beg Dante to "Say Him a paternoster for my sake" (XXVI). Appeals such as this allow us to infer a number of inherent opinions held by playwrights regarding the nature of the *comedia* and its relationship to "salvation." First, Calderón establishes a social hierarchy that recognizes the viewer as possessing the power and authority to both condemn and to bless the "humble" performance. Second, his reference to brevity suggests that there yet remains a brief period of time allotted for possible repentance and forgiveness, time that extends beyond the limits of the play. Lastly, the metatheatrical relationship of an actor breaking character to directly petition the audience, a performance strategy regularly employed both in the *comedia* and in the *entremés*, acknowledges that persons in one state (on stage) might benefit from the good will of persons in another (in the audience).

In his article, "The Uniqueness of the Comedia," Arnold Reichenberger explains that "a Spanish play follows a pattern from order disturbed to order restored. 'All's well that ends well,' and everything ends well when [...] a sinning soul is snatched from the devil and saved" (307). As we have seen, this pattern of restoration, in its execution, directly corresponds to the saving template along the eternal journey of the soul. The *comedia*'s unity-driven anchor in reality imitates mortal life. The gods of literary and popular criticism will judge the merits of a performance upon its conclusion. Before that happens, the *comedia* passes through an intermediate phase, the *entremés*, where it experiences a "cleansing purgatorial" that examines man as a creature burdened by sin.

The unrestricted delight and creative freedom available to this liminal space heighten the enjoyment of the theatrical experience and, consequently, lift the performance to a more favorable judgment from its critics who snatch a winning play and save it from disfavor and oblivion. “Hay una dependencia del entremés en la función del Siglo de Oro, no se puede negar,” explains Marc Vitse. “Es una dependencia a la vez teórica y práctica” (232). Like the soul of man, the *comedia* needs the purging and polishing offered by the *entremés*. Its salvation literally depends upon it.

In fact, Turner might extend the symbiotic relationship between the *comedia* and the *entremés* to affirm that every structure of social positions stands to benefit from the evaluation and re-invention made possible through the liminal space. In his *Dramas, Fields and Metaphors* he arrives at the following conclusion:

In the evolution of man’s symbolic ‘cultural’ action, we must seek those processes which correspond to open-endedness in biological evolution. I think we have found them in those liminal [...] forms of symbolic action, those genres of free-time activity, in which all previous standards and models are subjected to criticism, and fresh new ways of describing and interpreting sociocultural experience are formulated. (15)

More often than not, research in Golden Age drama focuses on a particular play, or group of plays, as entities extracted and isolated from their performance context, an approach that essentially transposes theater into literature. While this approach may eliminate the need for interdisciplinary exertion, it creates misleading representations of the playwrights, performers and audience members that comprised an afternoon in a *corral*. Fortunately, over the last twenty-five years, pockets of research in *comedia* studies have, as Turner proposed, increasingly advocated an expanded approach to Golden Age drama that encompasses multiple, even liminal, aspects of the theatrical experience. John

Varey, Jane Albrecht, Shirley Whitaker, and others, have investigated audience dynamics and the contribution of the spectator in performance. In her 1999 article, “The Preceptistas and Beyond,” Catherine Connors appraises the body of *comedia* criticism and laments what she calls “the neglect of the early modern audience’s vital role in making a play mean something” (417). John J. Allen’s study on the structure of the *Corral del Príncipe* laid a tremendous foundation for investigating the ways in which the physical setting contributed to staging and meaning. In 2004, the Association for Hispanic Classical Theater (AHCT) launched its annual publication, *Comedia Performance*, as a venue dedicated to exploring the social and creative climate of seventeenth-century theater, as well as present-day productions.

All of these varied approaches combine to produce a fuller, more enriched palate of understanding. Nevertheless, very few studies have considered the spectrum of theatrical experiences that transpired in a single afternoon, influencing and overlapping one with another. Likewise, classical theater on stage rarely portrays more than the *comedia* for performance. Diane Iglesias points out that “[w]hile modern theater companies have presented faithful and entertaining performances of Spanish Golden Age plays, today’s theater audience usually does not enjoy the total theatrical experience that their seventeenth-century counterparts witnessed” (140). The *comedia* consumed the most substantial amount of stage time but its three acts were surrounded by a considerable series of short theater pieces: *loas*, *bailes*, *jácaras*, *saraos* and, perhaps most importantly, *entremeses*. According to Turner, these liminal components “paradoxically expose the basic building blocks of culture just when we pass out of and before we re-

enter the structural realm” (*Betwixt* 110). Over time, these innovative misfits not only reveal the structure, they become actual building blocks themselves. “Yesterday’s liminal,” declares Turner, “becomes today’s stabilized, today’s peripheral becomes tomorrow’s centered” (*Dramas* 16). In the case of the *entremés*, Asensio finds a similar pattern of incorporation at work in the development of the *comedia*:

Esqueje desgajado de la comedia por mano de Lope de Rueda, [el *entremés*] ha medrado como planta parásita enroscada en hostil intimidad al tronco del que brotó. La misma cercanía le incitaba ya a remedarla, ya a contrastarla en un inevitable juego de atracción y repulsión. Momentos hubo en que el *entremés* influyó sobre la pieza principal a la que transformó en comedia de figurón. Mudados los papeles, el público toleraba los exaltados vuelos dramáticos, los lances de amor y honor en gracia al descanso cómico en que la musa echaba pie a tierra y se humanizaba en los intermedios. (*Itinerario* 15)

As one of the *comedia*’s means of salvation and survival, and a source of inspiration that contributed to its reinvention, theater practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries intentionally and necessarily adopted the *entremés* into its ranks. In fact, one firsthand account from an audience member describing his experience in a corral wrote, “Entre las jornadas intercalan algun *entremés* [...] que muchas veces es lo más entretenido de la comedia” (qtd. in Hesse 118). Critic and historian Hugo Rennert supported this sentiment when he observed that, “*Entremeses* [...] were for the purpose of avoiding the tedium between the acts, for without them ‘la mejor comedia tiene hoy el peligro de los desaires que padece entre jornada y jornada’” (288). Given this account, the *entremés*, by virtue of its liminal character, represents a significant contribution to the center that merits greater attention from Golden Age critics.

Of course, interludes may have delighted their audiences with snippets of juicy, albeit harmless scandal but ultimately their influence on the *comedia* and its audiences rarely promoted a morally circumspect message. If the *auto sacramental* represents the theatrical equivalent of a little angel resting on the shoulder of the *comedia*, using sacrament and ceremony to whisper saving doctrines through performance, then the *entremés*, with its portrayal of vice, becomes the devil resting smoothly on the shoulder opposite and hissing forth a pleasurable aesthetic of self-serving sin. In fact, the two minor genres posit diametrically opposed approaches the stage in virtually every way.

Each category of theater envisions itself as pursuing the polarized end of an ideological spectrum. The *auto* constructs reverent, largely canonical themes taken from the Bible, the lives of Saints and other liturgical texts, while the *entremés* appropriates deceptive, subversive, bawdy, lewd, intensely comical subject matter. As an instructional medium, the *auto* hopes to enlighten the view by demonstrating the proper course in life that would, with the help of the church, lead toward salvation, while the *entremés* revels in exposing human frailties and the hypocrisy of institutions. The *auto* also often occupies the stage for a far greater amount of time in order to develop and explore the philosophical depths of its profound declaration. The *entremés*, on the other hand, preferring a curt emphasis on the repulsive and the farcical, seems incapable of establishing characters and scenarios able to sustain the protracted playing time of the *auto* or the *comedia* and rarely extends beyond 10-15 minutes from start to finish.

Characterization differs in the two genres as well. Characters in the *auto* often do not represent people at all but rather allegorical components of the human experience,

such as emotions, virtues, vices and even material goods. When actual people do appear on stage they typically represent larger-than-life figures such as angels, saints and devils. In the *entremés* we find quite the opposite. Rather than the symbols of morality we find the embodiment of such in sketches of supremely flawed but individualized human beings that appear to live by a creed of sin rather than lend their voices to the sin itself. By favoring the idea over the action, like living essays, characters from the *auto* present their arguments in a very intellectual and carefully organized way that requires the audience to consider the validity of its position. In contrast, the *entremés* is a visual genre as characters on stage behave in a much more literal and emotionally-charged fashion, providing the audience with glimpses into the commission of vices only alluded to in the *auto*.

The two genres also made use of very different production values and resources. The *auto*, for example, enjoyed the financial support of church and state and invested its capital in enormous and elaborate productions that dazzled the audience. Each year residents constructed large, customized stages for the production of the *auto* and stocked it with scenery, costumes and props that afforded the performer with virtually limitless staging possibilities. The *entremés*, on the other hand, (particularly those not invited into the *corral*), typically took place on a very limited, small and bare stage, set up on streets and in town squares, flanked only by a small curtain and supplying only minimal props and costuming. A street performance of this sort never really owns the performance space but must instead compete with all of the sounds, interruptions and distractions native to the space. A company invited to perform inside a *corral*, or perhaps at the

residence of a wealthy patron, might enjoy a broader range of creative staging possibilities yet, save perhaps a performance before the king, even the best of resources paled in comparison to those afforded the *auto*. As a result, monetary success for the *entremés* resided in its ability to please its audience and especially to find favor with persons of financial importance freely willing to invest in their art. The *auto* enjoyed the benefit of a national holiday that freed its citizens from the tasks of their daily routines and even encouraged them to attend, free of charge, performances that swallowed the entire attention of the town. The *entremés*, cast out into the street, competed for the fragile attention of the small gatherings of people that might stop to listen.

The stark contrast between the two stages dramatically illustrates the fundamental differences that had evolved between the Hard and the Soft Theaters; the center and the liminal. Locked in binary opposition, the angelic *auto*, as self-proclaimed champion of behaviors worthy of emulation, waged a theatrical holy war against the devilish *entremés* and its minions, whose crude and grotesque behavior became a pattern of actions best avoided. Just as Turner had surmised, liminality fed the interlude's creative possibilities and granted it a certain degree of creative license, but its in-between, neither/nor nature also marked it with the unnatural liminal shape that unsettles social constructs. After all, the physical form of the devil, having features of a man twisted by the horns and tail of a beast, symbolized the unholy monster that Lucifer had mutated into. The uncomfortable similarity between the devil and the stage caused understandable alarm from Spain's conservative element, who voiced their opposition to the nefarious influences of the devil they perceived as originating from the theater, perhaps based in part on St. Augustine's

assertion that man's interest in the theater pulled him away from his attendance at church¹⁵. One seventeenth-century opponent, Friar J. de Jesus María, levied the following censure against this unspeakable villainy:

Los teatros son templos del demonio, y los comediantes son sus ministros [...]. Es cosa, sin duda, que las comedias como ahora se representan, son cuchillos de la castidad, incentivo de torpeza, seminario de vicios, fuente de disolución, estrago de todos los estados, confusión de las costumbres, destrucción de las virtudes [...]. (Madrid 1601)

Another friar, José de Villalba, joined in the assault. His lengthy and colorful comments extend to the very limits of language in outlining, with graphic detail, the omnipresent and pedagogical dangers of liminal performance:

Las farsas, que hoy se llaman comedias, y en otros tiempos se llamaban juegos escénicos, no tuvieron su origen de los discursos de los hombres, ni fueron inventadas por ellos. Sus primeros autores fueron los demonios...Son las representaciones peste de la ciudad, cátedra de pestilencia, iglesia de los demonios donde se abrasan en fuego de concupiscencia los que ven y oyen estas farsas. Cuanto hay en la comedia es torpísimo, las acciones, las palabras, los donaires, los meneos, los cantos, las músicas, las melodías, los melindres lascivos, con que hechizan no solo a los mancebos, sino que irritan a los ancianos, en fin, es un perdimiento del tiempo, escuela de adulterio, universidad de toda lascivia, motivo de destemplanza, materia de risa y ejemplo de maldad. (Madrid 1673)

These two quotes, like weapons of censure, leave no room for doubt or discussion. Like the cartographic omen “Hic sunt dracones” (“Here be dragons”), printed on the unknown fringe of the 1503 Lenox globe, these men warned of dangers that flowed from the

¹⁵ For if there are so many contrary natures, as there are conflicting wills; there shall now be not two only, but many. If a man deliberate, whether he should go to their meeting, or to the theatre; these Manichees cry out, Behold, here are two natures: the good one, draws this way; another bad, draws back that way [...] What then if one of us should deliberate, and amid the strife of his two wills is in difficulty, whether he should go to the theatre, or to our church? [...] the will which leads to our church is good. (212-13)

“moral vacation” of the liminal stage. Of course, they were not alone. The apostle Paul had foretold of a time when sin would blanket the earth and, like the friars, unloaded a litany of offenses to both recognize and abstain from. Notice the striking familiarity of the following passage from the New Testament with the alarmist language the friars would use hundreds of years later:

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, [w]ithout natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, [t]raitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; [h]aving a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Certainly through the eyes of Spanish society the theater possessed a “form of godliness” in the *auto sacramental* and, when used properly, had accomplished great things in the defense and dissemination of truth. The church itself had appropriated theatrical devices for centuries as a university of its own. Yet by condoning the *entremés* and similar denizens of liminal performance into its ranks, the tradition had turned away from God, reducing the “gran teatro del mundo” to a “templo del demonio.”

Entremesistas understood that vice, not virtue, provided the impetus behind the interlude to a degree far exceeding that of the *auto* or the *comedia*, so much so that even Benavente’s more respectable take on the genre could not completely abandon the primrose path. In this regard, Quevedo’s proficiency in licentious wit clearly outperforms his competitors. M. G. Ticknor, for example, writes that in the *Buscón*, “la caricature aparece en medio de un océano de equívocos y retruécanos, respirando toda la obra amargura y acrimonia, advirtiéndose por doquier el sarcasmo cruel contra la

sociedad” (qtd. in Espina 173). Elsewhere in his writings Quevedo appears so comfortable and familiar with the conditions in Hell that he, like Virgil, takes his reader to visit the place directly, as in *Sueño del juicio final* and *Sueño del infierno*.

Therefore, in order to investigate and analyze the *entremés* and arrive at what truly gives it life, particularly those of Francisco de Quevedo, one must accept the mantle of transgression and approach the genre in terms relevant to its liminality and its depiction of sin. Unlike Bleznick, who briefly summarized Quevedo’s theater according to representative character types (152), or Asensio, who explored each play as it emerged chronologically (*Itinerario* 196-99), I will discuss his interludes in the same manner that Dante rose through the concentric terraces of Purgatory, namely, by grouping the plays according to the ways they depict and embrace the Seven Deadly Sins: pride, envy, wrath, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust. Of course, the interludes in question did not limit themselves to one sin in particular. After all, as St. Augustine indicates, sins rarely travel alone, causing each play to explore a demonic cocktail of mixed morals that afflict its characters. Nevertheless, I find that these interludes also appear to favor one particular sin to a greater degree than the other six. To this end, chapter 3 will investigate the desires of the ego (pride, wrath and sloth) as they appear in *La ropavejera*, *Los enfadosos*, *El Marión* and *El marido fantasma*. Chapter 4 will explore desires of ownership (greed and envy) as they appear in *La polilla de Madrid*, *La destreza*, *La venta*, *El niño y Peralvillo de Madrid* and *La vieja Muñatones*. Lastly, chapter 5 will treat the desires of the body (lust and gluttony) as they appear in *Los refranes del viejo celoso*, *Diego Moreno*, and *Bárbara*.

CHAPTER 3: DESIRES OF THE EGO (PRIDE, SLOTH AND WRATH)

We have heard of the pride of Moab;
 he is very proud: even of his haughtiness,
 and his pride, and his wrath:
 but his lies shall not be so.

(Isaiah 16:6)

Ovid's *Metamorphoses* recounts the sad tale of Narcissus, a young man who pauses to drink from a pool of water and quench his thirst. Enchanted with his own appearance, the youth turned his gaze increasingly inward until nothing else in the world concerned him. Oblivious to the love of Echo, the nymph, eventually his life wasted away as he lazily dreamt of himself by the pool's edge. Like Narcissus, desires of the ego cause one to ignore the world around him, including the needs of others, and place one's personal interest above duty. These selfish desires manifest themselves in various ways that Catholic theology identifies as three of the seven deadly or cardinal sins: pride, wrath and sloth. Hoping to warn his readers of the dangers caused by egocentric desires, St. Augustine's *Confessions* explains:

For thus we see pride wearing the mask of high-spiritedness, although only thou, O God, art high above all. Ambition seeks honor and glory, whereas only thou shouldst be honored above all, and glorified forever. The powerful man seeks to be feared, because of his cruelty; but who ought really to be feared but God only? [...] Human sloth pretends to long for rest, but what sure rest is there save in the Lord? [...] Anger seeks revenge; but who avenges more justly than thou? (Book II, 13)

In each example St. Augustine identifies sins of the ego and subsequently redirects the sinner's attention toward serving God and his fellow men. In this way the prideful man

recognizes that only God reigns supreme over man. The wrathful man finds peace knowing that only God's anger avenges an offence with justice and mercy. The slothful man anxiously engages himself in obedience to God's will.

Unfortunately, not everyone follows St. Augustine's counsel. Indulging in his selfish ways, man invites pride, wrath and sloth to destroy his life and often the lives of people around him. To these individuals Dante describes the judgment of God that receives them in the life to come. On the first terrace in Purgatory (Canto X-XII), Dante describes how the proud bear massive stones upon their backs to symbolize the weight of sin. Carved into the path below their feet, the only place they can see, these souls in torment observe examples of pride that guide them toward repentance:

Who saw the scene themselves, could see no more
Than I did, looking down upon the pavement.
Now be ye proud, and go with haughty mein,
Ye sons of Eve, and look not 'neath your feet,
Lest ye behold the evil path ye tread!
(Canto XII)

Upon hearing the *Beati pauperes spiritu* prayer ("Blessed are the poor in spirit"), Dante observes the purgation of pride and ascends. In the third terrace he observes the punishment of the wrathful, who wander through a dark and heavy fog to remind them that anger blinds one's eyes from seeing the light of God and leads him astray into forbidden paths. Among the bitter voices of the tormented, Dante hears the voice of an angel proclaiming, "Blessed are the peacemakers/ For they have freed themselves from sinful wrath" (Canto XVII). As the wrathful learn to set aside their anger and instead fill their hearts with love they discover that, "love must be the seed/ Within yourselves, whence every virtue springs (Canto XVII). On the fourth terrace Dante encounters a

group of individuals in constant motion, unable to restrain themselves or rest. These souls' quickened pace compensates for a life spent in "neglect and slothfulness/ or lukewarm eagerness for doing good" (Canto XVIII). As they learn to make active use of themselves and their talents they purge themselves of sloth and ascend from the terrace.

Although Quevedo's interludes do not include massive stones, acrid clouds of darkness or perpetual motion, they nonetheless portray prideful, wrathful and slothful figures whose wicked ways often cause them great misery and torment. These characters in *El Marión*, *La ropavejera*, *Los enfadosos* and *El marido fantasma*, conduct themselves in a manner that reveals a life governed, not by a desire to humbly submit themselves to God, but rather by the desires of their own egos.

Entremés famoso «El Marión»

El Marión represents one of Quevedo's best and most popular *entremeses* and perhaps the most superior integration of all three sins of the ego: pride, wrath and sloth. Excluding one detail, we find very little remarkable or unexpected material in the text, so much so that the oft-repeated scenario might easily have fallen from any number of *comedias de capa y espada*. The scene opens at night on a vacant city street where a solitary figure quietly approaches the balcony of a lover. Tossing pebbles at the window above the figure hears the object of affection wake from slumber and appear at the balcony. Unfortunately, the figure's impassioned plea to obtain the lover's favor goes refused and anxiety over honor demands attention to discretion. Suddenly, a second

admirer appears in the street bearing gifts for the person at the balcony and the prior scene repeats while the first suitor observes from seclusion. At last, a third solicitor follows the second, this time in the company of musicians to woo the lover with song. Unable to restrain jealous passions, the first suitor springs from the shadows and confronts the third, followed by the second. The three posturing rivals exchange brazen insults. Swords awake from sleeping scabbards and the challenge of words erupts into a brawl of blades. Shouting and sparring in the street awakes the lover's father, who surfaces with rage at the discovery of this wound to his honor. He interrogates his child as well as the three instigators in the street below. Finding no harm, the father relents to hear the musicians soothe the company's spirits. This description of *El Marión* appears no different from plays such as Lope's *El caballero de Olmedo*, or even Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla*, where secret encounters under cover of darkness lead to confrontation and suspense, until we consider that Quevedo's version reverses the genders so that the man becomes the lover at the balcony and his three suitors are all women. This detail not only activates the comedy by inverting gender stereotypes, it overhauls the significance of the dialogue to produce entirely new meanings.

Doña María first arrives at the balcony tossing pebbles at the window above. When the *marión*, Don Constanzo, finally appears he responds only with questions: "¿Soy yo san Esteban?/ ¿Soy yo Gonzalo Bustos?/ ¿Quién tira?" (4-6). Of course, the reference to Saint Stephen, martyred by a savage stoning, and to the Gonzalo Bustos, a tragic figure from Spanish folklore whose house became the target of repeated rock-peltings at the hands of the conspirators who murdered his sons, provoke a comic rather

than tragic response within the topsy-turvy world of this inverted *entremés*. Constanzo responds with a similar series of questions when Doña Bernarda, his second admirer, appears in the street below, this time whistling to get his attention:

¿Soy yo culebra?
 ¿Soy yo culebrón?
 ¿Bebo en pilón?
 ¿Soy yo mala comedia?
 ¿Qué silbos son estos?
 (22-26)

Here the comic strategy replaces stoning for whistling, and instead alludes to hissing snakes, slurped water and even poor theater. When the last suitor, Doña Teresa arrives with her band of musicians playing a delightful melody, Constanzo again reacts entirely in questions: “¿Soy yo seguidilla, que me tañen,/ o soy niña que quieren acallarme? [...] ¿Soy yo gigante para darme voces?” (72-73, 75). Now a musical theme motivates the comedy and Constanzo compares himself to a strummed lullaby, perhaps sung to a distressed little girl, or even a giant, whose enormous height requires the tiny people below him to raise their voices if they wish to be heard. In each case Constanzo’s questions show him reacting rather than acting, thereby undermining whatever influence he may have had over his own life, even though Teresa tells him, “Por quien te quiere, algo has de aventurar” (82). Still unable to decide, he even makes an appeal to the audience in order to defend his lack of complicity and maybe even collect additional suggestions as to possible recourses: “Señores de mi alma, ¿quién ha visto,/ sin dar ocasión, tal desventura?” (68-69). Through it all he clearly understands the choice his father will make when he discovers his son’s chaotic personal life: “Bueno será aventurar sin fundamento/ que me meta mi padre en un convento” (83-84).

Making matters worse, his self-directed questions reveal that he appears not to know his own identity, either because he has not yet fully awoken from sleep or because the spinning gender reversal has left him feeling a bit dizzy and disoriented. As his name implies, Constanzo indeed remains constant throughout the play, but only in the sense that his uncertainty and utter lack of volition prohibit him from ever making a decision on his own, particularly regarding the difficult decision of his own gender. Is he a man or a little girl? If he is a snake, is he a “culebra” or a “culebrón”? At one point he straddles the gender fence by stretching the limits of language to call himself a “doncello” (38), while his own father calls him “señor hijo de puta” (138). The pathetic Don Constanzo, preoccupied with his ego and ultimately unwilling to do anything about it, suffers from sin of sloth, what Dante described as “lukewarm eagerness” (xviii), or the sin of love insufficient. Just as Purgatory punished the slothful with constant thirst in the presence of water, Don Constanzo agonizes over three women so desperate to have him that they fight for his affection, all the while remaining completely clueless as to when or how or even why he should obtain any of them. Analogous female characters in situations found elsewhere in the *comedia* often do not appear in such a scene at all, as we see in the episode involving the *listón verde* from *El caballero de Olmedo*. When they do, as in *El burlador de Sevilla*, they often seem immediately cognizant of their new identities as *mujer burlada*. Quevedo’s gender reversal literally questions the objectified person at the balcony in order to mock the unexpected display of feminized masculinity to ask, “Who is this man and what is wrong with him?”

Constanzo's three suitors also fall prey to sins of ego. As each woman converses with the "man" at the balcony she repeatedly identifies him using a variety of possessive constructions. Both María and Bernarda call him "mi don Constanzo" (2, 27), and "mi bien" (6, 46). Teresa's subsequent appearance acts as an additional claim to the prize and she demands not only that the musicians play on but that Constanzo, as we have seen, do something to defend her love for him. At this point all three women burst with anger, especially María, who flies into a rage crying:

¡Rabiando estoy de cellos! ¡Vive Cristo,
que estoy por darlas yo mil cuchilladas!
¿Pasarán a las dos dos estocadas?
Ya me parece a mí que están pasadas.
(78-81)

Bernarda answers both María's fury and Teresa's insistence that the band play on to exclaim, "¡Aquí no canta nadie, si lo ignora,/ que en acabando de cantar no llora!" (85-86). When no woman retracts her claim to Constanzo, María breaks the impasse by challenging her rivals to a duel. It remains unclear what motivates such strong feelings for Constanzo besides the obvious explanation as a mechanism of the play's comic plot. María calls a temporary cease-fire only to cite Constanzo's "tez y hermosura, cosa rara" (109). Teresa, for her part, explains that, "A mí me obliga mucho más tu talle" (111). These hardly seem like convincing examples of *casus belli*. Even Constanzo admits that he has done nothing to approach, woo or otherwise encourage any of the women. Yet, just as Rene Girard outlines in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel* (1961), the triangular (or, in this case, rectangular) desire that connects the play's characters clearly demonstrates how each contender allows envy, catalyzed by wrath, to cloud her judgment and divert her

attention. As a result, affirms Gerard, she turns her gaze away from what she wants entirely and instead focuses her hostility on her two enemies, thereby thrusting her both into harm's way and the shared target of the play's mocking criticism. Constanzo may hold the coveted honor of being the title character but wrath leaves him upstaged by a woman's fury.

Lastly, the play also explores the sin of pride as an unbridled desire of one's ego. Certainly, the argument between the three women grows into a physical altercation with the potential to wound or even kill one of them but the framework of liminality assures that no real harm will come of it. Nevertheless, the real danger of the play, as in most interludes, has less to do with the blade and more to do with the tongue. When Constanzo discovers María at his window he instantly recognizes the threat her presence represents and tries to convince her to leave:

Don Constanzo:	¡Desvíese, desvíese!
Doña María:	¿Qué importa que me vean?
Don Constanzo:	¡No quiero que ande, por escuchalle dos razones, mañana mi opinión en opiniones! (15-18)

Constanzo makes it perfectly clear that he feels little or no direct danger from María but rather feels tremendous concern for the ways in which the gossip of her visit could negatively affect his reputation among his neighbors. He is prideful, seeing and considering only himself. Of course, one may argue that within the context of Early Modern Spanish society, María's appearance in the street (even if she were a man) constitutes the greater scandal since her reckless behavior, exhibits a lack of discretion, not to mention of breach of social protocol. Showing no respect for her own honor she

too thinks only of herself. Regardless how we approach the matter, both Constanzo and María exhibit an attitude more acutely focused on themselves than on others. Indeed, part of the humor of the interlude owes to the selfish exchanges between two individuals who care only for their own needs.

When Bernarda joins the midnight rendezvous Constanzo's paranoia of neighbors and, in particular, his father, gets the better of him. He goes inside briefly to check on an unsettling noise and emerges a moment later, thankful not to have found his father awake. Unfortunately, Constanzo's realizes that his luck has run out when the swordfight begins and, still concerned only about himself, actually runs out into the street hoping to put an end to it: "Buena anda mi opinión desta manera! [...] ¡Desdichado de mí!" (105, 107). His father calls from inside the house and Contanzo turns noticeably frightened. Hoping to calm his fears, Teresa tells him not to worry: "No te alteres" (119). At this suggestion Constanzo loses control: "¿No te alteres, no te alteres,/ y me viene a hallar con tres mujeres?" (120-21). As it turns out, he has a good reason to worry. When Constanzo's father bursts onto the stage, horrified at the scandal he observes, he, like everyone else in the play, instantly appropriates the danger as his own and considers only how it will affect his reputation: "¡Oh villano! ¿Así mi honor se trata?" (122). In perhaps the most comical exchange of the interlude, the father takes his son aside to find out if he has relinquished his virtue to one of these women. When the son denies the charge the two men wonder how they might go about verifying such a claim and, either unable or unwilling to devise the proper means, they turn to music as a means of escape from the situation. Quevedo constructs his plot within the framework of Spanish honor that tightly

governs virtually every aspect of society and places a certain degree of value in the pride one shows for one's name. In this regard it seems natural to assume that the play reflects its culture more than criticizes it. Yet even as an observation of honor, the play illustrates a "me first" mentality that appears to permeate the rules of proper decorum in social engagements.

As a tribute to the play's popularity, or perhaps as an illustration of the consequences of wrath, *El Marión* includes a second part that explores the continuing exploits of Don Constanzo and plunges him into a far worse predicament than he experienced earlier. As in part one, the now married Constanzo remains the unchanging and indecisive victim of his circumstances. His wife on the other hand, Doña María, has taken a much more dramatic turn for the worse, abusing her husband both verbally and physically, and even chasing him on stage with a dagger in her hand:

Doña María:	¡Vive Cristo, que si algo me replica, que he de dale quinientos mojicones!
Don Constanzo:	No me dieron mis padres para eso. ¡Nunca yo me casara! (1-4)

María's comical wrath in part one has turned to frightening and violent abuse in part two. When Constanzo begins to cry she threatens him with a severe beating: "¿Lagrimitas conmigo, maricote?/ Si cojo un látigo, a puro latigazo/ no quedéis en dos meses de provecho" (14-16). He begins to remove his clothes in order to demonstrate the bruises of former beatings but, unappeased, María shoves him to the ground. Constanzo reveals that his wife's gambling addiction has left the couple penniless. He never leaves the house, he has no friends and she will not allow him to look out a window, let alone

entertain guests or attend parties. Enraged at his words, she threatens him again with the dagger. Fortunately for Constanzo, Doña Andronia arrives looking for María to accompany some friends for the evening. Quickly, she calls for her sword and cape and removes her husband's ring from his finger. The broken Constanzo wonders how he'll ever escape such a miserable existence:

No me parió mi madre para sancochado.
 Tengan esa mujer, que está furiosa.
 ¿No hay justicia en Madrid?
 [...]
 ¿Cómo he de vivir siempre deste modo?
 El vicario pondrá remedio en todo.
 (81-86)

The interlude, perhaps a bit like Constanzo's life, ends abruptly and short. In contrast to the carefree singing and dancing that concluded the first part, María orders the musicians to play and demands that her husband dance. Here María's wrath dominates every aspect of the performance. In place of comic wordplay, harmless intrigue and deception we find only anger, violence and abuse. Whatever gentleness, love or compassion the woman may have demonstrated in the first part has been choked from the second part, leaving only "quinientos mojicones" in her wake. To view such a radical departure from both the comic formula of the genre and the witty humor of its now bitter and angry playwright would almost certainly distress any audience greatly. All of the anger, pride and sloth of the first part functions within the protective boundaries of the liminal frame. Here, on the other hand, María breaks those boundaries. There seems little doubt that her inexcusable behavior owes entirely to the wrath that she cannot or will not control and Constanzo, now a tragic and even sympathetic fool, sees little more

than death awaiting him in the future. While Constanzo's feminized behavior in the first part makes him a comical example of liminal role reversal for the audience to laugh at, María's sheer brutality in the second part makes her a terrifying monster for the audience to fear. Combined the two liminal creatures warn their male viewers that the surrender of one's masculinity leads to mockery, oppression and social death.

Entremés de la ropavejera

La ropavejera appears far ahead of its time in the way Quevedo's portrayal of the human body has more in common with Absurdist Theater of the mid twentieth century than it does the interlude, and certainly the *comedia*, of Early Modern Spain. The play explores a scenario involving two characters, Ropavejera and Rastrojo, who, as their names imply, operate a small second-hand clothing store. Yet Quevedo puts a liminal twist on the situation in a way that he transforms this simple locale into a vehicle for sharp and witty criticism of pride. As if interpreting St. Matthew's counsel to pluck out an offensive eye (Matthew 5:29, 18:9), in this second-hand store customers actually purchase second hands.

For Ropavejera, a self-proclaimed "ropavejera de la vida" (4), the human body is no different than any other article of clothing and when parts of it wear out she offers to replace them. The lengthy description she offers of her trade proves so remarkable that it bears repeating here:

Soy calcetera yo del mundo junto,
pues los cuerpos humanos son de punto,

como calza de aguja.
 cuando se sueltan en algunas barbas
 puntos de canas, porque estén secretas,
 les echo de fustán unas soletas.
 [...]

¿Y a mano izquierda veis una mozuela?
 pues ayer me compró todo aquel lado:
 y a aquella agüela, que habla con muletas,
 vendí antenoche aquellas manos nietas.
 Yo vendo retacillos de personas,
 yo vendo tarazonas de mujeres,
 yo trastejo cabezas y copetes,
 Yo guiso con almíbar los bigotes.
 Desde aquí veo una mujer y un hombre,
 nadie tema que nombre,
 que no ha catorce días que estuvieron en mi percha colgados,
 y están por doce partes remendados.
 (12-17, 20-32)

For this proto-plastic surgeon and her age-defying trade, business is booming. All of Spain has passed through her shop at one time or another. She even goes so far as to create entirely new people out of the various remnants she has lying around, like socialite predecessors to Frankenstein's monster. As the play continues customers enter one after another seeking solutions to curb the effects of time scrawled on their bodies. One woman enters and purchases a new set of teeth. Another customer follows inquiring after a pair of legs. A veiled woman approaches the shop to place an order for a new face, while a disguised man secrets himself on stage in search of a good mustache. The last customer enters the shop, like many of her predecessors, too embarrassed to reveal her true self. Hidden behind a fan, she has never been to the shop before and does so now only out of desperation. At the tender age of twenty-two, Doña Ana's once snow-white hands and smooth complexion have turned, at least in her opinion, yellowed, sunken and wrinkled. Unable to bear the shame of her appearance any longer she pleads with

Ropavejera for a complete overhaul of both hands and face. Musicians appear and, while the customers return to sing and dance their cares away, the Ropavejera, according to the stage directions, “Va limpiando con un paño las caras a todos, como a retablos” (137).

This science fiction turned comedy stands out as an excellent example of the kind of creative possibilities made available to liminal spaces. Yet underneath the light-hearted rendering of Spanish society as a collective of Mr. Potato Head dolls, Quevedo advances two criticisms of individuals consumed by their own vanity. First, the interlude attacks the notion of time as a thief of beauty that regularly appears in the *carpe diem* poetry of the era. Consider, for example, Luis de Góngora’s well-known sonnet in this tradition, “Mientras por competir con tu cabello,” that urges the reader in its final tercets to take advantage of youth and beauty before time inevitably intervenes and steals away both:

goza cuello, cabello, labio y frente,
antes que lo que fue en tu edad dorada
oro, lirio, clavel, cristal luciente
no solo en plata o en viola troncada
se vuelva, más tú y ello juntamente
en tierra, en humo, en polvo, en sombra, en nada.
(84)

The poem’s reference to the natural progression of the physical body as it ages over time provokes the reader into amorous action when it extends that time table into the grave and demonstrates the revulsion and futility of a body in advanced stages of decomposition. This linkage of physical beauty to self worth likely motivates Ropavejera’s customers to regularly seek her services in order to hold back the tides of time. Yet the interlude as a whole appears to refute their motivation. Of course,

Ropavejera has discovered a way to cheat the natural progression of the physical body through the exchange of its various parts, but the play does not hope to replace “seize the day” with “seize the scalpel.” Instead, the interlude confronts time similar to the way Quevedo’s own sonnet, “Amor constante más allá de la muerte,” rejects Góngora’s explanation of *carpe diem* to affirm that while time may change the body it cannot change the soul of the individual. The last stanza of the poem reads:

su cuerpo dejarán, no su cuidado;
serán ceniza, más tendrán sentido;
polvo serán, más polvo enamorado.
(Buendía 123)

Like his sonnet, Quevedo’s interlude admits the passage of time but insists that time is not to blame for the patron’s undesirable circumstances. In fact, in harmony with St. Augustine’s statement that “A body is not great or fair because it is a body, because, even if it were less great or less beautiful, it would still be a body” (Book 4, 29), Quevedo disassociates the two completely to suggest that the decay of physical beauty progresses in relation to the actions and attitudes of the individual. Doña Ana provides an excellent example. At only twenty-two years of age, she seems far too young to blame time for her present condition, a fact she recognizes upon revealing her face to the Ropavejera:

Doña Ana:	Y de melancolías tengo ya mordiscadas las faciones, y mazco con raigones.
Ropavejera:	¿Y es de melancolías, no de años, desmuelo semejante?
Doña Ana:	Años no hay que tratar. (89-94)

Ana blames sadness for her condition, not time, and makes a point of drawing a distinction between the two, though she never elaborates on the source of her

melancholy. The business-minded Ropavejera likewise shares the opinion. Earlier, while speaking with Godínez about a new face, she says, “Los años no tendrán la culpa de nada” (62). This time she carefully observes Ana’s face and hands and concurs that the *dama* is in fact the age she claims to be. The shopkeeper then pauses to insert a cogent and positive affirmation, the likes of which audiences do not often hear in the moral vacation of the *entremés*:

En las mujeres siempre son los años
buenos, justos, y santos inocentes:
pues en cana, ni arruga, ni quijada,
no tuvieron jamás culpa de nada.
(108-111).

Perhaps in order to avoid appearing excessively moralizing, Ropavejera interrupts herself and whisks Doña Ana away before she has a chance to reveal the actual guilty party. Quevedo returns only briefly to the notion of years following this statement and, in a word play involving the Spanish construction *tener años*, claims that years cannot be too bad since we all have them. This denial of a vilified time shifts the effects of aging away from the impartial and unsympathetic nature and instead calls into question the behavioral choices and circumstances of the individual. The customers may tell themselves they hope to run away from time but in actuality they are running only from themselves.

Quevedo’s second criticism, against the secrecy employed by the vain, appears, as one might expect, in a more subtle way. Ropavejera openly admits to the services she provides her clients and even suggests that everyone else knows the truth as well (“nadie tema que nombre”). Nevertheless, in contrast to her transparency, most of the customers

sneak their way into the shop so as to preserve their anonymity. Doña Sancha, for example, enters “tapada con manto.” Godínez enters “con manto de anascote” and whistles to get Ropavejera’s attention, who replies “Ya entiendo la seña” (58). Ortega also appears “arrebozado” and, as we have seen, Ana hides her face behind a fan and speaks in a whisper so that “ninguna persona nos oyera” (82). Their behavior inside the store corresponds to their behavior outside it. In both cases the customer hopes to go unidentified by society by modifying his or her identity. As he trades away his teeth, arms, legs, face, and anything else he can afford, the client slowly whittles away at his true identity until eventually nothing original remains.

This intentional disassociation from one’s former self liminalizes the individual, a fact many of them embrace and hope to exploit for their own advantage. Disguised, these individuals might advance the reach of their own pride. For example, Doña Sancha purchases a new set of teeth but Rastrojo directs young men in the audience to the promises made by “bocas falsas” (46). Likewise Ortega explains that he needs a good mustache in order to “engañar de hombre en una casa” (77). Regarding this intentional method of deception, St. Augustine draws a clear connection to pride that warns of future consequences: “human pride deserves to be deceived” (Book 10, 67). Quevedo’s *entremés* expounds upon this statement to show how human pride deceives itself into thinking it deceives others and thereby doubly justifies the mournful wages of sin that will eventually find such individuals. Of course, within the framework of the *entremés* those consequences are postponed until a later date, but each character’s paranoia that

time is chasing them may imply that it will overtake them, as it does for all of us, in the end.

Entremés de los enfadosos

Quevedo uses *Enfadosos* to explore the linguistic possibilities of selfishness in the interlude and uses his tremendous talent with language to mock four examples of pride in Spanish society. He does this by revisiting the comic scenario of the judge interrogating comic stereotypes made popular by works such as Cervantes's *Juez de los divorcios*, or Hurtado de Mendoza's *Miser Palomo*. This formula enjoys continued rejuvenation even today in the seemingly endless variations of television programming such as *The People's Court* and *Judge Judy*. At the beginning of the play, Pelantona, Quevedo's "jüez pesquisidor" (4), explains that he possesses a particular talent for discovering the hidden and most aggravating character flaws of an individual:

Hasta en las almas puedo hacer procesos
y sacar enfadosos de los güesos;
traigo, por alguaciles, zahoríes
que ven el enfadoso que se encierra
siete estados debajo de la tierra.
(7-11)

In fact, his talent as an inquisitor so greatly exceeds comparison that he claims, "[e]stuve consultado en Antecristo" (2). Immediately, within the first few lines of the play, Quevedo establishes that pride and vanity will govern the characters and events of the performance. Yet before the audience has time to sympathize with the man, hear his statements or have confidence in the quality of his rulings, Quevedo has already undermined the authority of his magistrate by dressing him, as the stage directions

indicate, “con una ropa de mujer por sotana, cuello de clérigo italiano, ferreruelo más corto, sombrero de verdulera. Figura ridícula” (124). The ridiculous hybridization of an man with social authority wearing a woman’s dress and accessories constantly filter Pelantona’s governance through the comedy of a liminal lens and thereby remove any shred of expectation the audience may have imagined that justice and rationality would triumph over absurdity. Typical of the *entremés* model, here we find a courtroom of fools judging fools.

Pelantona examines four defendants during the play. The first *enfadoso* he discovers, surprisingly, is the judge’s own clerk, Carasa. Before the bailiff brings any of the accused into the courtroom, the judge and his clerk discuss the vanities of Spanish society where the conversation quickly lands on women who attempt to conceal their baldness using a variety of absurd practices, including the shaving of corpses, in order to supplement thinning hair. Suddenly, his attention turned to the observation of scalps, the judge realizes that Carasa never removed his hat as a common gesture of courtesy and respect when the two men first met. The clerk promptly confesses that own baldness has transformed him into a “gorra perdurable” (75):

Yo soy de las figuras
que llevan en Madrid la calva a oscuras.
En mi vida quité el sombrero a nadie;
y soy tan estreñado de sombrero
que no hago sombrero en todo el año.
(69-73)

Embarrassed, the clerk attempts to explain his vanity and describes how complicated his life has become in order to avoid social circumstances that would require him to remove

his hat. In essence, his pride has marginalized him from society. The judge hears his argument but finds the man guilty on the following grounds:

Desdichado de vos que en el enfado
gorra eternal es caso reservado,
ni puedo, por razón de buen gobierno,
absolver de bonete sempiterno.
(76-79)

Carasa, banished from the court, accepts his fate adding only, “De dormir con sombrero ya lo hago” (102), before leaving “apretando el sombrero” (126). It would appear that this initial victory lends Pelantona a touch of credibility to his self-proclaimed talent at discovering secret frailties. Perhaps this ridiculous arbiter in drag really does possess the gift of discernment.

The next *enfadoso*, Don González, enters elaborately gushing with all the ceremony he can muster, and showering compliments on the grandness and tenderness of his moderator-superior:

Yo, señor licenciado de mi alma;
yo, señor licenciado de mi vida;
yo, juez de mis entrañas, pido expreso
un privilegio.
(103-106)

The astute judge, undecieved by the man’s flattery, recognizes the defendant instantly as a tremendous sycophant. Eager to make a memorable impression on the judge, lest he be treated equal to other *enfadosos*, González not only recognizes his sin but rejoices in it as his most distinguishing characteristic:

Yo no soy enfadoso de traseras;
yo me acuso a mi propio de enfadoso
y soy enfados en superlativo, pues antes de engendrado
enfadaba a mis padres, pues reñían

porque no tenían hijos, de manera
 que ya yo era enfadoso antes que fuera.
 Soy zurdo y zambo.
 (108-115)

González's repeated references to "yo" and "soy" dominate the linguistic subject of his explanation, showing how even his parents bowed to his infuriating influence. Without question the man exemplifies the sins of ego, yet he carries his insolence to new heights when he insists that his self-serving pride "superlativo" exceeds that of any other *enfadoso* imaginable. As he continues, González glories in the way that his regal and excessive pleasantries of salutation, employing a tone and comportment that, as he explains it, incorporates count, duke and marquis, make him the "Caballero Extramaución" of all who know him. Displaying no shortage of words, the man's self-incriminating monologue extends *ad nauseum*. In fact, his parsimonious grip on the conversation almost entirely forbids the judge from interjecting any kind of rebuttal or questioning, and the impertinent flatterer refuses to leave the stage even when the Alguacil enters bearing the next set of defendants.

In contrast to the previous *enfadosos*, both men who approached the judge voluntarily, the last examinees are two women who appear in court not by their own design but rather by mandate of the law. The first woman, the beautiful Doña Luisa, so instantly entrances the judge that he almost forgets his duty, until the Alguacil intervenes to remind him that this clever siren "tiene enfadada/ toda la Corte a puro manotada" (202-03). As if immune to her tricks in a way Pelantona is not, the Alguacil emerges as the accusatory voice of the law, explaining that, "Antes de conocer, pide a la gente,/ y es una pedidora supitana" (221-22). Luisa, like her predecessors, admits her guilt but defends

her attitude both eloquently and almost convincingly. To her, asking for favors has become more than a habit but rather a fundamental and rather enjoyable way of life:

Y estoy en el pedir tan divertida,
que ayer, por preguntar a un caballero
que vino a visitarme
«¿Cómo está vuesarced?» equivoquéme,
y le vine a decir: «¿Cómo está deme?»
(235-39)

Luisa's self-assessment makes use of a play on words to illustrate the Alguacil's accusation against her. Her interest never strays from the extraction of monetary favors to the exclusion of even the simplest of social courtesies. Perhaps recognizing the judge's inability to defend himself against Luisa's comical and honeyed words, the Alguacil interrupts her explanation to introduce the last *enfadoso* of the play, Doña Lorenza, whom he alleges "ha sido cien doncellas en diez años,/ y lo tiene por trato" (246-47). In response to the accusation against her, Lorenza claims that her deceptive behavior actually serves to boost the popularity of Spain's image in the eyes of foreign visitors who return to their various nations under the assumption that the nation abounds with young, chaste and available women. The argument proves as thin as the hair hidden under the hat on Carasa's scalp and ultimately falls on deaf ears. Luisa quickly intervenes and asks for music. True to form, she gets what she wants as incarcerated musicians (also *enfadosos*) spontaneously appear to celebrate the conclusion of the play with song and dance.

As we have seen, the interlude adheres to the liminal comedy formula of its genre in many ways. This semblance of a court of law admits a series of two-dimensional *figuras* with little or no real substance. Each character engages the lampooned figure of

authority over the proceedings, Pelantona, in a humorous way that allows the playwright to safely criticize perceived vices, in this case pride. Furthermore, the guilty parties, also typical of the interlude, speak with a degree of frank confession regarding their sins. In this regard *Los enfadosos*, using a formula similar to dozens if not hundreds of other *entremeses*, fails to demonstrate the rich and creative imagination of a man like Francisco de Quevedo. Yet the play distinguishes itself within the genre by the remarkable way in which the poet distorts, reinvents and manipulates language in order to offer a critique of Spanish vanity. Consider, for example, the extensive amount of word play dedicated to the theme of baldness. After describing his abilities to Carasa, Pelantona asks his assistant, “Usanse todavía antojicalvos” (12). The understandably personal reference to “antojicalvos,” an unusual combination of the words *antojo* and *calvo*¹⁶, causes Carasa to respond with an equally clever terminology for hair loss: “Mucho se usa coronilla en cueros” (13). Now described as a crown of skin, this tit for tat sets in motion a lengthy series of word play involving baldness. Pelantona begins the pseudo-contest, saying:

Conviene restañar la calva luego;
que se introducen todos en calvinos
y se vuelven los hombres perros chinos,
y como al hombre quieren las mujeres
(llévase esta doctrina)
solo para pelalle,

¹⁶ The word *antojicalvo* also appears in *El hospital de los podridos*, an *entremés* sometimes attributed to Miguel de Cervantes. In the play, Gálvez laments his state after being scorned by the woman he loves. Secretario, observing the scene explains, “Este hermano se pudre de que una dama muy hermosa deste lugar está enamorada de un hombre calvo y que mira con un antojo.” Gálvez responds with disbelief: “Pues ¿no me ha de ir? Que más quisiera verla enamorada de un demonio. ¿Por qué una mujer tan hermosa ha de favorecer a un hombre antojicalvo?” (Cervantes, *Hospital de los podridos*, paragraph 6).

sienten, al repelar todo cristiano,
que las gane la calva por la mano.
(14-21)

The twisted game of word association allows the poet to expand the initial reference to bald-induced vanity and connect the vice to the misogynist opinion that women maintain the appearance of beauty in order to strip away all of a man's possession, including his hair. At this point the poetic discussion intensifies to more directly resemble the thinly veiled voice of Quevedo himself, as the baroque, rapid-fire game of words spins to a climax much like an Abbott and Costello comedy routine:

Carasa: Digo señor, que hay calvos y calvarios,
calvones y calvísimas calvudas,
calva Annás, calva Herodes, calva Judas.
Juez: Hijo Carasa, en buen calvería,
calva teñida, sucia y con ribete,
ha de llamarse chúrrete calvete.
(22-27)

Quevedo's intensifying linguistic strategies mirror the growing desperation of follicly-challenged practitioners as they struggle to maintain the appearance of beauty. These individuals chip away at their true identities and, similar to the physical transformation that accompanies the patrons of *La ropavejera*, they slowly mutate into strange, hybrid creatures. Far from an isolated phenomena, the judge remarks that Court has become full of these "guedejas en pena" (41). He even recoils upon seeing flowing locks of stolen hair the way Perseus turned from Medusa, calling them, "rizos [...] hechos culebros" (44). Ironically, although the men accuse women of going to extreme measures to conceal age and baldness in order to literally save face, Carasa, a man, proves the guilty party of the play. Although vanity proves his downfall as well as for the women, he

insists that his hat, as a component of social behavior, and his refusal to remove it has, like the “rizos culebros” become the external symbol of his deformed honor: “soy un hidalgo y muy mal criado” (84).

Quevedo also incorporates the notion of time similar to the way he does in *La ropavejera*, where the shopkeeper’s customers suffer from the anxiety that time somehow eats away at their bodies. Pelantona explains that the wig-wearing members of the Court engage in such extreme practices precisely because, “quieren hacer cesar atrás las vidas,/ dando a entender que pueden con engaños/ hacia la cuna recular los años” (33-35). Later, when speaking with the Alguacil about Luisa, the woman who wants it all, he admits that no woman seeks a greater portion of one item in particular: “no tengan años las mujeres” (201). The denial of time as a minor theme in *Los enfadosos* links the interlude with *La ropavejera*, a play Asensio that believes represents a continuation of the former.

Nevertheless, here Quevedo chooses not to explore the motivations of a person’s vanity so much as the negative impact that vanity has on others. Carasa’s preoccupation with his baldness causes him to regularly breach the niceties of social protocol and anger the person offended. González’s “enfado en superlativo” sets him up as a hollow, disingenuous target for the ridicule and scorn of his peers. The play’s only women, Luisa the slothful freeloader and Lorenza the greedy, lusty and falsified “virgin” come to embody the aggravating friend, neighbor or relative that takes without giving back and betrays our trust. In each case Quevedo labels his creations as “enfadosos,” not for the rage they cause themselves but rather for the rage they inspire in others and therefore

become the instruments of their own undoing. In a very real sense, they are the “vain talkers” divided against themselves that St. Augustine warned his readers to both recognize and avoid:

Let them perish from thy presence, O God, as vain talkers, and deceivers of the soul perish, who, when they observe that there are two wills in the act of deliberation, go on to affirm that there are two kinds of minds in us: one good, the other evil. They are indeed themselves evil when they hold these evil opinions—and they shall become good only when they come to hold the truth and consent to the truth that thy apostle may say to them: “You were formerly in darkness, but now are you in the light of the Lord.” (Book 8, 22)

In the brief instance of the play we do not see a change in behaviors as each sinner discovers virtue and holds to it, nor, in my opinion, does Quevedo intend such. Rather, the liminality of the genre allows the poet to poke fun at four examples of vices that plague his own culture in a light-hearted and harmless spirit. Ultimately, as Pelantona indicates at the end of the interlude, these kinds of “vain talkers,” despite their harmlessness, grow tiresome and the simple redirection of one’s attention to merry music wipes them from the stage as easily and effectively as a tiny ray of light pierces through the darkness.

Entremés del marido fantasma

El marido fantasma humorously introduces a subconscious space between reality and the imagination in order explore the sin of pride and equate marriage with a life of punishment. The play follows Muñoz, a young man described in the stage directions as, “de novio galán.” In a conversation with his friend Mendoza, Muñoz explains that

although he may appear ready for marriage he has not yet found his bride. Having given the matter a great deal of thought, Muñoz describes the ideal woman whom he seeks:

Yo estoy enmariado;
 mas la mujer que quiero
 no ha de tener linajes ni parientes;
 quiero mujer sin madres y sin tías,
 sin amigas y espías,
 sin viejas, sin vecinas,
 sin visitas, sin coches y sin Prado,
 y sin lugarteniente de casado.
 (11-18)

Mendoza reacts with astonishment. Rather than discourage his friend from pursuing such a course, or lauding maternal virtues, he wonders if such a woman, one free from all familial and personal attachments, especially female relations, even exists. Muñoz, perhaps a bit smug at the brilliance of his original idea, declares, “Ella es invención nueva” (23), showing himself completely detached from anything but his own desire.

The self-centered Muñoz has instead crafted in his mind a woman capable of satisfying his every wish, even if he must defy the very laws of nature to do it. Before he can explain further, Mendoza thinks of perhaps the only woman in history to warrant such a description. Eve, he remembers, had neither mother nor aunt, and certainly had no prying neighbors to speak of, although he admits that even she, the woman “invented” by God himself, entered matrimony with unwanted baggage: “tuvo culebra” (27). Muñoz remains firm in his desire and carries the example of Eve to its extreme, asserting:

Tenga norabuena
 cuantas cosas enhebras;
 no tenga madre, y llueva Dios culebras;
 que una mamá de estrado
 es chupa y sorbe y mazca de un casado.
 (27-31)

Yet Muñoz, like a lawyer defending his hypothesis in open court, expounds upon his defense of the snake against the mother-in-law with a lengthy speech, something not typically seen in the *entremés*. A snake, he argues, has the decency to transport itself, while the mother-in-law “arrastra al que la tiene yernalmente” (34). The snake also exhibits a great deal of restraint when necessary, in contrast to the mother-in-law who “de cualquiera moscatel que asome,/ [...] se las pide y se las come” (36-37). The snake offered the gift of an apple to Eve but the mother-in-law “pide toda fruta humana” (39). Certainly, the snake may hiss from time to time, but the mother-in-law “hace silbar al triste yernecillo” (42). The snake changes and replenishes its own skin while the mother-in-law “si arrugó el propio, desolló el ajeno” (45). Lastly, the nefarious snake that tempted Eve may have possessed great knowledge but the even more sinister mother-in-laws and old women in the world, perhaps exceeding the devil in evil, “dicen que saben más que las culebras” (48). As a result, Muñoz stands by his desire and concludes his open declaration of selfishness by expressing his superlative preference for a woman with all manner of horrible diseases rather than family, since “el parentesco es peste en cuarto grado,/ que le padece el misero casado” (59-60).

By coincidence, Mendoza knows of a woman in the village who may in fact fit his companion’s description, a solitary woman with no family to speak of, and he promptly leaves to seek her out. Muñoz, now alone on stage, drifts into a sleeping vision where he hears his name called in a mournful voice echoing the impassioned plea of Jacob Marley that introduces Ebenezer Scrooge to a night of ghostly visitations. Like Marley, Lobón has returned in agony and grief to warn his former friend of a fate worse than death:

marriage. Of course, he has not come alone. Following his every move, Lobón's wife, her parents and even the matchmaker that arranged the fated union, cling persistently to the newlywed and slowly bleed him of possessions and sanity. His in-laws, critical of their new son's every move, accuse him of failing to deserve so great a prize as their daughter, while the matchmaker calculates endless fees for his services. Lobón's new wife, for her part, demands an unending list of entertaining comforts, including parties, clothing, jewelry and fancy meals that have exhausted his finances. "Sácame de la suegra que padezco," pleads Lobón, "Sacar de suegras es sacar de penas" (164, 166).

Muñoz awakes from his ghastly vision with new resolve to flee from the bonds of marriage, only to find a mysterious woman by his side. She tells him that her name is Oromasia de Brimbronques, and that "calva de amigas y parientes" (184) she has come hoping to make Muñoz her eighteenth husband in yet another marriage of financial opportunity. Just as Muñoz marshals his courage in defense of his "gusto y [...] contento" another visitor appears. Lobón returns, this time in the flesh, and as the stage directions indicate, "Aparécese lleno de luto" (p. 81). Thanks to an unexpected fever, and with a little help from an understanding doctor, Lobón finds himself a recent widower and the wealthy inheritor of his former wife's estate. In contrast to the supplicant attitude of his ghostly doppelganger, the living Lobón morbidly urges his friend to marry with all due haste:

Cásate, Muñoz amigo,
cásate luego de choz;
que todo puede pasarse
por ver ir en procesión,

chirriada de los niños
 la mujer que nos cansó.
 (240-45)

Muñoz thinks he has fallen into the perfect plan. He will take the untethered Oromasia to wife and, following a brief period of time, conspire to have her killed: “Aun no durará esta esposa/ un año, según yo soy” (250-51); “Para todos hay entierros; capuz tengo prevenido” (261-62); “Sin duda seré heredero” (265). Little does he know that in Oromasia his selfishness has found its equal, if not its superior. As Muñoz gazes on his perceived ticket to riches his unchecked pride blinds him from recognizing Oromasia’s seventeen marriage certificates for what they really are: trophies of previous conquests and omens of his own undoing. Without realizing it, he stands in the presence of exemplary pride and an ambitious con artist. He may have plans to eliminate her within the year but we learn in an aside that she will out-swindle him in less than a month: “Para un mes tiene marido,/ en éste, mi condición” (252-53). The musicians, attempting to conclude the scene on a merry note of song and dance, try in vain to prevent the fateful marriage and remind that viewer that this unholy union of self-serving appetites, despite receiving the blessing of Lobón, will only end in tragedy.

Transitions into and out of liminal spaces dominate the development of the interlude. Muñoz’s appearance as a bridegroom without a bride instantly identifies the play’s marital satire for the audience but it also disassociates him from marriage in a way that transforms his character into a walking contradiction. More than a man on a selfish quest for the impossible, he is at once neither single nor married. Nor is he the phantom husband of the play’s title. Rather, as an embodiment of self-serving pride, Muñoz is a

dangerous, marital mercenary on the prowl for Machiavellian rewards with little consideration for the consequences those designs will have on others. His twice uttered declaration, “No quiero madre, y llueva Dios culebras” (69) likewise defies religion and presumes his own supremacy over his circumstances. Having denied familial roots and almost daring God to curse him with a Biblical plague, Munoz rejects both man and maker in favor of some unnatural intermediary phase betwixt heaven and earth that he almost certainly has invented for himself.

Just before drifting into sleep and experiencing his frightful vision, Muñoz offers the following prayer:

Señor, tú que libraste
a Susana inocente de los viejos,
pues escuchas mis quejas,
líbrame de las madres, suegras, tías,
que es chilindrón legitimo de viejas;
y como defendiste
del lago de los leones el Profeta,
en las miserias mías
defiéndeme del lago de las tías.
(96-104)

The reference to Susana alludes to the apocryphal account of a beautiful and virtuous wife condemned to death for a crime she did not commit. Before receiving her sentence she makes an appeal to God to recognize her innocence. The prophet Daniel receives inspiration to question her accusers separately. When the men fail to corroborate their accounts of the crime Daniel declares Susana’s innocence and orders her accusers stoned. This same prophet Daniel famously faced the “lago de leones” and, also by prayer, surfaces the next day entirely unharmed from his stay in the lions’ den. The combination of the two references results in a binary parallel demonstrating how Muñoz sees himself

as both another victimized Susana and a visionary prophet, condemned to death by the false-accusing, ravenous women eager to devour him. Considering his prior defiance of God, and the utterly false message delivered by the phantom husband, Muñoz emerges from his subconscious journey through the liminal not as a humble believer having received divine assistance but rather as a self-serving witness to the projection of his imaginations and desires. In essence, his pride causes him to replace God and true revelation with his own preferred version of heavenly visitation, thereby justifying for himself his misogynist desires.

In fact, the tentacles of pride extend beyond Muñoz to distort the very language of the interlude. Following his introduction to Oromasia, Muñoz, employs a play on words in a manner typical of Quevedo's satirical style. Affirming his refusal to wed he argues:

Cásese el rico, el virtuoso, el bueno,
que yo no quiero entrar en matrimonio;
que si bien lo construye quien lo alaba,
empieza en matri, y en el monio acaba.
(220-24)

Matrimony, in his opinion, belongs to the rich, the virtuous and the good; three adjectives he extends no effort in applying to himself. Instead, by fracturing the word into two pieces he opens up a middle space that serves to distort the word's original meaning. Instead of the holy bond between a husband and wife, Muñoz deconstructs the word into *matri-*, a reference to maternal and motherly, and *-monio*, a clear allusion to *demonio*, to produce a liminal monster: the medusa-like mother-devil. What's more, this redefining of terms also accompanies a major shift in the play's poetic structure. Prior to this realization, Quevedo employs largely *endecasilabos* in a way that, according to Lope's

Arte nuevo, serves to communicate “cosas graves” (311), an understandable choice given the protagonist’s abnegation of marriage. Yet immediately following this reinvention of language, just as the real Lobón enters to tell his friend the happy news of his wife’s untimely end, Quevedo switches to the poetic structure to *redondillas*, a form Lope indicates corresponds with “las [cosas] de amor” (312). The switch from *endecasilabos* to *redondillas*, from “cosas graves” to “cosas de amor,” underscores the first real thematic shift in the interlude. Lobón’s announcement causes Muñoz to reconsider and redefine his previously unwavering rejection of women, marriage and the devil’s *matri-monio*, and instead focuses his attention to discover his true love: money and the power to seek out his own happiness.

Not surprising, St. Augustine warned of men like Muñoz and even confessed to having behaved like them from time to time, calling them:

men delirious in their pride, carnal and voluble, whose mouths were the snares of the devil; a trap made out of a mixture of the syllables of thy name and the names of our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Paraclete. These names were never out of their mouths but only as a sound and the clatter of tongues, for their heart was empty of truth. (Book 3, 10)

In a sense, Muñoz’s reinvention of language and doctrine allows him to appropriate the play’s title as his own. As the disembodied shadow of husbandry he seeks only the trappings of marriage in a way that both satisfies the clatter of his mixed ideology and, like the “vision” of his friend telling him precisely what he wished to hear, deceives him from confronting a heart “empty of truth.”

None of the characters in these plays literally suffer the graphic tortures of Dante's Purgatory. None of the Ropavejera's prideful customers bear enormous stones on their shoulders but all of them reveal an emotional pain that equally weights them down until they cast of their anatomical imperfections. Muñoz's pride in *El marido fantasma* likewise inhibits him from standing upright and recognizing the dangerous woman that stands in front of him, ready to land on him like a tremendous weight. Dante's wrathful souls wander in darkness, unable to see through thick smoke, similar to the way Don González, as the "enfados en superlativo," fails to recognize that the judge, and everyone else in *Los enfadosos*, has long since ignored his incessant monologue. Likewise, María, Bernarda and Teresa, Constanzo's three wrathful suitors, argue blindly in a liminal space below the balcony, causing them to turn their attention inward upon each other and almost completely ignore the object of their desires in the process. Lastly, poor Constanzo's sloth causes his life to spin in constant danger with no rest in sight, very much like Dante's slothful forever run to compensate for a lack of spiritual fervor. While the punishments of the guilty in the interlude often emerge more subtly than they do in Dante, they similarly correspond to the sin committed with monstrous results. As St. Augustine describes, "Thus it is that by a sinner's own deeds he is himself harmed" (Book II, 13).

CHAPTER 4: DESIRES OF OWNERSHIP (GREED AND ENVY)

Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough,
and they are shepherds that cannot understand:
they all look to their own way,
every one for his gain, from his quarter.

(Isaiah 56:11)

The selfish desires of greed and envy easily contribute to more interludes than do any other sins. Naturally, these mutated examples of the otherwise natural human instincts to survive and progress represent prominent stumbling blocks to individuals intent on casting off the impurities brought about by “greed of filthy lucre” (1 Timothy 3:3). The New Testament, for example, includes the story of a wealthy young man who approached Jesus with the following question: “Good Master, what good shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16). The direct and honest inquiry receives an equally direct answer from the Master:

[...] if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. [...] Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honor thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. (Matthew 19:17-19)

Perhaps unsatisfied with so simple a formula for a treasure so great as eternal salvation, the young man probes further: “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” (Matthew 19:20). At this point Jesus perceives the man’s heart and deals him a crushing blow: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me” (Matthew 19: 21).

Matthew's account gives no indication that any additional questions followed, and says only that, "[...] when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22). St. Augustine includes this story in his *Confessions* to illustrate how the desire to accumulate wealth represents a theological stumbling block against an individual's progress toward God. To those souls struggling to overcome the love of money he advocates a prompt call to repentance:

[...] uproot the briar patch of avarice; sell what you have, and be filled with fruit by giving to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and follow the Lord if you would be perfect and joined with those in whose midst he speaketh wisdom—who know how to give rightly to the day and to the night—and you will also understand, so that for you also there may be lights in the firmament of heaven—which will not be there, however, unless your heart is there also. And your heart will not be there unless your treasure is there, as you have heard from the good Teacher. (Book XIII, 24)

In the passage, St. Augustine compares greed and envy to weeds that one must pluck out of his heart. Only in this way can a man place his heart upon the treasures of the kingdom of God and find true wealth.

Dante encountered many individuals during his journey through Purgatory who, like the young man that spoke with Jesus, chose not to sacrifice their material goods. On the second terrace, for example, Dante meets the envious, who spent their days gazing wistfully at the possessions of others only to enter the afterlife and have their eyes sewn shut with an iron wire. Furthermore, the group appears dressed in rough, earthen-colored clothing that prohibits them from standing and makes them virtually indistinguishable for the ground they sit on. These souls in torment use their blindness and humility as a reminder to keep their eyes fixed on the glory of God instead of on the treasures of their

neighbors. On the fifth terrace Dante observes the souls of the avaricious lying face-down and motionless on the ground. One of the captives speaks to the travelers and explains his torment saying:

And as our eyes, intent on earthly things,
 Were never lifted up to heaven—so
 Has justice sunk them here upon the ground.
 Even as greed destroyed our love for good,
 Whereby the labor of our lives was lost,
 So justice holds us here in close restraint,
 Captive, and fettered by the hands and feet;
 And for so long as it shall please the Lord,
 We must remain outstretched and motionless.
 (Canto XIX)

Both categories of sin receive a punishment that strips them, not only from all power and worldly possessions, but also blinds them from observing the conditions of their companions. In this manner they learn to abandon money and objects and instead depend on God for everything they have, looking to Him alone to provide their needs as the giver of good things.

The desire of ownership, particularly schemes to obtain riches fraudulently, represents one of the strongest and most common motivators in *entremeses*, including those by Quevedo. While greed and envy undoubtedly appear in all twelve of Quevedo's interludes to one degree or another, five in particular illustrate these sins with special attention: *La venta*, *La vieja Muñatones*, *La destreza*, *El niño y el Peralvillo de Madrid* and *La polilla de Madrid*. While interlude con artists and their accomplices do not always experience the punishments of Dante's Purgatory, they cause great distress to those around them and often serve to punish others for the practice of sin.

Entremés de la venta

Similar to the function of the television in modern times, inns of Early Modern Spain served as a social nexus of information. Visitors provided news, gossip and entertainment from the city as well as a source of financial revenue to its proprietors. Naturally, given its geographically liminal location between cities, its high level of intimate interaction with the ordinary citizen and its common appearance across the landscape of the nation, the setting of the inn appears often in Golden Age literature. Consider, for example, the important role the *venta* plays in Don Quijote's tale as both the "castle" where he takes his vows of knighthood and the safe haven he returns to when the execution of those duties leave him battered and broken. Yet the liminal qualities of the inn that make it appealing to the pilgrim, the news monger or the writer also make it appealing to the thieves, rogues, prostitutes, rascals and con-artists eager to swindle an unsuspecting traveler out of a few extra coins and slip away without retribution. This latter attribute in particular, as a covert for greed and crime, makes the *venta* particularly attractive to writers of *entremeses* in need of locales to display the innumerable adventures of human vices related to ownership.

Quevedo's interlude, simply titled *Entremés de la venta*, makes an innkeeper out of a *pícaro* (or perhaps vice versa), showing how the businessman's underhanded dealings transform the social nexus of the *venta* into a financial magnet of greed through a series of guests, including a young mule-driver, a student and a group of musicians. Corneja, the aging *ventero*, begins the play holding a rosary and praying while his servant, Grajal,

sings a merry tune in another room. Yet, transformed by the liminal frame, the rosary quickly evaporates as a representative of piety into one of hypocrisy while the light-hearted music adopts a comically subversive agenda that ultimately drives the action of the play. Grajal and her musical theater articulate more lines than any other character in the play and expose the countless sordid details of her employer regarding both the food he serves and the lodgings he offers. As a consequence of her extensive stage time, Grajal, rather than Corneja, leaps into the role of chief protagonist, leaving her employer behind as the defenseless butt of all her jokes:

Linda letra me canta mi criada.
 No sé como la sufro. ¡Vive Cristo!
 Ella se baila todo cada día,
 Y siempre está cantando estos motetes;
 Y sisa, y es traviesa y habladora.
 Moza de venta no ha de ser canora.
 (9-14)

The distinctly performative act of singing, dancing and speaking on the part of the servant “morphs” the setting of the *venta* yet again into a second stage within the stage as she both entertains the play’s internal guests at the inn and offers a running commentary for the benefit of the external audience. The expansion of the narrative frame invites not only travelers into the inn but also the audience. As if aware of his inn’s reputation for fraud in all of these levels of performance, and eager not to see it spread in any of them, Corneja ineffectually attempts to navigate the multiple frames by repeatedly begging Grajal (in vain) to desist:

Coroneja: ¡Válgale los demonios por cantadora!
 Ya que cantas de chanza,
 ¿es bueno el villancico en mi alabanza?
 Grajal: Capitulo segundo, en que se trata

en cómo se responde en esta venta.
 Corneja: ¿Coronista te haces?
 Grajal: Tenga cuenta.
 (23-28)

Grajal, on the other hand, lends a narrative voice to both the interlude and her meta-performance within it. Her voice then becomes one of both mockery and warning. As audience members we would do well to avoid Corneja's inn, and probably every other similar establishment across the nation that engages in the same practices. Unable to disrupt or even interrupt her double-narrative, Corneja must instead become the audience to his own sins and inheritor of his own undoing.

The symbolic names of the innkeeper and his assistant immediately describe the pertinent qualities of each person's character. According to Covarrubias, a *grajal* refers to a "villa en tierra de campos" (363), although it also bears a similarity to the word *grajo*, or "rook." The word likewise appears in contexts associated with the songs of birds. This image of a singing village bird paint a multi-faceted portrait of a woman who, perhaps as the representative voice of the town, roosts with her greedy master in order to sing out his secrets to her companions. Corneja's name, "crow," describes the man as an ominous bird of prey in a manner that should serve as a warning to his guests. According to Grajal's first song:

¿Es ventero Corneja?
 Todos se guarden,
 que hasta el nombre le tiene
 de malas aves.
 ¿Qué harán las ollas
 adonde las lechuzas
 pasan por pollas?
 (2-5)

Like his crow namesake, Corneja shrewdly manages his business affairs like a hunter on the prowl for a meal, waiting for the right opportunity to swoop in and take advantage of his guests, even if it means cooking up owls and calling it chicken. This association with hunting and food becomes a metaphor not only for the ravenous appetite of the innkeeper but the tightfisted way he retains what he owns by diluting the products he sells to others. Grajal, for example, reveals that this businessman of prey practices an eclectic menu of penny-pinching culinary secrets, including that he frequently serves his guests rats:

Quien temiere ratones,
venga a esta casa,
donde el huésped los guisa
como los casa.
Zape aquí, zape allí, zape allá,
que en la venta esta,
que en la venta esta.
(16-22)

“Zape” emerges as a common refrain at Corneja’s inn of avarice where any being that moves (and even those that do not) represents a suitable meal. In addition to owls and rats, Grajal tells us that some of the inn’s regular delicacies include cats (29-32), bugs (70, 89), watered-down wine (42), donkey (194) and a *morcilla* made of leather taken from an old boot on the side of the road that several diners mistook for a piece of luggage (124-33). She even suggests to one customer that he not rest too much or he may end up on the menu himself:

Mozo:	¡Muerto estoy!
Grajal:	Pues no sepa el huésped que estás muerto, porque al punto, si acaso nos escucha, os venderá a los huéspedes por trucha. (176-179)

Corneja's extensive and artful manipulation of the menu may provide colorful, comical and shocking images of avarice for the audience to enjoy but to his guests these repulsive concoctions represent gross violations of his responsibility as an innkeeper. In fact, one such guest, a student, actually returns to the *venta* to accuse its proprietor of offending both his stomach and his wallet:

Estudiante:	En esta pobre choza todos somos hurtados sin Mendoza.
Corneja:	Miente, miente el picaño.
Estudiante:	Ladrón, protoladrón, archiladrillo y tátara Pilatos, casamentero infame de estómagos y gatos...
Corneja:	¡Infame, espera, calla!
Estudiante:	Que quien no mata con morcilla rala, menos me matará con una bala. (212-21)

In addition to the clever metatheatrical reference to a fellow *entremesista*, Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza, the student's reaction to the abuses at the inn accuses Corneja of criminally exceeding the limits of thrifty business sense. Corneja's avarice makes him both a thief and a magician, taking what does not belong to him and forming unnatural alliances of man and beast in return. More than just a monster himself, and a relative of Pilate, he is a maker of monsters, since those who partake of his meals, "después de comidas rebuznaban" (196) as if transformed into the donkeys they have eaten. Thanks to the liminal frame, the audience laughs at the sins of others while the voices from within the liminal frame, a bit like Dante's souls in Purgatory, bray at their own misfortunes.

Entremés de la vieja Muñatones

The prose style of Quevedo's *Entremés de la vieja Muñatones* suggests a date of composition prior to 1620 and likely represents the earliest in a series of interludes he dedicated to the fraudulent and nefarious trade secrets of procuresses, prostitutes and pickpockets thirsty to bleed their victims of every last cent. To accomplish this task Quevedo, in essence, descends into hell by leaving the socially acceptable structures of taverns and residences and instead follows these monstrous individuals across boundaries of social propriety and into the marginalized spaces that spawned them. The play opens with a conversation between Cardoso, a conservative visitor from Sevilla, and Pereda, a man eager to help his friend unwind with the sights, sounds and sins of Madrid. "Vuesté trae acazorlado el gusto," spurs Pereda. "Suelte ese dinero y hágale bravo y engañese por mi" (24-25). Eventually Cardoso relents: "Vamos a Madrid. Dinerito alerta, ojo avizor, que tocan a vieja como a muerto" (46-47). The two men leave to find Muñatones, the woman of the title who operates a brothel. While the two men make their way to the establishment, Quevedo transports the audience to the scene instantly, providing a covert glimpse into the backstage mechanics of Madrid's sexual theater. Oddly enough, behind closed doors the brothel looks and sounds very much like a school with Muñatones instructing her two pupils, Cristina and Berenguela, in the art of extracting money from their customers:

Berenguela:	¿Vengo tarde madre?
Muñatones:	Hija, sero venis, cito vadis, etc. No tenéis cudicia de cosa de virtud. ¿En qué quedamos ayer, Cristina?

Cristina: Señora, acabó vmd. el párrafo de las nueve mil y seiscientas maneras de pedir, y empezó la materia de «hoy no fían aquí, mañana sí tampoco».

Muñatones: Atendiste. Los hombres se han vuelto ganados. (54-60)

Educated, formal and typical of an instructor in an academic institution, Muñatones even chides her tardy student using the Latin expression “sero venis cito vadis [nunquam bonus scholaris]” (“Arrive late, leave early, never a good student”). Yet, unlike her university counterparts in Salamanca or Alcalá de Henares, scholarship in this context means studying and mastering the art of extortion. Her careful instructions reduce the chaos of human emotions into proven statements of natural law and create a scientific laboratory of cause and effect. These precursors to behavioral psychology use their knowledge of the male sex to their own advantage, having discovered and developed the actions, words and attitudes that will enable them to extract the greatest sum from their foolish targets.

A knock at the door interrupts the lesson on greed and Muñatones quickly swaps it for one on sewing as her students remove the instruments for weaving fabric that she calls “herramienta[s] de disimulo” (99). While the women feign embroidery the door opens to reveal Pereda and Cardoso, who enter the “classroom” like tasty morsels haplessly wandering into the spiders’ sanctum. Pereda knows Muñatones¹⁷ well and even

¹⁷ Quevedo’s use of the name “Muñatones” represents one of many examples where the poet engages in a dialogic relationship with works by Cervantes. In chapter 7 of the first part of the *Quijote*, for example, Don Quijote awakes to find his library missing. When a housekeeper explains that the devil must have claimed the room and all its contents, Don Quijote’s niece interjects: “No era el diablo [...] sino un encantador que vino sobree una nube de noche [...] Dijo también que se llamaba el sabio Muñaton” (53). Quevedo perhaps deliberately draws from Cervantes’s negative use of the name to describe his own

embraces her, calling her “madre” (110), before introducing her to his companion. Seizing the opportunity, the master and her pupils instantly weave a net of deceit to ensnare their guests and, quite symbolically, the conversation tries to persuade the men into providing the women with a meal. Cardoso appears to recognize the ploy and, in an aside, exclaims: “Mala ensanchadura te dé en el corazón. ¡La sarta que ha metido la vieja! Teniente se hace de un oído y yo de dos manos. Quiero mudar plática” (143-45). A second knock at the door interrupts Cardoso’s attempt to steer the conversation in a different direction. Robledo, another customer, enters anxiously seeking news regarding a certain letter he arranged for delivery using Muñatones’s help. She attempts to reassure the man that all is going according to plan before a knock at the door intrudes upon her efforts for a third time. Not wanting to spoil her chances with her first guests, she politely asks them to step into another room while she manages a bit of personal business. They relent.

Like Robledo, Don Toribio now enters inquiring after a letter he sent to one Justiniana but free from the necessity to tease out her intentions with hints and inklings, Muñatones responds with clarity that reveals her greedy hunger. Justiniana indeed expressed his emotions but she may have received them better “si fueran escritas con una pluma de diamantes” (181-82). His signature lacked the wealthy status of nobility and, although full of words and promises, the light weight of the ink and paper confirmed by absence of coins to accompany it. The business of love, explains Muñatones, comes with

character, a mysterious and even demonic woman capable of silently plundering a man’s purse as well as his script.

a cost that Toribio cannot hope to provide:

Doña Justiniana es muy larga de nombre, es tomona y más querrá. No tiene vmd. hacienda para sustentarla de almendrucos y zarzamoras. Déjese de altanerías. Yo le tengo medio mogate, cosa entre moza y vieja, de entre once y doce, mantellina y «agua va». Qu'esotro es negocio para desmoronar un Fúcar. (188-92)

When Toribio asks if she knows of any more affordable women, the clever business woman offers him a bit of advice on how to alter his appearance and improve his chances with other, more attainable women.

Just then, a fourth knock on the door brings danger to the coy classroom. An *alguacil* has arrived, in the company of an *escribano*, to arrest the “vieja entre diablo y zorra” (217). Quickly, Muñatones instructs her pupils to leave their sewing and entreat their new guests to song and dance. The music begins and swallows the officers before they have a chance to execute their orders, yet its lyrics convey the misogynist interlude’s disenchantment with the falseness of women who manipulate their men for wealth:

Un reloj da cada hora
y aun no le tienen por largo.
¿Qué harán al caballero
que da una vez en el año?
Quién no lo tiene, lo hurte,
pues suena mejor al gasto
«Toma estas cosas hurtadas»
que «Perdona que no hallo»
[...]

Para los que tienen
hondo el dinero
soga larga de mozas
hasta cogerlo.

El que tiene someros
los talegones,
una herrada tras otra
porque le ahogues.
(233-40, 245-52).

This rather abrupt ending to the play certainly feels contrived as a mechanical transition out of the liminal frame, yet it adheres to the anticipated *deus est machina* format of the interlude as the means to whisk away both the audience and the sinner precisely in the moment of judgment, thereby sparing everyone the harsh consequences of reality.

The most immediate commentary of the play attacks Madrid as a hotbed of greed, envy and corruption. As a visitor from out of town, Cardoso observes with disgust a litany of abuses at work in the capital city: “Teníanme quebrada la cabeza con este Madrid: «Daca Madrid, toma Madrid». Y llegado a Madrid es todo Madrid daca y toma. La arena con puente, el río con polvo; mujeres que piden, hambres que arrebatan, un fardo por cuello, un cuello por un puño” (4-7). His repeated references to “Madrid” land on the ears like accusations or even lamentations. As evidence of its wickedness, Cardoso points out examples of how the thirst for money has juggled honesty, propriety and even moral judgment to produce a society of indolence and deception:

[...] más barrigas en los hombres que en las mujeres, colchones por pantorillas. [...] Como antes iban a la maestra, hoy van las niñas a la castañeda, y en lugar de decillas oraciones, dícnelas bailes. Solo es que el trajecito lo adoba. Hasta en los chapines gastan sangre de bolsas, y hay orejas que merecen alanos y piden arracadas. (8-13)

In a very literal sense, money has become a “sangre de bolsas,” replacing honor as the blood of Spanish society, setting aside universal values based on God in favor of national values based on wealth. “Es mejor danza el rey de oros,” explains Muñatones, “que el rey don Alonso” (80-81). Quevedo injects very little comedy into this damning observation. Instead, he employs his skill at rhetorical devices, such as antithesis and apostrophe, to establish the dire paradox of the situation rather than to endorse it with

witty and humorous word play. Pereda responds to the accusation by claiming that his friend has only just arrived in the city and certainly has not spent enough time in its streets to make an accurate account of its character. This counterargument dissolves away when juxtaposed with the next scene where Muñatones and her school for scandal confirm all of Cardoso's fears. In fact, at no time does the interlude speak highly of any aspect of the city that does not directly involve its skill at fomenting vice.

As a result, Madrid adopts all of the evil "qualities" of the demonic "madre" Muñatones herself. Both attract pupils eager to make their fortune at the expense of their neighbors. Both apply a veneer of legitimacy to obscure a sordid reality beneath it. Both play on the emotions of their customers, selling them false expectations and robbing them blind. Both prefer money over nobility and honor. Unfortunately, both the procuress and the place also emerge triumphant in the end by distracting authority and derailing the proper execution of their mandate. Quevedo appears to harbor a certain degree of disdain for sycophantic Madrid as similar depictions of its corrupting powers appear in others of his interludes, including *El Niño y el Peralvillo de Madrid* and *La polilla de Madrid*. These plays tend to incorporate a larger cast of performers than do plays involving either desires of the ego or desires of the body, creating an impression that equates the ubiquitous presence of sin with that of the setting and the people themselves. Greed and envy lurk in every person, around every corner and in every business. To this fact Quevedo's message resounds with exquisite clarity: trust no one.

Part of the trouble with Muñatones is that she has so thoroughly integrated herself into so many social circles, and transformed herself into so many different forms,

that, as an entirely liminal subject, society has effectively lost its ability to recognize her. Just as Mary Douglas (119) described the liminalized subject as “polluting,” Muñatones’s influence has tainted everything in the city that touches it, leaving those few unaffected areas to turn away and ignore her in the hopes that she will disappear or at the least cease exert influence. As a result, the monstrous “madre” has grown to embody everything and nothing at the same time, a hybridized creature that evades understanding. In fact, at times it seems that Quevedo uses the play as the means of documenting all of the names and titles used to describe women such as Muñatones. For example, when Pereda explains that he wishes to introduce his friend to a “viejecita que recibe pupilos” (38), Cardoso asks, “¿Es alacahueta?” (39). Pereda responds:

Ya pareció ese nombre, ni hay quien le oiga. No se llaman ya sino tías, madres, amigas, conocidas, comadres, criadas, coches y sillas. Persíñese bien, que la vieja tratante en niñas y tendera de placeres de mujer que con un bostezo hace una jornada de aquí a Lisboa y con el aliento se sorbe un mayorazgo. (40-44)

This detailed reply not only calls attention to the intimacy with which Spanish society has embraced the procuress and welcomed her into their homes and families, it also labels as “old fashioned” the moral code of Cardoso who calls things by their real names. Cristina and Berenguela naturally call her “madre” (50, 54), but they also praise her as the “reverendísima y espantable y superlativa madre nuestra” (79-80). When Robledo enters he calls her “la conchabadora” (154), “la organista de placeres” (154), and “la juntona” (155). Don Toribio calls her “la encuadernadora, le señora embajadora, la masecoral de cuerpos humanos, la trasponedora de personas, la enflautadora de gentes, la figona de culpas que las da guisadas” (171-73). The Escribano, as we have seen, calls her, “la vieja

entre diablo y zorra” (217). Just before the play’s conclusion by the musicians, Cardoso makes one last attempt to describe this enigmatic woman. “Diablo es la vieja de Leganitos,” he affirms. “Hasta las sabandijas del procesado se embazan en viendola” (226-27). As difficult to grasp as a whisp of smoke, frightening to even the most disgusting insects and appearing everywhere to enchant every person only to disappear or transform at a moments notice, this woman can only be the devil himself. Perhaps as an additional key to understanding this figure, Quevedo gives her the name “la vieja Muñatones,” a title similar to the Spanish verb *muñir*, meaning to arrange or advise the actions of others. In this sense the superlative Muñatones represents a kind of super-Celestina figure, the greatest or perhaps the conglomerate of all *alcahuetas* who illicitly arrange marriages or rendezvous for money. Yet this component of her function, built into the semantics of her name, should also serve to warn or advise the audience against contracting such a woman to replace the work of proper courtship. She represents the wicked individuals that St. Agustine described who exchanged the learning of God for money and the learning of the world:

[...] they fornicate against thee, for they love the transitory mockeries of temporal things and the filthy gain which begrimes the hand that grabs it; they embrace the fleeting world and scorn thee, who abidest and invitest us to return to thee and who pardonest the prostituted human soul when it does return to thee. (Book 5, 22)

Muñatones may go by many names committing all manner of crimes against God for money, but Quevedo makes one point absolutely certain: she and her kind live and flourish in Madrid.

Entremés de la destreza

In *La destreza* Quevedo returns to depicting the artistry of the *alacahueta* that he had previously explored in *La vieja Muñatones*. In fact, the two plays follow a very similar structure. As in *Muñatones*, *La destreza* begins with a conversation between two individuals, Pitorra and Chillona, two women who debate techniques of sword play with all the posturing of a locker room controversy. Chillona, a self-described “hombre y mujer y marimacho” (2), boasts her own name and accomplishments in the profession and the pair engage in a debate over the most famous practitioners in the field: “Dicenme qu’es Morales gran maestro” (19); “Isabel Ana es toda juego limpio,/ y con ella y con Robles se me acuerda” (25-27); “Trevino es un rayo/ aunque riñe lo más como lacayo” (28-29); “De Granados también aprender puedes” (34); “Avedaño es famoso,/ pues con María Candado y con Antonia,/ entrambas de arte y de hermosura rara” (36-38). Amid the back and forth discussion, Pitorra notes that madre Monda stands out as one of the greatest instructors in the art and, as it so happens, the master herself approaches the pair. The stage directions describe her entrance in this manner: “Sale la madre Monda con sus tocas de viuda, un casco, un montante, dos espadas de esgrimir; y con ella Ana de Coca y Vicenta” (104). Monda enters the stage like the literal embodiment of Chillona’s description of herself, “hombre y mujer y marimacho”. Dressed in the attire of a widow and yet bearing a helmet and three swords at her side, she is a walking gender contradiction and the vision of a dangerous woman armed for battle. Once the master introduces herself and begins instructing her four pupils we quickly realize that *la*

destreza (“skill”) mentioned in the interlude does not refer to the Spanish technique of swordplay that shares the same name. Instead, the tactics of fencing provide a metaphor to explain the art of manipulation for money.

Don Jerónimo de Carranza’s 1569 publication, *Libro de la filosofía de las armas* (Sevilla), and Luis Pacheco de Narváez’s 1600 publication, *Libro de las grandezas de la espada* (Madrid), represent the two most important guidebooks outlining the Spanish art of swordplay in the seventeenth century and serve as the models for Quevedo’s comparison of the technique to the covetous enterprises of prostitution and extortion. Pitorra makes a reference to both texts when, describing Monda’s expertise in the field, claims that, “de don Luis y de Carranza/ tiene todos los textos en la panza” (44-45). Having established the point of contact between the two art forms, Quevedo then applies Carranza and Narváez’s works to create a delightful series of *double entendre* to describe the “skill” of the gold-digging woman. Consider, for example, the following counsel that Monda offers Chillona:

Medio de proporción más verdadero
es, Chillona, el dinero.
La destreza de todos siempre ha sido
—así vulgares como verdaderos—
dar y no recibir; pues ten en punto,
por caridad que vais conmigo agora.
La que esgrimiere el jeme por espada
reciba mucho, pero no dé nada.
(76-83)

In a duel of blades each participant hopes to “give” to his opponent (stab) and not “receive” (be stabbed) in return. The predatory woman, on the other hand, uses her skill

in order to accomplish the opposite: to receive as much money as possible and give nothing in return.

In this context, skill at handling the sword makes use of phallic imagery to represent the manipulations of the male subject. Of course, these women do not wish to kill or even physically wound the men they take advantage of. Rather than strike a deadly blow at her target, the dueling woman aims to satisfy her own greed for material wealth by stripping him of all of he possesses. Monda explains:

Llamo necesitar al enemigo
el tomalle la hacienda, de manera,
y con tanto cuidado,
que le dejéis después necesitado.
(90-93)

When performed correctly, the art of avarice follows a series of steps, thrusts and parries that easily resemble the choreography of the sword. Like Muñatones, Monda instructs her eager pupils in all of the proven methods of the craft, including how to sneak in and out of a house without detection, how to manage a man with dogs, and how to maintain the appearance of youth. Twice she even delivers her instruction directly to the “viejas” in the audience. Above all else, a skilled charlatan remains emotionally aloof from her circumstances and extracts actual money, not the empty promises for such: “La cantidad discreta es la cantada,/ porque la prometida, en el que roba,/ es la cantidad boba” (112-14). Material possessions stand in for the targeted vital organs of the duel in this very serious business of beguilement.

Once again, as in *La vieja Muñatones*, the lesson shifts dramatically when officers appear to arrest the group, and once again both men fall prey to the talented con women.

Monda explains, “Aqui se trata de virtud en todo./ Estaba yo instruyendo estas muchachas/ en toda perfección de castañeta” (181-82). Music replaces sewing as the veneer of virtue but the ruse works in any case. The scene quickly ends when musicians appear and all the women invite the *alguacil* and the *escribano* to a dance.

Although both interludes deal with essentially the same subject matter and make use of the same basic structure, they ultimately produce significant differences. *Muñatones*, as a work in prose, eschews the baroque style of word play that we typically associate with Quevedo in favor of a simple, clearly defined message that warns the viewer of the dangers in the city and its professors of sin. *La destreza*, on the other hand, as a work in prose, offers the viewer a much more rhetorically diverse palate that draws heavily on symbolism, innuendo and ambiguity in the way that it pursues the elegance of the metaphor to elicit multiple parallels between swordplay and avarice, to the exclusion of diversity in the plot. This could imply that the idea of a school for crooked women fascinated the poet enough to explore it in two different approaches and at two different times. A play like *Muñatones*, with a stronger plot and comic situations, might have worked better on stage while *La destreza*, as a more experienced poet’s linguistically fanciful approach to the same topic, may have performed better in print. Studied together, both interludes support the opinion that women in general are rapacious (since neither play offers any example, either explicitly or implied, of a woman who behaves in a contrary manner) and scheme together to manipulate and exploit men in order to extract material goods from them. Perhaps the most frightening hypothesis these plays make appears in the following statement that Monda makes to her pupils: “mas estocada puño

es cosa poca,/ mejor es estocada saya y ropa” (98-99). In the duel of the sexes men will ultimately always remain outmatched since the marginalized woman, unfettered by masculine constructs of honor that maintain centers of social structures, remains free to pursue and to satisfy her own desires, thereby proving that she, not the pen, is mightier than the sword.

Entremés del niño y Peralvillo de Madrid

In *El niño y Peralvillo de Madrid*, Quevedo strays from the typical *entremés* formula and instead portrays the greed and envy of the city in an allegorical fashion more congruent with the formula of the *auto*. The scene opens in a moment of departure as Perico, a young man, bids farewell to his mother before embarking on a trip into Madrid. Aware of the dangers he will face, the woman begs her child not to go and even bribes him with candy in vain. The youth has fixed his gaze on the city, although Quevedo never reveals the actual motivation for the trip and, regarded as liminal theater, there appears little necessity to explain the decision in a logical manner. Before she can allow him to go, like so many parents saying goodbye to children about to venture off into the wide world, she imparts a bit of wise counsel to her son: “Y aunque Madrid es llano,/ la moneda, Perico, como corre,/ tropieza hasta en la palma de la mano” (15-17). The city, she warns, will do all in its power to swindle him out of every last coin. Perico, on the

other hand, seems to clearly understand this threat and has taken measures to appropriately defend himself against such a challenge:

Mamá, no vaya el nene descuidado.
 el rodete que llevo
 en la cabeza puesto
 por no descalabrarme, si cayere,
 póngasele a mi bolsa y mi dinero;
 que en la Corte, de obra y de palabra,
 el dinero es quien más se descalabra.
 (8-14)

In addition, the boy tells his mother that he has made himself two signs that read “No quiero” (26) as a declaration of his creed. Unconvinced of his safety, the woman directs his attention to the most nefarious of pick pocketing criminals he will likely encounter in the city, warning:

El dij que llevas tú más importante
 es, si se considera:
 que en la Corte, Perico, de cualquiera
 gustan de tocar algo las mujeres.
 (41-44)

Here again, Perico seems aware of the danger posed by greedy women, calling them “niñas arpías” (54), and commends himself into the watchful care of heaven. Grateful for his mother’s concern, the boy bids his mother a fond farewell and begins his journey.

Perico quickly meets a kind tool sharpener named Juan Francés, who shows him the way to Madrid by way of “el triste Peralvillo de la Corte” (86), where convicted criminals face torture and execution. The play then takes an allegorical turn in a manner very similar to Dante’s journey through Hell and Purgatory with Juan Francés playing Virgil to Perico’s Dante. Here, as in the *Divina Commedia*, the pair encounters a series of condemned souls recounting their tales of suffering brought about as punishments for

their actions. Alonso, the tailor, first staggers onto the stage repeatedly pricked and penetrated by the tools of his trade, including scissors and rulers. “De un pujamiento de enaguas,/ de un flujo de saya entera,” he sadly tells the travelers, “yo Alonso-Alvillo he quedado/ en Peralvillo de cuenta” (111-14). Diego-Alvillo follows the tailor. A cook by trade, Diego enters completely engulfed by pots, pans and grills. “Las ollas de cada día,” he tells Perico, “me sorbieron la hacienda” (125-26). Cosme-Alvillo, a scribe, follows his sad companions with hands and hair likewise coated in the implements of his trade. Juan points out how the man’s blood has turned to ink as a just reward for his offense: “La letra le entendió a él,/ mas él no entendió la letra” (135-36). Cosme confesses his guilt and laments his condition. “La desdicha de mi pluma,” he cries, “no hay demonio que la entienda” (137-38). Antonio-Alvillo makes his entrance as the gullible theatergoer who pays for anything and everything it offers, including the unpleasant smell. He confesses to paying to see plays written by “Mira de Mosca” (155), “Lope de Vergas” (156), and Juan Ruiz de Alarcón¹⁸, or performances by actors “Luisa de Robles” (159), and “Vallejo” (161), and even plays booed off the stage (166). Naturally, Antonio appears smeared with the concession treats and posters of the theater he blindly patronizes.

Lastly, Juan leads Perico to an empty bag laid on top of a pile of dried bones and, similar to the way Virgil guided Dante’s gaze, explains to his young companion:

¹⁸ Quevedo makes reference to a play titled *El Anticristo*. Asensio explains how this play not only famously scandalized Alarcón but how it relates to Luisa de Robles, another figure mentioned in the same passage from the interlude: “Los trozos satíricos alusivos a la representación de *El Anticristo*, comedia de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón cuyo estreno fue memorable tanto por los huevos podridos de los enemigos del mejicano como por la osadía de Luisa de Robles encaramándose por la maroma [...]” (233).

Esta que miras al cabo
triste bolsicalavera,
notomía de las lindas,
esqueleto de las feas,
es la bolsa condenada,
que, cercada de culebras,
está en los eternos dacas,
ardiendo en unas eternas.
(198-204)

Seeing before him the recompense of a life spent in the pursuit of material possessions,

Perico remarks:

A voces está diciendo
con aquella boca abierta,
desdentada de doblones,
al talegón que está cerca:
«Tú que me miras a mí
tan triste, mortal y feo,
mira, talegón, a ti,
que como te ves me vi,
y veráste cual me veo.»
(218-25)

This portion of easily recognizable verse, so intimately connecting life with death and often found inscribed on tombstones or memorials, coupled with the ghastly vision of bones that lay at his feet, invokes a sense of ominous foreboding that Perico instantly recognizes. Lest the gravity of the moment usurp the comedic formula of the *entremés*, three women descend upon the scene and immediately pounce upon the young man in an effort to woo him away from his money:

Manuela:	!Ay, que linda criatura!
Maria:	¡Ay, como llora!
	Los dientes deben de salirle agora.
	Dame la bolsa, y quitaréte el moco.
Niño:	¿Dame la bolsa? Coco, coco, coco.
Manuela:	Mil sales tienes; eres lindo: daca.
Niño:	¿Daca tras lindo? Caca, caca, caca.

(226-31)

Perico remains firm in his refusal to succumb to the requests of Manuela, Ana and María. Shifting their tactic, the women offer to sing to him a song. This time Perico consents and tells the nefarious trifecta that he will give them something in return: only his attention to the music. Deafeated at last, the women close the play with a song that includes the lines made famous by Tirso's *El burlador de Sevilla*: "Quien tal hace, que tal pague" (256).

As we have seen, the structure of the play bears a great deal of resemblance to Dante's journey through the afterlife. Like his predecessor, Quevedo begins the interlude in media res, with the traveler already embarking on his unknown journey. Furthermore, Perico's chance encounter with Juan, congruent with Dante's meeting Virgil, provides both him and the audience with a narrator to explain and interpret where needed. Yet, in addition to the interlude's similarity with Dante, the play also establishes interesting parallels with the biblical account of the temptation of Jesus Christ in the days just prior to the commencement of his ministry. The fourth chapter of the Gospel of St. Matthew describes how Jesus embarked on a journey into the wilderness to fast for forty days and forty nights. While yet in the wilderness Jesus was tempted three times by the devil: first, to change a stone into bread (Matthew 4:3); second, to cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple (Matthew 4:5-6); and third, to worship the devil in exchange for the all the riches and kingdoms of the world (Matthew 4:8-9). In each case, Jesus recognized the devil's trick and rebuked him with scripture. In response to the temptation of bread, Jesus replied, "It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that

proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). He denied the second temptation saying, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew 4:7).

Finally, in response to the third temptation, Jesus not only rebuked the devil but ordered him to depart: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10).

In a similar manner, Perico, reminiscent of Jesus, also leaves his mother to embark on a journey into the wilderness where he tackles the various devils that plague seventeenth-century Spanish society. With no other given explanation for his journey we might say that the young man knowingly makes the trip for the precise purpose of confronting temptation and overcoming it. Perhaps most striking, Perico concludes each encounter with a refrain, directed to whom he identifies as the “nenas” in the audience, which sounds very much like bits of scripture. For example, regarding the tailor Perico warns, “Las que priváis con los sastres,/ mirad bien por vuestra ceda” (115-16).

Following his conversation with the cook he says, “Nene, no gasten sus ollas,/ con sus propias cobertaeras” (127-28). Speaking of the scribe he declares:

El tragar las plumas da
 muermo, de todas maneras;
 si es escribano, a las bolsas;
 si es de gallina, a las bestias.
 Sean las niñas bien prendidas,
 mas no los que las sustentan,
 que el soplillo de los mantos
 se ha pasado a las Audiencias.
 (145-48)

Almost laughing at Antonio’s obsession with the theater, Perico remarks, “Eso es andar el dinero/ del pobrete que os celebra” (169-70), before describing the whole situation as

its own *comedia*, a play he suggests calling, “*Los juicios parecidos*” (179). When he comes upon the purse and the bones, in addition to the voice he hears coming from the mouth of the deceased, Perico turns his attention again to the audience to ensure that they hear the play’s message with soberness and clarity:

Nenes, mirad lo que somos:
 quien bien guarda, solo medra;
 veis allí las sepulturas
 que la dejaron tan seca.
 Esos gusanos con moño,
 ataúdes con guedejas,
 la comieron lo de dentro,
 la rayeron lo de fuera.
 En esto habéis de parar
 las más ricas faltriqueras:
 miradla, mirad con miedo
 a quien chuparon con fuerzas.
 (205-16)

This lengthy exhortation far exceeds the brief moral observations produced by Perico’s prior encounters. Instead, we see Quevedo temporarily set aside the use of allegory to provide his audience with a fully-developed sermon on the wages of sin, in particular the sins of avarice and envy. Like Jesus, Perico seems constantly aware that external eyes are and will observe this brief episode in the course of his life and consciously transcends the limits of his stage life in order to directly communicate with this second audience. When he finally confronts the “harpies” in the final phase of his temptation, Perico, like Jesus, identifies both his demonic assailants and himself and cements his position on the side of righteousness:

Yo soy, aves diabólicas con manto,
 el Niño de la guarda sin ser santo;
 y seré, si porfían
 y anda el enredo listo,

el Niño de la piedra, vive Cristo.
(235-39)

The devils on stage may not physically vanish from his presence, but his unequivocal declaration banishes all influence they may believe they had on him. In a sense, Perico the child triumphs over evil to become the Savior of the interlude and the example Quevedo hopes his audience will follow.

Of course, the boy finds himself surrounded by a host of equally allegorical characters. Juan Francés, the tool sharpener, serves as a guide to his young companion in a quest that sharpens the boy's senses, a process Perico explains as "amolar niñas contra los chiquillos,/ es amolar navajas y cuchillos" (79-80). All of the condemned individuals, as a result of their encounter with the dreaded Peralvillo, have abandoned their own names to adopt the "-Alvillo" as a surname, transporting them into a symbolic role as functions of their various trades. Perhaps, as wandering signifiers they seek out Perico, whose "Per-" in his name unites with the "-Alvillo" in theirs to perform a kind of unifying miracle that heals the division caused by the justice of the Peralvillo, similar to the way that Christians find healing salvation from separation from God through Jesus Christ and his atoning sacrifice on the cross.

As a result, Quevedo creates a theater piece that he calls "entremés" but that looks and functions, by its use of allegorical characters and situations, its confrontation and rebuke of evil and its clear intention to motivate the viewer toward righteousness, much more like an *auto*. While no evidence exists that Quevedo applied his hand specifically to the cause of composing an *auto*, the construction of the piece makes it clear that *El*

entremés del niño y Peralvillo de Madrid represents, at the very least, a close approximation to such.

La polilla de Madrid

Asensio supports a year of composition for *La polilla de Madrid* that places it in the same time frame as *La destreza* (*Itinerario* 220). While Madrid provides a backdrop of indulgence for the scene and certainly contributes to the success of the thieves who take advantage of its false and nebulous environment, the city does not form as potent an instigator of vices as it does in *La vieja Muñatonés*. Nor do we see Madrid as a place that provides both the means and the ends of sin as it does in *El niño y Peralvillo de Madrid*, since the con men and women in question ultimately triumph in their thievery. Instead, with *La polilla de Madrid*, Quevedo expands Cervantes's *Retablo de las maravillas* by transporting it into the nation's capital and illustrating the power, potential and danger of theater that escapes the stage and enters the service of one's desire for material wealth.

The play begins with a family of con artists, Carralero, Elena, Ortila and Luisa, busy putting the finishing touches on the details of their latest scam. Elena has devised a scheme and proceeds to rename her companions accordingly. She renames Ortila, the group's mother, Doña Onofria de Camargo, while Luisa, a sibling, will play one Doña Aldonza de Chirinos (a composite name with obvious ties to Cervantes: Aldonza, from the *Quijote* and Chirinos from *El retablo de las maravillas*). Carralero, her brother, will play a humble *escudero* by the name of Villodres. For herself, Elena decides to keep her first

name and, instead, adopt a Biscayan surname that will lend her a touch of exotic eclecticism: Doña Elena Vriguri Xaramillo. Like any good company of actors, once they have determined their respective roles the group begins to rehearse their parts, though not without some difficulty staying in character and remembering each person's new name. Elena explains that she has already primed the targets of the scam, three gullible men: "pues don Gonzalo quiere/ darme todas las joyas que tuviere;/ lo mismo don Lorenzo y don Garcia" (96-98). Following a few last minute bits of instruction, Elena sends the group off stage and into action.

Meanwhile, two men, Don Alejo and Mondoñedo, enter the stage busily debating whether greed runs rampant in society or whether there still remain a few charitable citizens. Alejo claims to know such a selfless individual while Mondoñedo provides an opposing argument that both denies the claim and utilizes a pessimistic tone of voice that very transparently reveals Quevedo's own:

En esto de pedir hay grandes cosas
con que van engañando.
Mujer conozco yo que pide dando;
yo conozco mujer en esta tierra
que a ninguno despide,
y pide con decir que nunca pide.
Y hay mujer tan maldita
que quien la festejaba
le pidió con reñir porque le daba.
Ya el pedir está bien vestido
que parece que dan al que han pedido,
y usan algunas damas principales
pediduras mentales,
que, sin decirles nada,
ni hablarle, estando ausente,
se siente uno pedir interiormente.
(120-35)

Naturally, all of the guilty parties identified by Mondoñedo turn out to be self-serving women (typical, as we have seen, elsewhere in Quevedo's theater), women so incapable of not asking for money and favors that they ask by not asking, they ask when they receive and they even ask without saying a single word. This power to manipulate men from a distance portrays women much like dangerous witches possessing some dark power over their male victims. Although clearly an exaggeration, Mondoñedo's paranoia at falling prey to the clever swindler nevertheless (according to Quevedo) has and will yet serve him well as it keeps him vigilant against the likes of Elena and her unquestionably fraudulent family. Furthermore, as a convention of the *entremés*, Mondoñedo plays the straight man whose gaze, like that of the audience's, penetrates the disguises, allowing him to move between the play and the audience more easily.

Carralero, disguised as an *escudero*, crosses by the men. When Carralejo claims that he is on his way to purchase a dress as an act of charity for a poor woman, Alejo intervenes and contributes money to the cause, leaving him with the satisfaction of his good deed and the favorable reception of his presence in the household. Mondoñedo, of course, cannot believe his friend's naïveté:

No es muy mal recibido aquel dinero
de aquel ejemplarísimo escudero.
De verle solamente,
de solamente oillo,
se me erizó el dinero en el bolsillo.
Yo espero ver a vmd. quemado,
pues, siendo hombre, se precia de tomado.
(156-62)

Mondoñedo may have recognized the scam when he saw it but his pride at proving himself better than his neighbor kept him from doing or saying anything about it until

after thief had left, exposing him as a man unwilling to give even assistance. When Carralero returns he brings “Doña Onofria” with him. Of course, she too finds herself in a financial pickle, needing thirty *escudos* more to cover the cost of her daughter’s dowry. Again, the generous Alejo brings his wallet to her rescue and again Mondoñedo cannot believe his eyes, launching into another tract against avarice, this time comparing women like Onofria to greedy barbers who cut, shave and take even ear wax from their customers only to hand them a bill for their handiwork. “Doña Aldonza” next arrives, apologizing for her lateness and announcing that her mistress is busy rehearsing for a play. Yet again, Mondoñedo sees through the ruse and begs his mystified friend to come to his senses. Unphased by these rebuffs, Alejo shows great interest in the coming play and even offers his own feathers and scarves when Aldonza explains that their costumes lack certain accessories. Before long, the scene repeats itself yet again as Elena appears explaining that the play has encountered another problem (the players lack some twenty yards of fabric), and Alejo not only calls his purse into their service but leaves to go and get the fabric himself after expressing accepting a role in the performance. Carralero returns and places the whole company on alert by announcing the arrival of certain (imagined) noble guests (whose names he invents on the spot): “don Luis Machucha” (288), and “don Cosme de Minchaca” (289), accompanied by “Hans Sergen Dringen Dron” (292). Using the ruse as an excuse to speak with Elena alone, he tells her that Gonzalo arrived bearing numerous items of jewelry, which Elena promptly stuffs into her pockets.

Suddenly, Don Lorenzo and Don García also appear and, like Gonzalo before them, pledge their support to the success of the performance by offering their promised

jewels to Elena, who secretly worries that the con may have grown more complicated than she can safely continue to manage. Anticipation for the play grows and the swindlers manage to extract a few more items of value out of their audience using similar ruses. Finally, the moment of the play arrives and the audience members head to the theater. The scene then shifts over to a stage where another audience anxiously awaits a play called “*El robo de Elena.*” A regidor announces the performance and its players just as Mondoñedo, Alejo, García and Lorenzo arrive looking for Elena and her companions:

D. Alejo:	¿Salió ya mi señora doña Elena?
Güésped:	Ya salió, ya se ha ido.
D. García:	¿Pues cómo? ¿Su papel es ya acabado?
Güésped:	Esta carta me dio sin más recado y dijo que la diese a quien por ella a preguntar viniese.
D. Lorenzo:	¿Es paso de la comedia?
D. Alejo:	Antes sospecho que el paso ha sido de entremés de robo.
D. García:	Yo en aqueste entremés he hecho el bobo. (434-43)

Mondoñedo takes the letter left behind and reads it out loud to the group:

«Yo convido al ensayo a vuesarcedes,
y pues me llevo joyas y vestidos
yo los dejo y me acojo como un rayo,
miren si el diablo hiciera tal ensayo.»
(446-49)

The men nearly faint with surprise and horror, having surrendered their fortunes over to a brilliant theatrical device. Elena’s victory proves so complete that she even manages to steal the music that normally accompanies the end of an *entremés*. Instead, Quevedo draws a final curtain over his sad victims with only a quiet melody sung from off stage

and a warning from Mondoñedo, who steps out of his role in the play to address the audience directly:

Ésta ha sido entremés con cuatro lobos.
 Guárdese ya la gente,
 que el robo no es de Elena solamente,
 sino de Luisas y Anas,
 de Franciscas, de Aguedas y de Juanas.
 Que toda niña que se ingiere en lobo,
 ella es Elena y su galán el robo.
 (454-60)

Quevedo's rendition of Cervantes's most well-known *entremés* produces a much more pessimistic product. Rather than simply embarrass an audience of foolish townspeople by convincing them to see a play that does not in fact exist, Quevedo's distinctly greedy con men and women both embarrass their audience and plunder their pocket using a play they unwittingly participate in. Moreover, Quevedo takes advantage of theater, and a play within a play, as a metaphor to describe the practices of deceivers stealing from the deceived. Consider the different reactions of Mondoñedo and Alejo when Aldonza announces that the group is preparing a *comedia* for their guests:

Mondoñedo:	El tormento de dueña es el de toca. Abre los ojos, ciego, porque tocan a dueña, como a fuego.
D. Alejo:	¿Hacen estas señoras y otras damas una comedia?
Mondoñedo:	Toda entre mujeres será cosa de ver.
D. Alejo:	Será gran cosa. (206-11).

Alejo, a bit like the gullible theater-goer in *El niño y Peralvillo de Madrid*, surrenders all reason and blindly allows himself to be led and even manipulated by the players on stage while Mondoñedo not only resists, he extends the metaphor to illustrate that such

performances occur in real life much more often than they do on stage even though many, like Alejo, refuse to see it: “Toda entre mujeres/ será cosa de ver” (210-11). Elena clearly understands the power of performance as a means to an end. Before the company of thieves faces their audience, Elena gives them careful instructions so as to help them appear as convincing and real as possible. On stage, this method of “realistic” theater can produce stirring performances and evoke strong emotions that entertain the audience. In real life, on the other hand, theatrical deception has tremendous power to manipulate and destroy its audience.

Quevedo’s interlude, then, presents an interesting conundrum. An audience might reasonably (and likely) enjoy the play as yet another example of liminal performance, where greedy but clever tricksters comically fool the gullible into handing over their possessions. Refusing to suspend one’s disbelief, such as Mondoñedo advocates, most often destroys the enjoyment produced by such an illusion. On the other hand, an audience might overlook the stage connection altogether and instead take Mondoñedo’s recommendation to heart, causing them to interpret the play as a blasting criticism of falsifiers (in particular women, but not excluding men either) and subsequently begin to question the motives and loyalties of everyone around them. Unfortunately, refusing to trust people most often destroys one’s ability to find joy in life. Furthermore, it would seem ironic to trust the advice of a performance that advocates not trusting in performances.

Perhaps this particular interlude, like a great deal of Quevedo’s other works, admits a third option by presenting an entertaining and engaging idea (con artists at work)

in a clever manner (using the device of a play within a play and the surprising revelation that the play has already concluded) that simultaneously admits a variety of interpretations (life and theater can both prove deceiving if we fail to distinguish truth from fiction), thereby stretching the play beyond its expected frame (a light-hearted interlude based on greed but that attempts to communicate a serious and moral message against avarice and ignorance to its audience). In this regard, Quevedo's interlude succeeds through its association with a liminal frame, allowing it to both clash with and address the expectations of its audience.

Through their actions, the numerous characters in these interludes demonstrate their greed and envy through elaborate deceits to accumulate greater wealth. Upon seeing the treasures of their neighbors these sinful thieves almost instantly plot to obtain them. Strangely, unlike the clear examples of poetic justice found in Dante, the theatrically greedy and envious often do not reap the rewards of their trickery on stage, not only in Quevedo's interludes but in the genre as a whole. Elena and her troupe of con artists, for example, make off with a fortune while Muñatones and Madre Monda manage to evade capture by distracting the officers of the law with music. In these cases, the greed of one person serves as a punishment to the sins of another (such as the lust of the men manipulated by the clever *alcahuetas*). For other characters, such as Muñoz, the self-centered hopeful husband from *El marido fantasma*, and the cuckolded husband from *Los refranes del viejo celoso*, punishment awaits them off stage. The first case will likely not survive the month as the groom of a conniving black widow, and the second will collect a severe beating when the apparitions finally catch up with him. In the case of *La*

venta and *El niño del Peralvillo de Madrid*, the punishments of greed have already been administered to the guilty. Corneja's reputation for fraud ruins his business while the guilty merchants that cross paths with Perico have already passed through the torture of the *Peralvillo*.

Nevertheless, the gospel of Luke warns interlude and audience alike: "Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke 12:15). Each of these plays depicts individuals whose unscrupulous but clever business practices allow them to survive and even excel in a society that often values money over honor. As a result, the plays become less about the valuables or their means of procurement and more about the wit of the person committing the sin. Desires of the ego and desires of the body cause one to make foolish and harmful decisions against one's self while desires of ownership, characterized by greed and envy, often lead one to successfully outstrip her opponent. Perhaps for this reason, as examples of mind over matter, the abundance of greed and envy in the interludes owes, in part, to the evidence of its strategic success in real life.

CHAPTER 5: DESIRES OF THE BODY (LUST AND GLUTTONY)

Among whom also we all had our conversation
 In times past in the lusts of our flesh,
 Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;
 And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

(Epesians 2:3)

As sins commonly described in terms of love in excess, lust and gluttony identify one's self-indulgent, unrestrained behaviors that exceed the normal needs and desires of the human body. Humans, for example, must eat in order to survive, yet the gluttonous man indulges his physical appetite and eats far more than his body requires. Likewise, sexuality provides the means of reproduction essential to the survival of the human race, but the lustful person exceeds this natural appetite when he betrays the limits of God and society in order to satisfy his physical desires. Knowing when a good thing has evolved into too much of a good thing can represent a difficult question to distinguish. St.

Augustine addressed the desires of the body in this way:

Besides this there is yet another form of temptation still more complex in its peril. For in addition to the fleshly appetite which strives for the gratification of all senses and pleasures—in which its slaves perish because they separate themselves from thee—there is also a certain vain and curious longing in the soul, rooted in the same bodily senses, which is cloaked under the name of knowledge and learning; not having pleasure in the flesh, but striving for new experiences through the flesh. This longing—since its origin is our appetite for learning, and since the sight is the chief of our senses in the acquisition of knowledge—is called in the divine language "the lust of the eyes." (Book X, 54)

Deep within the fabric of humanity, St. Augustine observes a “curious longing in the soul” that can motivate human beings to engage in positive behaviors, such as learning and the acquisition of new experiences. Nevertheless, he also describes this “fleshy appetite” as a source of great peril since, left unchecked, it “strives for the gratification of all senses and pleasures.” The key becomes knowing how to balance the two and maintain the “curious longing” within the bounds of propriety.

As we have seen in previous chapters, Dante’s description of Purgatory includes members who allowed these natural desires of body to exceed their proper limits and evolve into the sins of lust and gluttony. When he arrives at the sixth terrace Dante encounters a group of lean and withered bodies. These, he discovers, are the souls of the gluttonous, who spent their lives in the contestant pursuit of appetites. As a result, they now find themselves forbidden to eat or drink and pass by fountains of cool water that exacerbate their torment. Here a voice in the darkness cries out:

Blessed are they whom grace has so illuminated
 That due to love of taste within their breasts
 They burn not with an undue appetite,
 [...] but hunger only as is right.
 (Canto XXIV)

Following his encounter with souls corrupted by excessive hunger, Dante ascends into the seventh terrace and the souls of the lustful, where he discovers a wall of fire that engulfs its victims. Here Dante’s guide repeatedly to beware his every step: “Along this passage/ One needs must keep a tight rein on the eyes,/ Because one easily might miss the way” (Canto XXV). Virgil’s reference to protecting the eyes and its correlation with lust reflects St. Augustine’s description of love in excess as a “lust of the eyes.” Indeed,

according to scripture, the eyes play a significant role in the conduct of lust. In the book of Proverbs, for example, the Bible warns against “strange women” saying, “Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids” (Proverbs 6:25). Later, in the New Testament, Jesus repeats this counsel: “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in thine heart” (Matthew 5:28). In each case, as in St. Augustine, the eyes serve as a path to sexual love that exceeds its proper limits. Dante takes care as he approaches the tormented lustful and, after speaking with some of them, remarks, “my conscience pricked” (Canto XXVII). This desire of the body through the eyes also applies to the *entremés* in the way that lust very rarely appears on stage as an action but rather as a perspective, or the way in which one person views and desires another.

Naturally, desires of the body make regular appearances with their comrades in the interlude. Quevedo’s use of gluttony and lust always occurs in tandem with other sins. Two of these plays, *Bárbara* and *Diego Moreno* employ these sins as the mechanism by which a greedy character tricks the lusty person for financial gain. The third play, *Los refranes del viejo celoso*, introduces a twist by illustrating a case of gluttonous quotation.

Entremés de los refranes del viejo celoso

In a departure from what one might normally characterize as sins of lust and gluttony, Quevedo’s *Entremés de los refranes del viejo celoso* depicts a man with an

insatiable appetite for literary citation rather than sexual gratification. Nevertheless, this desire of the mind corresponds to the more anticipated desires of the body in the way that his failure to control his natural impulses places him in harm's way. Furthermore, as an author himself, Quevedo directs the audience's attention to a subject that likely caused him a great deal of personal annoyance: misquotation and abuse of the source material.

The play begins with Rincón showering his beloved Justa with poetic expressions of his adoration for her. Of course, Quevedo soon reveals that the enamoured pair are actually scandalous adulterers as Justa, much to her displeasure, finds herself “casada con celoso y viejo” (27). In addition to his age and jealous temperament, Justa loathes the old man's exaggerated propensity for citation: “Cada palabra es un refrancito;/ cuando habla, cuanto dice son vejeces,/ repitiéndolo más de dos mil veces” (39-41). She even gives numerous examples of how he manages to incorporate an illustration into every situation:

[S]i me amenaza, dice con visajes:
 «Agora lo veredes, dice Agarajes».
 Si de noche va huyendo de mi fuego,
 Dice que toma las de Villadiego;
 Si digo que murmuran los vecinos,
 Cuentos dice que son de Calafnos;
 Si algo le cuento, dice con gran saña
 Que soy del tiempo de Maricastaña.
 (42-49)

Rincón attempts to allay her frustration and tells her that he has already concocted a plan that will save them both: “qu'en tu marido mi remedio estriba,/ pues con ardides, tretas y ademanes/ han de ser mis terceros sus refranes” (51-53). Before he can divulge the details of his plan, the husband arrives, sending the forbidden lovers in a scramble to conceal their lustful encounter. Rincón hides himself just as the husband enters the room.

Quickly, Justa runs to the old man, claiming she can see something in his eye, and pretends to remove it in a clever series of word play that simultaneously describes

Rincon's attempts to remove himself from the scene:

Vejete:	¿Sale?
Justa:	Ya sale.
Vejete:	Mucho me está doliendo.
	¿Sale?
Justa:	¡Valgame Dios, ya va saliendo!
Vejete:	No la dejéis acá.
Justa:	No haré, marido.
Vejete:	¿Ha salido, mujer?
Justa:	Sí, ya ha salido.
Vejete:	Mira bien si salió.
Justa:	Ya salió fuera, que no os dejara yo si no saliera. (70-75).

The ruse works beautifully. The Vejete feels that his eye has been properly cared for and the secret admirer indeed escapes undetected.

Moments later Rincón returns to the house, this time wearing a harlequin-colored suit and holding a lit firework or candle, which he uses to pronounce a magic spell upon his rival:

Viejo clueco, viejo clueco,
no digas que no te aviso
que de la selva encantada
un mágico había salido,
y dentro della te ha puesto
sin mula ni sin borrico.
(98-103)

When Justa remarks that she suddenly feels “encantada” (104), the old man silences her, claiming that “no hay encantos, que todos/ son cuentos de Caláinos” (106-07). At the mention of the name, who should appear but Caláinos himself, a fictional adventurer

whose collection of stories reached their peak of popularity during the XVI and XVII centuries. The spirit chides the old man for abusing his name and demands to be left in peace. Meanwhile, with her husband preoccupied, Justa takes advantage of the opportunity to disappear with Rincón. Once the spirit vanishes, the Vejete realizes the trick and exclaims: “Tomó las de Villadiego,/ voy tras ella” (128-29). The phrase represents an idiomatic expression (“tomar las calzas de Villadiego”) to describe someone who leaves in a hurry, but again the enchantment conjures Villadiego to appear in person. Like his fantastic predecessor, Villadiego reprimands the Vejete and contradicts the expression by demonstrating that no one has taken his breeches. This formula repeats itself all the way to the play’s conclusion. Each time one spirit leaves the astonished husband unwittingly responds to the experience with a *refrán* that conjures another spirit to replace it.

Along this chain of spectral visitors, the Vejete meets the following: Juan de la Encina (the renaissance author and musician [144-63]), Perico de los Palotes (an idiom for an unknown person, analogous to “John Doe” [164-71]), Maricastaña (a name mentioned to indicate that something happened a very long time ago, i.e., “en los tiempos de Maricastaña” [172-83]), la dueña Quintañoña (a matronly symbol of age and time [184-96]), el Rey que Rabió (a fabled king who died of madness [197-209]), el Rey Perico (a king of fools from Spanish folklore [210-19]), and even one figure simply called “El Otro” (222), who describes himself saying:

Aquí está El Otro,
a quien han atribuido
necedades, boberías,
sentencias agudas, dichos,

ignorancias, frialdades,
 y todas por un camino.
 Dicen: «Como dijo El Otro»,
 y nunca «El Otro ha dicho».
 (222-28)

The assembly transforms into a tribunal when el Rey Perico invites a host of people and idioms alike, including Mateo Pico, Agrajes, Cochite-erbite, Chisgarabís, Trochemoche, Bobo de Coria, Mari Tabadilla, Doña Fáfula, Pedro de Urdemalas and Pero Grullo (231-44), to register their complaints of improper citation against the old man, who still cannot refrain from his use of refrains and calls on Santo Mocarro, Santiliprisco and Santo de Pajares (249-52). At last, Pero Grullo approaches the Vejete to offer the man an ultimatum:

Que huyáis de aqueste picazo
 agora, Viejo, os aviso,
 que si os alcanzo, os haré
 que paguéis vuestro delito.
 (259-62)

Even in this climactic moment the Vejete simply refuses to abandon his lust for citation and defies his accusers by declaring: “No pagaré, juro a Dios,/ que con este pergamino/ hare que todos me teman” (263-65). At the mention of the name of God (who understandably does not make an appearance) the phantoms burst into a rage and descend upon the man, beating him all the way off stage.

The very simple plot based on an exaggerated, comical situation and involving a limited number of ordinary principle characters supported by well-known allegorical ones make this an excellent example both of the *entremés* in general and of Quevedo’s interpretation of the genre. Furthermore, the play’s violent conclusion harkens back to an

earlier version of the interlude practiced by Lope de Rueda, decades earlier, and the Antellan farces of ancient Rome. Nor is the idea new to Quevedo, as Asensio points out that the poet had experimented with the notion of “fantasmas folklóricos” previously in the *Sueño de la muerte*, and even suggests that the dramatic similarities between the two texts demonstrate Quevedo plagiarizing himself (*Itinerario* 227).

The play quite effectively illustrates both the power and the peril of language. In the opening dialogue of the play Rincón successfully woos Justa using two examples of poetry that each make use of distorted language. Consider the first example:

Justa querida, Justa de quien gusta
mi alma, que a quererte bien se ajusta;
Justa a quien mi deseo humilde implora
que de Justa te vuelves pecadora;
Justa, más deseada que una herencia,
y más introducida que un abuso;
Justa, más justa que un zapato al uso;
Justa que tienes, a lo largo que imagino,
todas las propiedades del buen vino:
buen color, buen olor, mas ¿quién se atreve
a decir del sabor sin que lo pruebe?
(1-11)

Rincón’s over-use of anaphora to describe Justa not only serves the comical needs of the play, it also establishes a theme of verbally abusive repetition that introduces the Vejete’s linguistic gluttony. Rincón over-relies on the name of his beloved similar to the way the Vejete over-relies on the words of others. Furthermore, when Rincón’s language multiplies the subject it connects her to so many other things that the signified becomes lost in a sea of signifiers, resulting in the image of a woman with such disparate qualities as an inheritance, an offense, a shoe and wine. Once he begins finding similarities Rincón, like the Vejete, finds it difficult to stop himself. When Justa asks if he really

finds her that beautiful he informs her that he has not finished and launches into a second round of poetic imagery:

Un breve rato
 hago pincel mi lengua y te retrato:
 frente mas espaciosa y placentera
 que una criada cuando sale fuera;
 ojos que decorando sin perjuicio
 hacen más muertes que un doctor novicio;
 narices que temiendo algunas riñas
 se han puesto de por medio entre dos ninas;
 labios—pintor sea yo con vos dichoso—
 que con ellos me quemén por goloso;
 garganta que es, cuando el cristal reluce,
 hija de abad, pues toda se trasluce.
 (12-23)

In this example, as in the previous one, Rincon adds layer upon layer of comparisons that bury Justa's physical description beneath a heap of new doctors and skinning glass. This section utilizes the classical poetic model of courtly love that describes the woman as a collection of her physical parts, especially her forehead, eyes, lips and neck. Rather than establish more traditional similes (i.e., hair like gold, lips like rubies, teeth like pearls), Quevedo substitutes ridiculous objects of comparison: eyes that kill more victims than a green doctor; a forehead as free as happy as a servant let out of the house; a nose that separates two checks about to fight each other. Here again, the use of a traditional form with unexpected substitutions elicits a comic response and illustrates how one might stretch and even abuse language to suit one's own purposes. Once she manages to help her lover escape from the house, even Justa engages in a bit of anaphora:

Velete:	¿Queréisme mucho, a fe?
Justa:	¿Luego no os quiero?
	!Ay mi Rincón, por verte ya me muero! <i>Aparte</i>
	Tanto os quiero por ser de vos querida,

que a un rincón me estaré toda mi vida;
 y pues gustáis de verme retirada
 os prometo estar siempre arrinconada,
 qu'es mi gusto, mi amor y mi fineza
 tener a un rincón vuelta la cabeza,
 y yo hago nada en estas ocasiones:
 que soy yo muy amiga de rincones.
 Vejete: Mucho rinconeáis, y no querría
 que andéis en ello tanto, mujer mía,
 que los rincones, fuera de otras tachas,
 sirven de echar basura y matar hachas.
 (76-89)

Justa's extended use of anaphora, not to mention *double entendre*, stretches semantics in a way that, like Rincón, allows her to convey a multitude of ideas and emotions. In her case, the expansion of possible meanings serves to obscure her true intentions from her husband. Blind to the actual implications of her word-play, the Vejete hears what she says and arrives at a very different conclusion than she does. This juggling game of language that undergoes a constant process of retelling and re-hearing, often with unexpected and even unintended substitutions, coincides with the more obvious sins of distortion that the Vejete commits as a result of his uncontrollable lust for language.

In Rincón and Justa's case, verbal manipulation produces comic results that illustrate the power of words to adapt into new meanings. For the Vejete, using language to create new meanings offends the source with tragic consequences. Caláinos compares the Vejete's treatment of his material as a kind of beating: "[Q]ué cuentos he dicho,/ o cuándo los he contado, para que azotéis conmigo?" (109-11). Villadiego accuses the old man of falsifying the facts of the story and demands evidence of his interpretation: "En mis calzas, ¿que habeis visto/ para decir que las toman/ los que huyen?" (131-33). Juan

de la Encina order the old man to cease and desist immediately before things get out of control:

Dejad a Juan de la Encina,
disparatados del siglo,
que yo me voy, por no hacer
un disparate contigo.
(160-63)

The Vejete's refusal to comply with all of these requests incurs the wrath of the authors he has offended, and he pays for his crime with a severe, albeit comical, beating. This kind of stretching and reimagining of language, Quevedo might have us believe, represents an improper abuse of literature, one that exceeds the limits of both fact and intent. Over and over the Vejete faces his accusers only to hear them say, "I never said that" or "I never meant it in that way." Herman Iventosch calls this argument a "defense of the slandered" and suggests that as a polemic writer known to have caused a great deal of controversy amongst his fellow readers and authors, "A continual theme in Quevedo's work and correspondence is the defense of great figures' (especially writers) fame, corrupted [...] by vulgar ignorance" (95). It seems possible that here, as well as in *Sueño de la muerte* and in *La defense de Epicuro*, among other writings, these accusations against the Vejete may in fact constitute an attempt on the part of Quevedo to defend his own writings from misrepresentation by his contemporaries as well as his successors. In defense of his actions the old man delivers the play's most salient appraisal of literature from the past: "Los más antiguos son los verdaderos" (95). Perhaps, as an author who sees his own work enduring the test of time, Quevedo hopes to align himself with the great and "verdaderos" authors of the past.

Entremés de Diego Moreno

Written in prose and only within the last century brought to light by Eugenio Asensio, Quevedo's two-part *Entremés de Diego Moreno* also possesses a lighter tone that almost certainly identifies it as an early example of the poet's attempt at writing theater. Here, in a style reminiscent of Hurtado de Mendoza or even Lope de Rueda, we see the consequences that result when compulsive lust meets insatiable greed. Notwithstanding its youthful bounce, the interlude expands its vision of debauchery to weave together a variety of colorful sins and create a rich tapestry for the stage. In addition, the play's length and themes, combined with its expanded view of sin, the work exceeds the typical definition of its genre to inhabit a liminal space betwixt and between an *entremés* and a *comedia de enredos*, as the reflection of a nation descending into lustful decadence.

The first part of the interlude opens with a very formulaic discussion between Don Beltrán and the Capitán, two men anxious to make the acquaintance of a certain Doña Justa. Before they do, Beltrán describes life at court to his dapper rival. Like Mondoñedo in *La polilla de Madrid*, he observes a society of contradictions where women entertaining an array of amorous suitors struggle to maintain the illusion of virtue and conceal a reality of vices:

Cada una tiene un discreto, un valiente a quien teme, un poderoso a quien respeta, un pícaro a quien manda, un avariento a quien quita, un genovés a quien pide, un necio a quien engaña, un bellaco a quien entretiene, un querido a quien sustenta de lo que pela a todos. Y tras esto, quieren paje que las obedezca, escudero que las acompañe, coche que las lleve,

mercader que las visita, poeta que las celebre, soldado que las pasee. (22-29)

These women negotiate the lust of the men that surround them in exchange for all the trappings of wealth they can imagine and desire. Surprisingly, the men caught in such a spider's web of desire appear to recognize that the women they seek have no interest in them beyond one's ability to give gifts and favors. Nevertheless, they cannot resist the siren's enticing song and they allow themselves to give and give until they have nothing left. "Talle tiene," warns Beltrán, "de no dejar a vm. con blanca en una hora" (31-32). None of this information gives the Capitán cause for alarm. In fact, he claims to prefer it that way: ¿Qué hace vmd. de repetir que pide? Eso es bueno para mí, que no estimo el dinero en lo que piso. Conténteme ella y verá si la descontento. ¿Tiene buenas manos? Que hay mujer que las tiene como la nieve" (35-38). As a man driven by lust he cares more for the beauty of a woman's hands than he does for the beauty of her character, even when it causes himself great harm. While the tricks and abuses of Justa offend nature and certainly demand retribution, the Capitán and all of his companions contribute to their demise by offering themselves up as fruits of lust ripe for the picking.

In contrast to these men stands Diego Moreno, Justa's husband and the man Beltrán describes as "el hombre más cabal. Bueno es eso para mí [...] Diego Moreno no es de los hombres de agora" (55-57). Here we see a man who takes people at their word, speaks ill of no one and who treats his wife with the respect and dignity she repeatedly betrays. Even Gutiérrez, Justa's crooked criada and accomplice, admits that, "Dios me lo guarde a mi Diego Moreno, que calla lo malo y dice lo bueno" (94-95). As the antithesis of the modern gentleman, Diego in many ways represents the honor, virtue and decency

of Spain's fabled past. Now in advanced years, foolish Diego finds himself literally married to a value system that has completely abandoned him.

When we finally meet Justa and Gutiérrez, the pair faces yet another scandal. Diego has discovered a sword and buckler at his bedside left by one of Justa's lovers from the previous night. The phallic symbolism of another man's sword at his bed may escape the simple-minded Diego, but Justa feels certain that the evidence will eventually cause him to question its presence and put an end to her tricks. When her husband enters inquiring of the mysterious items Justa, with help from Gutiérrez, insists that he must have forgotten that they belong to him. When her husband balks at the suggestion Justa panics and four times resorts to a trick that must have fooled many other suitors: she pretends to faint and, evoking the privilege of liminality afforded pregnant women, exclaims, "¡Ay Jesús, que estoy preñada y malpariré!" (78, 85-86, 92, 114). Finally, Diego relents: "Ansí ya me acuerdo, mías son las armas, Jesús ¡y qué flaqueza de memoria" (144-45). Lest the audience consider that the women have succeeded in their deception, he includes a brief aside before making peace with open arms: "Miento en conciencia, que de miedo lo hago" (145). Perhaps having resigned himself to his wife's wicked ways, Diego chooses to ignore personal offenses if it maintains peace in the home. This strategy may not improve his marriage or his reputation, but he none the less appears contented with the control he does have and demonstrates tremendous patience in his undesirable circumstances.

Diego leaves and the women return to their scheme. Before long the house fills with Justa's lovers. Ortega, the Licenciado, arrives and learns that he forgot his sword

and buckler after last night's escapades. Musco, the doctor, follows with gifts and money he hopes will grant him special access to Justa. The Capitán also drops in with Beltran at his side for encouragement and support. Curiously, none of the men feel the need to hide from one another and each knows the intentions of the other. Nor do the men seem disturbed enough, (for the most part, though not exclusively), by the presence of a rival to actually take any course of action against it. In fact, they are all rivals to Diego and therefore have nothing to fear from her attention to another. As the Capitán explained earlier, these men already know of Justa's philandering ways. They seek her in spite of this in order to satisfy their lust, not their greed. As a result, they do not mind sharing her a little if it means they get enough of the attention they gluttonously seek for themselves.

The party turns perilous when Gutiérrez hears Diego returning home. She quickly produces a plan of action and places each person in a specific pose. Justa lays on the ground on the verge of death, with the doctor taking her pulse, the Capitán holding a ring in her hand, the Licenciado reading her last rites and Beltrán supporting her head. When Diego discovers the performance each actor plays his or her part with great enthusiasm. Again, the trick works (or perhaps Diego allows it to work) and Gutiérrez even accuses him of having caused the scare in the first place:

*¿Qué ha de ser mal hombre? Mal hombre, ¿qué ha de ser? Que quedó el angelito tan agustiado de vuestras palabras de denantes, que le dio un mal de corazón. Que a no llegar el señor doctor y este caballero con la sortija de uña, y el señor don Beltrán que la ha tenido, y yo no hubiera llamado al señor licenciado para que la confesase...Mal hombre, ¿qué ha de ser?
(329-34)*

Diego laments his role in the scare and instructs the group to take her to bed (much to the surprise and approval of the suitors). As the play ends, the Capitán tries to get his ring

back from Justa. She refuses and cries out, “¡Apriétenme la sortija! Y, si hay otra, también, porque estoy preñada y malpariré” (353-54). It would appear, typical of most interludes, that the greedy adulterer triumphs over her foolish spouse in the end, and that Justa has escaped the consequences of her actions and even prospered through them.

Part two of the *entremés* brings justice to Justa’s debauchery in the form of Diego Verdugo, whose ominous name foreshadows the play’s conclusion. Some time appears to have passed since the first part and things have changed. Verdugo reveals that Diego Moreno died only hours earlier, leaving his young wife the sole inheritor of a wealthy estate and the target of his own designs to obtain it: “Es hermosa y muchacha y, aunque no tiene la mejor opinión del mundo, corren en él las cosas de manera que ha de haber mil golosos que la pidan por mujer. Y podría ser que presunciones pudiesen tanto con ella que olvidándose de mí, se casase con otro” (11-16). His comments make it clear that he cares little for the woman’s reputation or even her faithfulness as a wife. Verdugo wants Justa’s money, and he wants it before anyone else has a chance to take it from him. Perhaps revealing the vanity of his machinations, he explains:

[...] bien sé que ha dado ocasión la condición de su marido a muchas lenguas del lugar, y algunas debían glosar más de lo que era. Pero no es más la mujer de como la tiene el marido. Y yo sé que mudará de costumbres conmigo de suerte que borre todas las cosas pasadas. Y en conclusión, estoy resultó en casarme con ella, y no pido consejos sino ayuda. (23-28)

Confident that he can change Justa where no one else could, Verdugo has enlisted the services of Leocadia, an *alcahueta*, and gives her specific instructions to arrange the union immediately. This unwavering determination to take what he desires contrasts sharply with Justa’s previous suitors who, blinded by their own lust, allowed themselves

to follow her every whim. With Verdugo Quevedo paints what he might consider the masculine corollary to Justa's feminine frauds, the portrait of a man who sees only his own greed.

Her husband having died only hours earlier, Justa throws herself into the performance of a grieving widow: “¡Ay, señora mía, que es muy fuerte y yo muy flaca para tan gran golpe! ¡Ay marido mío, bien mío, regalo mío! ¿Y qué ha de ser de mí sin vos?” (67-69). Even Gutiérrez seems impressed by the quality of her acting skills: “Pues los suspiros y desmayos han sido con tanta propiedad dichos y hechos que muchas veces los tuve por más ciertos que fingidos, con saber el intento a que se decían” (39-42). Justa embraces the social market hungry for a new husband that will indulge her wandering heart and provide her with the wealth she seeks. Of course, her growing appetite does not overshadow her discriminating taste. “Entiende los pobres y feos,” she warns the audience, “que ricos y galanes son lindo bocado, y más con la salsa de ser liberales” (136-37). Literally on the hunt for her next meal, the wealthy widow begins entertaining a series of male visitors. Don Pablo arrives to offer a bit of comfort and establish himself as a frontrunner in the race to marry her. Two other suitors, Landínez and Guevara, also descend upon the scene hoping for the same. Despite their best efforts, Leocadia interrupts the discussion and quickly brokers a deal on behalf of her client. When the runners-up observe Justa laughing and dancing in brightly colored dresses, still only hours following her husband's demise, they instantly realize that no matter what she had promised them, she had agreed to marry another. The disenchanted Landínez vows, “Que no fiaré ya de una mujer en mi vida” (287). Verdugo arrives to claim his prize.

Musicians bring song and dance to the happy couple and Justa anxiously leaves to join in the festivities until her new husband forbids her: “Señora mujer, ya no es tiempo dellas y de bailar; no lo son para mí. Que mejor me parece una mujer con la rueca en la mano que con las castañetas” (290-92). Justa resists. Having likely never spent a single day of her life sewing she has no interest in playing the role of a dutiful wife. “Donaire ha tenido,” she explains, “¡Y está rabiando por verme bailar!” (293). Verdugo’s response, to Justa’s utter disbelief, effectively ends the party:

Verdugo:	Mire que tan rabiando estoy que no me ha de quedar instrumento bailarino hoy en casa que no le queme.
Justa:	¿Hablas de veras, amigo?
Verdugo:	Ya no soy sino marido, y de los que no sufren cosquillas. (294-98)

Shocked and surprised to discover a husband dramatically different from Diego Moreno, Justa turns to her bag of tricks as a means of escape and falls fainting into the open arms of Landínez. Gutiérrez throws the room into a panic by announcing that her lady has just suffered a heart condition, but Verdugo intervenes and simply asks for a lit candle. When he takes Justa by the hand and begins to hold it over the candle’s flame she miraculously returns to her senses: “Que ya estoy buena, que ya estoy buena” (366). Verdugo recognizes her recovery: “Ya lo creo, porque este remedio es famoso” (367). He then turns his attention to the gathered crowd and the audience to offer them the following advice: “Señores, cuando a sus mujeres o a sus damas les tome este mal, ya saben la medicina” (367-69). He allows the musicians and the crowd to continue with the song and dance but forbids his repentant wife from participating as the play draws to a close.

The light tone of the first half, depicting sinful characters in a world free from serious consequences, sharply contrasts with the foreboding tone of the second half, where the introduction of fear and violence return order to social chaos in a manner echoing Juan Manuel's medieval tale from the *Conde Lucanor* of the *Mozo que casó con una mujer muy fuerte y muy brava*. Naturally, the variety of men who approach and interact with Justa over the course of the play explores the notion of husbands and suitors in Spanish society. As we have seen, Diego Moreno represents the honorable husband, if not the most wise figure of the group.

The second half directly addresses the moral code he once represented, making his presence felt even in his absence. Weeping over her loss to a neighbor, Justa twice refers to her deceased husband as "la honra del mundo" (83, 98). She repeats this idea again when Pablo arrives to offer his condolences: "[...] me excedía, que todo lo atribuía a ser él tan honradazo. [...] Porque era la honra del mundo" (161-77). The death of Diego in the second part indicates not only the absence of a husband but also the disappearance of honor in the world. Society's sliding value system eats away at the virtue in a way that opens the door to attacks from the lustful and the greedy. And yet, the first half of the play clearly illustrated how Diego himself had done little to stop the changing moral tide against him. Perhaps in his youth he may have cried out with rage and fought to maintain the honor of his family but as an old man, he picks up the sword and the buckler of his assailant only to sigh, "Esto es inconveniente a la honra de los Morenos" (102-03). Times have certainly changed. By dividing the interlude with the

death of honor Quevedo aligns his social metaphor to coincide with a marked period of transition.

In addition to Diego Moreno, the interlude reveals a generous sample of varying approaches to matrimony, each fraught with sin. The Capitán comes dressed in all the pomp and finery of his office, offering gifts of jewelry, but Justa can barely stand to indulge him: “Ahora yo quiero, por más que me quiera, desenamorarle de mí; pareceréle peor que el diablo. ¿Y cómo le desenamoraré, como?” (269-71). Yet, despite all her abuses, she cannot manage to dissuade the clueless Capitán from throwing himself at a battle he cannot win. Nor does Beltrán, the shrewd observer of society’s ills, extract himself from Justa’s magnetic field and accompanies his friend throughout the scandal despite his best efforts to turn away from it. The Doctor and the Licenciado, as well as Pablo, Guevara and Landínez from the second part, all expose themselves as agents of pure lust, in the way that their desires allow Justa to easily manipulate them like puppets on a string. Verdugo, on the other hand, represents a different breed of suitor, one that satisfies his desires by taking rather than simply receiving. He does not negotiate with Justa at any point in the play and even refuses to negotiate with Leocadia whom he employs precisely for her negotiating skills. If the first group of men revolve around Justa, Verdugo makes sure that Justa revolves around him.

Presented with this field of handsome mates to choose from, Gutiérrez recommends to her lady that she take advantage of each one according to what he has to offer:

De cada uno toma lo que te diere; así, del carnicero carne, como del especiero especias, del confitero dulces, del mercader vestidos, del sastre

hechuras, del zapatero servillas, del señor de joyas, del genovés dineros, del letrado regalos, del médico curas, del aguacil amparo, del caballero oro, del hidalgo plata y del oficial cascajo; de unos, reales, y de otros, blancas. Todo abulta. (162-68)

With so many options to choose from in this market of men, Gutiérrez nevertheless warns Justa that she ought to avoid certain kinds of suitors, such as “valientes que te regalarán con estocadas y te darán en votos y juros lo que tú has menester en censos” (168-69). She likewise urges Justa to avoid musicians, “porque ya no se come con pasos de garganta, sino con qué tener que pasar por ella” (170-71), and poets, whom she describes as, “Gente apestada: con un soneto te harán pago si los quieres, y con una sátira si los dejas” (171-73). The most lucrative target men, in her opinion, are the, “viejos verdes, éstos son los que importa a la ventera pativo que profesas” (174-75). These men have a great deal more wealth available for the taking and an overabundance of lust that allows them to give it away without noticing.

The menu narrows dramatically in the second part, once Justa considers not an amorous lover that she can take advantage of and abandon on a whim, but a husband that will observe her every move. Here again Gutiérrez supplies the advice on how to proceed:

[...] no hay peores maridos que los que han sido primero galanes. Porque, como saben las flaquezas de las mujeres y los modos de dar trascalones, están en el caso y no hay echalles dado falso. No topará vmd. condición como la de Diego Moreno, qu'esté en el cielo. (49-52)

Ironically, the lustful man provides a good source of extramarital entertainments to the married woman but the same man disrupts those activities once she marries him since he knows all the tricks and can recognize the markings of cuckoldry when he sees them.

This constant game of back and forth as Justa tries to simultaneously cash-in on the benefits of both married and single life removes her from membership in either category, in essence, liminalizing her name in society. As Verdugo pointed out in the beginning of the second part, everyone knows that she had been unfaithful to her husband and yet no one, including the offended party, did anything about it. Her liminal status as married-bachelorette allows her to say and do things not typically allowed by established social structures, a power she utilizes to its full capacity. Unfortunately, as a consequence of her liminality, she has also transformed herself into something both feared and shunned. She has made herself a kind of monster. Pablo alludes to this fact when he first arrives to comfort Justa, confessing that, “leyendo esta siesta la historia del Minotauro, me enterecía acordándome de vmd” (150-51). Surprised by the comparison, Gutiérrez asks him what he means. “Algo parece que acude,” explains Pablo, “que al fin queda una mujer viuda como en un laberinto” (153-54). He intends to compare a widowed woman to a person lost in a labyrinth and faced with numerous difficult decisions without a clear vision of how to escape. Yet, in many ways, by her shifting value system and endless contradictions, Justa has created the labyrinth for herself as a means of trapping the lustful men who wander into its keep. In that labyrinth Justa herself has replaced the monster, devouring her victims like “bocados” (137). She has transformed herself into a figure of revulsion, an animal with feminine features and a plague to society. In this regard, Quevedo shows how only when Verdugo slays the beastly part of her nature can Spain truly rest in safety.

If we extend the symbolism of Justa's escapades into a national context, the play may reveal something much more sinister at work. Seventeenth-century Spain, like Justa, had perhaps become a monster anxiously feeding its financial greed by courting and bleeding the resources of peoples in both the old world and the new. Although at one time bound by honor, she has gradually betrayed her creed and slipped into a state of complete moral decadence. The danger of this scenario, as Quevedo illustrates, appears in the allegorical figure of the Verdugo. One day in the not too distant future, he may warn, Spain will have its day of reckoning and see its greedy fingers held to the flame until it agrees to cease its excessive behavior. While an interesting possibility to consider, I do not believe that Quevedo has intentionally built such a statement into his play. Nevertheless, as an undeniable product of its time and culture, the striking parallels between Justa and Spain's unquenchable thirst for more wealth and power provide stimulating material for consideration.

Entremés de Barbara

Quevedo's two-part *Entremés de Bárbara* represents one of the poet's best examples of comic theater. Like *Diego Moreno*, the story involves a greedy woman who manages to juggle a host of gullible suitors who, blinded by their lust, allow themselves to be deceived out of money and marriage. Yet unlike many of Quevedo's other interludes, this play resolves the conflict without violence or punishment but rather introducing a surprise marriage of sorts.

The play opens with Hartacho vehemently accusing Bárbara of pawning various items of jewelry he left in her care before making a month-long trip to a town in southern Spain to conduct some personal business. Unphased by his accusations, she confesses that she uses the man according to her needs and expects him to accept the fact by playing along without complaint:

Es menester que con unos se haga vmd. mi hermano, con otros mi primo, con otros mi tutor, o mi curador, o que me solicita mis negocios. Aquí ha de ser soberbio, allí manso y a maldecir, acullá loco o manco u tonto. Y si fuese menester, que se destierre, y a ausentarse. (39-43)

Perhaps realizing that she has made a fool out of him, Hartacho refuses to admit her honeyed words and turns to leave, though does not get far before Bárbara reveals what she has accomplished during the month of his absence: “Y porque vea lo que he hecho en este mes de ausencia, sepa que me he hecho preñada y he parido, y está viva la criatura y aquí en casa” (56-58). Obviously surprised to hear that she has conceived and given birth to a child in less than a month, Hartacho listens to her explain how she fabricated the story in order to fool three different suitors. Each man, believing himself the father of the child, regularly visits the house to supply money and clothing for his son and making Bárbara very rich.

A knock at the door sends Hartacho into hiding. Ascanio, an Italian gentleman, enters as the first of the would-be fathers. When Bárbara tells him she has just had an argument with a man over the cost of some jewelry, Ascanio gives her the money to pay for the items. He inquires about his son, wishes her well and takes his leave. Hartacho emerges in disbelief: “Vive Dios, que te puedes dar la borla de astute entre todas las mujeres que cursan tu arte” (117-18). A second knock at the door sends Hartacho back

into hiding. This time Silva, a captain and also would-be father, enters. Bárbara tells him that she has fallen behind in paying her rent and the landlord has come threatening to evict her. Silva tells her not to worry and provides her with the sufficient funds before inquiring about his son, wishing her well and taking his leave. Again, Hartacho reacts with amazement at Bárbara's skill as a con-woman: "Ni mujer que no sea una grandísima bellaca en llegando a conocer eso de un hombre" (167-68). A third knock at the door introduces Truchado, the third would-be father. He brings with him a sum of money that he had promised and urges Bárbara not to give a penny of it to Hartacho, whom he indicates "gusta de ser infame" (188). When the third suitor finally leaves Hartacho emerges in a rage ready to avenge the insult against his enemy. Bárbara cleverly manages to allay his temper and sends him away promising to share with him the spoils of her ingenuity.

At this point Bárbara begins to realize that she can no longer maintain so complex a ruse and instead sneaks off to marry Gelves, a musician that she has been seeing for quite some time. Before she leaves she instructs Álvarez, her *criada*, to tell any visitors that she has left with an uncle and will return shortly. One by one the suitors return and, rather than obey her mistress's instructions, the traitorous servant tells them the truth of both Bárbara's whereabouts and the child. The four jealous, disenchanted men fly off to the wedding only to arrive a moment too late. Not only has Bárbara married someone else, she mocks and ridicules their foolishness before the entire wedding party.

Like *Diego Moreno*, the second half of the interlude finds that time has passed and Bárbara is now a widow. Hartacho again opens the play, this time confessing his undying devotion to the women that has so cruelly abused him:

¡Amor, amor! Venturoso se puede llamar el que se viere libre de tus niñerías. Tres cosas dicen que destierran al amor: ausencia, necesidad e ingratitud. Pero en mí es tan al contrario que ni un año de ausencia, ni necesidad, ni ingratitud han sido parte para poder olvidar a Bárbara, antes estimo el venir ahora con hacienda para poderla querer y regalar. (10-15)

Unable to free himself from her influence, he returns to find a very different woman than the one he knew. Her husband gone, and with him all of her money and hope, Bárbara has resigned herself to a life of isolation. She sees no one, keeps the windows closed and leaves the house only to attend mass. Hartacho sees his opportunity and promptly offers her a gold necklace as a promise of his hand in marriage. She, with little other recourse, accepts, and he leaves to gather his things and call for a priest. No sooner does he leave but Bárbara receives a second offer for marriage, this time from Ascanio the Italian gentleman from the first part. Comparing the two offers she finds that the latter proves much more financially lucrative and accepts even though she has already promised to marry Hartacho. Quickly, she runs to wed before she changes her mind. Hartacho returns and Álvarez refuses to grant him access to the house, telling him that her lady has instead chosen to marry his rival. Deceived for a second time, he hurries off to stop the wedding.

Unlike Hartacho, Ascanio shows that he learned something about his bride-to-be in the first half of the play. Paranoid that everyone at the wedding has set their minds to steal away his wife, Ascanio one by one orders them to leave, including the guests, the

musicians and even the priest. Just then, a third gentleman appears and reveals himself as Octavio, Bárbara's husband, and explains that he only pretended to die at sea in order to test her loyalty. Spared from marrying either Ascanio or Hartacho, Bárbara proclaims, "Venga mil veces enhorabuena, que también he resucitado yo en saber que he salido del poder deste figonazo" (285-86). The musicians return and the play concludes with a happy reunion rather than a wedding.

Like countless other *entremeses*, Quevedo builds his plot around a premise identified by Barbara in the second part: "Los hombres están obligados a dar a las mujeres" (73). The first part establishes this notion as a social truth. Ascanio, Silva and Truchero certainly engaged in sexual relations with Bárbara, without any promise of marriage, as a result of their lust to have her. The fact that they have not disappeared after first meeting her may indicate that those relations continued for several months. But when each man receives word that he has fathered a child by her the obligation of society dictates that the father of a child has the responsibility to provide for the needs of the child. As a result, his physical obligation turns to a familial obligation. Later, when the men discover they have been fooled, this sense of social obligation demands that they seek vengeance for the offense. "[S]é lo que son todas estas señoras," remarks Hartacho, "Y pues me parece que corre la obligación por entrambos, que vamos allá y podremos estorbarlo" (307-09). The second part portrays a different kind of obligation, one motivated by the desires of the body. Hartacho, for example, confesses his inability to leave Bárbara even after all of the cruelties she has inflicted upon him. He knows that she has not borne him a child, that she lied to him and made a fool out of him and even

believes, at least before he arrives at her house, that she is still married. Yet despite all of these reasons why he should socially reject her requests, Hartacho's physical and emotional desires oblige him to forever pursue that which he knows he cannot have. This addictive behavior manifests itself in Ascanio as well. Even more severely abused by the woman than Hartacho, Ascanio likewise overlooks all of her past transgressions in order to quench his physical obligations. Sadly, both men end up like the gluttonous souls in Dante's Purgatory, forever thirsty yet incapable of drinking.

Another driving force behind the interlude is the power lies and the accumulation of them versus the power of truth. In addition to the lie of the child, Bárbara possesses a wide variety of falsifying skills. In order to convince the men of her pregnancy she explains, "soy gran mujer de finger vómitos" (66-67). She lies to Ascanio about the pawned jewelry and he pays her money. She lies to Silva about the overdue rent and he pays her money. She lies to Truchado about her relationship with Hartacho and he pays her money. She even lies to Hartacho about sharing some of the loot with him and he believes it. Relishing in her unstoppable success, Bárbara turns to the audience in a brief monologue and, almost duplicating the advice Gutiérrez gave to Justa in *Diego Moreno*, describes how the fruits of all these lies will help her attain her ultimate goal of freedom from her tormentors:

¿Qué les parece a vmds. en lo qu'estoy metido? Pues muy bien pienso salir de todo, porque la colación que los padres del niño han traído, que como hijo de la ignorancia han contribuido, ha de servir para mi desposorio. Que yo y otra amiga tenemos concertado de irnos a desposar a Gelves. Y ha de ser el desposorio hoy. ¡Pues decir es malo el que yo tengo escogido para marido! Sino que es un mocito que canta y baila que no hay más que desear; y no estar sujeta a un alguacil, a un escribano que

os encarte, y al caballero que os burle, y al rufián que os estafe, y más como este bellacón que se acaba de ir ahora. (216-25)

Her marriage to the young musician appears to have served its purpose well. In the second part of the play we find her married, not to Gelves the musician, but rather to Octavio the sailor and adventurer. Perhaps, given what we know of what happens later on, we see Bárbara in this moment lying to the audience. Either way, she clearly falsifies her story as a way of manipulating the obligations of others. “¿[A]nsí se engañan los hombres como yo,” wonders Hartacho, “y olvidar una amistad tan larga y llena de obligaciones?” (353-55).

Ironically, Bárbara’s plan very nearly unravels when Álvarez intervenes to counteract fiction with fact. Immediately following her lady’s confession to the audience, the *criada* enters to make one of her own: “Vaya vmd. con Dios. Y miren este gorgojo los que ha traído engañados, y el pago que les da. Yo he dicho que esforzaré su enredo, pero no querría que cargasen sobre mis espaldas estos negocios” (237-40). True to her word, Álvarez immediately tells Ascanio that Bárbara has run off to marry another, and explains the reason for her decision saying she did it: “no por el interés sino por la obligación que tengo de servir a vmd” (247-48), and does the same for Silva, Truchado and Hartacho. Curiously, the same obligatory phenomenon that bonds these men to their betrayer, and the Bárbara manipulates with lies, also prevents Álvarez from betraying the men with false information.

As an interlude packed with intrigue and deception, hidden observers, social obligations, betrayal, surprising revelations, greed, lust, gluttony and lies, Quevedo’s *Entremés de Bárbara* represents perhaps the poet’s finest work in the genre. Despite a

propensity for physical and visual comedy, the *entremés* typically refrains from displaying acts of lust on stage and instead relies on allusions and innuendo, such as the sword of his rival left at Diego Moreno's bedside. Perhaps, in this way, the interlude follows the advice Virgil gave to Dante to "keep a tight rein on the eyes." Furthermore, as operations of the eyes, these sins appear in the form of attitudes and the way in which the unrestrained physical appetites of the individual leads to foolish judgment, such as Hartacho's relentless pursuit of the deceitful Bárbara. Each sinful man, from Ascanio, Silva, Truchado, and Hartacho, to Ortega, Beltrán and the Capitán, indulges in the desires of his body in a way that makes him, in St. Augustine's words, "not a lover of wedlock so much as a slave of lust" to the women they pursue (Book XIII, 25). Likewise, the Viejo's gluttonous appetite for citation makes him a slave to his thirst for literature. The grave consequences of that slavish indulgence places all of these men in a state of torment similar to their counterparts in Purgatory where the gluttonous and the lustful hunger for those things they cannot have.

CONCLUSION

Monsters are manufactured precisely to teach neophytes to distinguish clearly between the different factors of reality, as it is conceived in their culture.

(Victor Turner, *Betwixt and Between* 105)

Hybridization and liminality often produce the horrifying monsters of dark tales. The Minotaur of Greek mythology transformed the labyrinth from a mental exercise into a fight for survival. The curse of undead, Egyptian mummies added alarm to archaeology. Yet, as Turner (*Betwixt and Between* 105) suggests, monsters might also serve a valuable function in society by symbolizing the hidden dangers that can overtake the individual and, like Dante, cause him or her to wander off the designated path. Covarrubias, for example, connects the word *monstruo* with its Latin origin *demonstro*, meaning to point at or to indicate (812). Bakhtin likewise speaks very highly of marginalized figures such as fools and clowns that use their liminality as the means of bridging the gap between actors and audiences. As he argues, these performance monsters accomplish what neither structure can accomplish alone, namely, “[represent] a certain form of life, which is real and ideal at the same time. They [stand] on the borderline between life and art, in a peculiar mid-zone as it were” (8). Peculiar and powerful, these liminal spaces often produce the most creative and engaging elements in a story.

History suggests that Quevedo never intended his interludes to become the subject of critical study. He and his fellow *entremesistas* hardly ever mention the existence of such works, let alone discuss their quality, and instead direct the reader to the novels, treatises, volumes of lofty poetry and even *comedias* that generated greater interest and higher profits in publication. Likewise, the genre rarely participates in the critical dialogue of any generation and when it does, as we have seen, reviewers often point to its monstrous corruption of morality as evidence of the Soft Theater's degenerate state. In general, Golden Age scholarship has at worst adopted the same antagonistic position, or at best chosen to overlook the *entremés* as simply a mechanical device of performance, too hard to find, too simple, too sloppy, or even too silly for investigation and review. But even the *comedia*, the Golden Age's theatrical darling, suffered a devastating blow when, during the two centuries that followed it, works by Lope, Tirso, Calderón, Moreto, Alarcón, and others all but disappeared from the stage taking the *entremés* with them into obscurity. The *comedia* managed to survive oblivion and even build its comeback thanks in large part to its abandonment of the liminal and its appearance on the published page. The interlude, with the stage as its fundamental means of survival, could not.

All of this changed in 1911 with Emilio Cotarelo y Mori's formidable publication of more than 350 examples of short theater from Spain's Golden Age. Although not without its shortcomings (Cotarelo y Mori died before he could complete the work), the collection shed light on a tremendous quantity of virtually unexamined theater. Finally, after centuries adrift, scholarship had easy access to the interlude in a way it never had before. Not long after Cotarelo y Mori, Eugenio Asensio's *Itinerario del entremés*

(1965), and Hannah Bergman's almost simultaneous study of the life and works of Quiñones de Benavente (Castalia 1965), shed new light on the value and potential of the genre and encouraged others to follow. As a result, scholarship began to take notice of the Soft Theater and the ways in which it contributed to the Hard. Victor Turner, as a cultural anthropologist writing in roughly the same time frame as Asensio and Bergman, understood this process well:

Without liminality, program might indeed determine performance. But, given liminality, prestigious programs can be undermined and multiple alternative programs may be generated. The result of confrontations between monolithic, power-supported programs and their many subversive alternatives is a sociocultural 'field' in which many options are provided, not only between programmatic *gestalten* but also between the parts of different programs. (*Dramas* 14)

Once considered monsters of the stage that distorted the otherwise uplifting and instructive potential of theater, “[h]aving a form of godliness but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:5). As we have seen, research by Asensio, Bergman, Turner and others illustrates how liminality made the interlude a boon of innovation that ultimately benefited not only the *comedia* but the popularity of theater performance in general. Mirthful rather than menacing, the dark laughter of these plays more accurately resembles Cookie Monster than it does the bloodthirsty creatures of horror films.

Quevedo's own approach to the genre reveals not only a sense of engagement with the subversive elements in society, as described by Turner, but a confrontation with the form as well. One category of plays includes *Los refranes del viejo celoso*, *El marido fantasma*, *Los enfadosos*, *Doña Bárbara*, and *La venta*. These plays fit nicely into the mold created by Lope de Rueda, Hurtado de Mendoza and Quiñones de Benavente and

depict the anticipated stock character whose personal vices ignite a comedy of situations that typically ends with music or violence. They also demonstrate Quevedo's endless creative wit and fine-tuned sense of comic timing.

A second category of plays includes *La polilla de Madrid*, *El Marión*, *La ropavejera* and *Diego Moreno*. These intermediate plays possess characteristics that show the poet distinguishing himself from the traditional interlude formula. *La polilla de Madrid* extends almost double the length of works by Benavente and the character of Mondoñedo regularly contributes opinions that seem far too caustic for a light-hearted skit about mischief and trickery. The first part of *El Marión* follows the typical non-threatening model of its predecessors and plays upon gender reversal for comic affect. Yet the second half turns ugly, plunging the innocent Constanzo into dangerous and aggressive abuse that, while likely still considered humorous by its original audience, none the less marks a shift in the poet away from the frivolous and toward the fatal. With *La ropavejera* Quevedo keeps the plot light and simple but engulfs the genre into entirely fantastic possibilities in a way that directly and blatantly transmits a social message in opposition to the hypocritical practices of individuals obsessed with beauty. Similarly, *Diego Moreno* appears comfortable in the mould of the philandering woman motivated by avarice until the second half when the play's discussion regarding Diego and its numerous references to the death of honor call attention to social ills in a manner much more allegorical than amusing.

A last category of plays includes *La vieja Muñatones*, *La destreza* and *El niño y el Peralvillo de Madrid*. These works break from the pattern entirely and, bear very little

resemblance to their fellow *entremeses*. In the case of *La vieja Muñatonos* and *La destreza*, Quevedo entirely abandons not only physical comedy but comedy in general to make education at the university and in sword play thinly-veiled, misogynist analogies to the nefarious nature of women whose only purpose in life seems to be ridiculing men and extorting money from them. *El niño y el Peralvillo de Madrid*, as we have seen, quickly slips into the allegorical mould of the *auto* and subjugates the comedy to an instructional and morally uplifting message. The fact that more than half of his interludes demonstrate a break with tradition exposes Quevedo as a liminal playwright, even within the liminality of the genre.

As a distinctly polemic writer (to borrow a term from Iventosch), much of Quevedo's work, including the *Sueños* and the *Buscón*, regularly and creatively question the limits of language and literature. It comes as no surprise then that his theatrical writings also employ similar strategies of experimentation. In addition to the search to uncover presently unknown or unpublished theater by Quevedo, another subject for future research and analysis are the ways in which his theatrical works may have influenced his literary endeavors, and vice versa, as this study touched only briefly on possible connections between the two. Robert Holub explains how unknown or unstudied works can potentially change the way scholarship approaches and understands the greater body of the author and his or her works:

Moreover, structures should not be conceived as independent, self-sufficient entities. Changes in any single structure—e.g. the discovery of a lost work by and author—will necessarily alter the perception of other, related structures. (31)

As examples of Quevedo's writings that rarely receive exposure in circles of critical analysis, these interludes provide a new perspective on one of Spain's greatest writers.

Scholarship might also benefit from considering the influence of performance on composition. Despite the significant contributions of Cotarelo y Mori, Asensio and Berman, the *entremés* continues to represent a largely untapped source of investigation. Quevedo's theater, like most interludes, suffers from extremely sparse research regarding their stage histories. How often did companies produce them? What kinds of settings did those companies stage them in? How did audiences receive the performance? Did the plays enjoy performance abroad and, if so, how did those stagings compare to ones produced in Spain? How closely might Quevedo have developed his theater in collaboration with performers? These and other questions offer promising avenues of research to better understand not only Quevedo as a man and as a writer, but also the development and character of the Early Modern Spanish stage.

One final question we might consider is the place of the interlude today. During the seventeenth century the *entremés* represented an integral part of the theatrical experience and participated in virtually every performance. The audience expected a series of musical numbers, interludes and dances to fragment and accompany the *comedia*. Since most *comedias* did not mandate the addition of specific supporting pieces the task of organizing an afternoon of performances fell to the *autor de comedias* that arranged and rearranged the various pieces so as to produce the most favorable results. Today that tradition no longer continues. Audiences who attend a twenty-first-century performance of *El caballero de Olmedo* or *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* expect to see

only a single play told without distraction or interruption (aside from the occasional intermission). In this case, a company that chooses to include an *entremés* certainly provides its audience with a more complete picture of Golden Age Theater but, depending on the kind of piece selected and how they incorporate it into the performance (two things an *autor de comedias* would easily know how to do), they also run the risk of distracting or even confusing their audience.

This should not imply that the interlude no longer has a place in modern times. On the contrary, today's entertainment provides numerous examples of the popularity of short, comical, even sinful theater such as the *entremés*. Consider, for example, the enormous success of television sitcoms such as *Seinfeld* that share much in common with the Soft Theater tradition, or the countless examples of variety and sketch-comedy programming such as *The Carol Burnett Show*, *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, *Saturday Night Live*, *Mad TV*, *In Living Color* and *The Kids in the Hall*, all of which employ sinful, exaggerated, stock characters to produce innumerable comic episodes. In a sense, the *entremés* survives today as the precursor to these modern entertainments.

Perhaps one of the best applications of the interlude appears in the classroom as a way of introducing students to the theater of the Golden Age. Their brevity and simplicity of plot, combined with a very visual and comical approach to story-telling, make them ideal candidates for study and even performance in an educational environment and the stepping stones toward a more profound study and appreciation of the *comedia*. Ultimately, even as examples of liminality and sin, the interlude as a genre, including those by Francisco de Quevedo, represents an integral component of the Early

Modern Spanish stage. If audience members and *autores* alike valued the *entremés* with such high regard and laughed while its sinful characters cried, perhaps we, as its modern-day practitioners and critics, ought to as well. After all, as Asensio points out, “Teatro menor no significa teatro inferior” (*Itinerario* 9).

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