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# STAGING THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE

TRANSLATION AND PERFORMANCE



*Kathleen Jeffs*

OXFORD MODERN LANGUAGES AND  
LITERATURE MONOGRAPHS

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*Translation and Performance*

KATHLEEN JEFFS

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# Introduction

The publicity material for the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC)'s 2004–5 Spanish season referred to the Golden Age again and again as 'the last great unopened treasure chest of world drama', enticing subscribers with Spanish seduction, honour, and revenge: 'These plays are hot'.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, the season was heralded as a success, and it has sparked interest in the Golden Age both with a surge of scholarly work and an increase in productions of plays from this period in the UK and the US.<sup>2</sup> Amid the atmosphere of castanet classes, the season's new artistic director, Michael Boyd, expressed the desire to give the audiences translations, not adaptations, and the RSC hired academic consultants from Belfast, Oxford, and London universities to aid with the play selection and translation processes.<sup>3</sup> Part of the job of these consultants during the season was to serve as translators not only from Spanish to English, but also between the language of Spanish letters as it appears in scholarly literature and is spoken in academia, and the parlance of theatre practitioners and marketing managers working for the RSC. My role as script consultant in rehearsals during the season required developing a translation and communication methodology that would feed the actors' and directors' creative processes, while maintaining an ethos of fidelity with regards to the original texts. A successful theatrical ensemble thrives on the mingling of these different voices directed towards a common goal. Now that the RSC's Spanish Golden Age season has closed, this book posits a model for future productions of the *comedia* in English, one that recognizes the need for the languages of the scholar and the theatre artist to be made mutually intelligible by the use of collaborative strategies, mediated by a consultant or dramaturg proficient in both tongues. This model applies more generally to theatrical collaborations involving a translator, writer, and director, and is intended to be useful for translation and performance processes in any language.

<sup>1</sup> Royal Shakespeare Company (ed.), 'The Spanish Golden Age' (season brochure, June 2004).

<sup>2</sup> Two edited volumes were published shortly after the RSC season: Susan Paun de García and Donald Larson (eds), *The Comedia in English: Translation and Performance* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2008); and Catherine Boyle and David Johnston with Janet Morris (eds), *The Spanish Golden Age in English: Perspectives on Performance* (London: Oberon, 2007). Productions include Catherine Boyle's translation of *House of Desires* by Lansing Community College, 4–5 and 11–12 November 2005. Laurence Boswell went on to direct *El perro del hortelano* in Spanish in Madrid at Teatro Albéniz 27 September to 13 October 2007. He then translated and directed *Fuente Ovejuna* for the Canadian Stratford Shakespeare Festival, 19 June to 4 October 2008. See Chapter 6, this volume, for more information.

<sup>3</sup> Castanet, flamenco, and tango classes were offered as part of the 'Fiesta' session, The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, 30 July to 1 August 2004.

The Royal Shakespeare Company is known internationally for staging the work of Shakespeare, based at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. The RSC also features a regular rotation of plays by other authors, including many new works. However, in 2004 the company announced the opening of its Spanish Golden Age season, with four full productions and one play for BBC Radio 3. Why perform the *comedia* at the RSC? This begs the wider question of why cultural institutions look to translate work from other languages in general. Sirkku Aaltonen describes the need of the target culture to incorporate foreign works: 'When foreign playtexts are chosen for translation, the choice is based on some need of the indigenous system for them, but it is also affected by the compatibility of the discourse of the foreign text with that of the receiving theatrical system and the target society'.<sup>4</sup> Within the RSC, precedent for the season, and perhaps the 'need' for the season, rested in the very reason its home, the Swan Theatre, was established. In 1986, Trevor Nunn and Terry Hands opened the Swan, a space purpose-built for performing the works of Shakespeare's contemporaries, European writers, and occasionally Shakespeare's plays. In 2002, Gregory Doran led a Jacobean season of five rarely seen plays by Shakespeare's contemporaries.<sup>5</sup> Riding on the back of that season, Michael Boyd invited RSC Associate Director Laurence Boswell to lead a season of Spanish Golden Age plays. Of the Jacobean season, Boyd wrote: 'The success of and hunger for this work illustrated our audience's desire to see unknown pieces of drama in an intimate space and the Spanish Golden Age productions build upon this'.<sup>6</sup> So, although the Swan, with its studio feel, is regularly used for contextualizing Shakespeare by staging his English contemporaries, the Spanish season was the first time a major season of foreign plays of the same age had been produced by the RSC in this way.

Michael Boyd also made changes in the structure of the company, convinced that the future lies in the past. Under Boyd, the renewed RSC described its purpose as 'Defined by Ensemble: Our work is created through the ensemble principles of collaboration, trust, mutual respect, and a belief that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'.<sup>7</sup> Boyd created two ensembles in 2004–5: one to work on four Shakespearean tragedies in the main house (*Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, and *King Lear*), and a smaller ensemble for a Spanish Golden Age season in the adjacent Swan. For the Spanish Golden Age season, the ensemble was expanded to include academics and professional Hispanists within the RSC's family of theatre-makers, engendering opportunities and problems in the way theatre practitioners and scholars collaborate.

<sup>4</sup> Sirkku Aaltonen, *Time-Sharing on Stage: Drama Translation in Theatre and Society*, *Topics in Translation* 17 (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2000) 47.

<sup>5</sup> The Olivier Award-winning Jacobean season included *Edward III* by William Shakespeare; *Eastward Ho!* by Ben Jonson, John Marston, and George Chapman; *The Roman Actor* by Philip Massinger; *The Island Princess* by John Fletcher; and *The Malcontent* by John Marston.

<sup>6</sup> Royal Shakespeare Company (ed.), "Welcome", Programme Note, *The Dog in the Manger* (Coventry: John Good Holbrook, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> Michael Boyd (ed.), *Royal Shakespeare Company Annual Report 2004–2005* (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2005 <<https://cdn2.rsc.org.uk/sitefinity/corporate/rsc-annualreport2004-05.pdf?sfvrsn=2>>, 3.

The ensemble created for the season was a continuation of previously established relationships. London's Gate Theatre ran a series of Golden Age plays over the course of 1990–2, during which several principal members of the RSC Golden Age season (Laurence Boswell, David Johnston, Simon Usher, Jack Sage, and Jonathan Thacker) collaborated.<sup>8</sup> Staging a series of plays from the Golden Age earned the collaborators at the Gate an Olivier award in 1992, and set a clear precedent for the RSC season.

The Spanish Golden Age season opened on 14 April 2004 at the Swan Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon with the performance of *The Dog in the Manger* (Lope de Vega's *El perro del hortelano*), directed by Laurence Boswell and translated by David Johnston. *Tamar's Revenge*, James Fenton's translation of *La venganza de Tamar* by Tirso de Molina, directed by Simon Usher, was scheduled to open two weeks after the *Dog*, but after previewing for a week beginning 28 April, the opening was delayed until 15 June 2004. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz's *House of Desires* (*Los empeños de una casa*), directed by Nancy Meckler and translated by Catherine Boyle, opened on 30 June. Philip Osment's translation of Miguel de Cervantes's *Pedro, the Great Pretender* (*Pedro de Urdemalas*), directed by Mike Alfreds, opened on 1 September. The fifth work in the season, Calderón's *Daughter of the Air* (*La hija del aire*), was translated by Sarah Woods with the academic collaboration of Jules Whicker of the University of Birmingham, and was given as a performed reading in the Swan on 8 October and aired on BBC Radio 3 on 21 November 2004. When the Swan season closed on 2 October 2004, the company then transferred to Madrid for ten performances at the Teatro Español (23–31 October 2004). Following this transfer, the company toured to the People's Theatre in Newcastle (8–25 November 2004), and the Playhouse Theatre in London (2 February–26 March 2005). *Tamar's Revenge* did not tour to London.

Selecting five plays out of the hundreds of seventeenth-century *comedias* was no small task for those responsible, but this choice was not left to the producers of the RSC alone. Instead, specialists in the Spanish Golden Age were commissioned from the very beginning for unprecedented involvement in each play's selection, interpretation, and presentation processes. These specialists were Jonathan Thacker of Merton College, Oxford, and Jack Sage and Catherine Boyle of King's College, London. Beginning with a 'virtual seminar' the academic consultants exchanged many emails with the season's artistic director, Laurence Boswell and the company's dramaturg, Paul Sirett over the course of the year before the translators signed their contracts. Their discussions were based on thirty plays which they suggested be translated quickly in 'literal' versions for the directors to read and evaluate (see Chapter 1 for an examination of this process).

It was in the creation of the literal translation of *Pedro, the Great Pretender* that I first became involved in the project. Sage had been working closely with

<sup>8</sup> The plays produced included Johnston's translations of Lope's *Lo fingido verdadero* (*The Great Pretenders*) (1991), *El caballero de Olmedo* (*The Gentleman from Olmedo*) (1991), *Los locos de Valencia* (*Madness in Valencia*) (1992), along with Boswell's versions of *Don Gil de las calzas verdes* (*Don Gil of the Green Breeches*) (1990, with Deirdre McKenna), and *El condenado por desconfiado* (*Damned for Despair*) (1991, with Jonathan Thacker). See David Johnston on his translation strategy for the Gate season, and how it differed from that of the RSC season (*The Spanish Golden Age in English*, 53–4).



Philip Osment, the poet charged with the translation of *Pedro*, and the director Mike Alfreds (one of the founders of the influential theatre company, Shared Experience). After scrupulously interrogating two distinct literal translations, Alfreds and Osment asked Sage to undertake a new version, deciding that the 'literals' they had been looking at had been useful for the purposes of selecting the play, and they could see its potential, but that they did not have a sufficiently 'literal' translation to aid Osment in his version. Because of the short space of time in which this new translation was to be delivered, Sage chose to work with a collaborator and Thacker put the two of us in touch. I worked on the season first as a literal translator with Sage on *Pedro*, then in rehearsals for two of the productions, writing programme notes for *The Dog in the Manger* and translating for the company in Madrid.

From 16 February until 5 April 2004, I assisted in the daily rehearsal process of *The Dog in the Manger* as an assistant to the RSC's dramaturg, Paul Sirett. I worked under the title of script consultant and was on hand for daily reference and clarification of the original Spanish text. As the translator Johnston could not be present in rehearsals, I was responsible for suggesting and conveying cuts and changes to his evolving translation. During rehearsal breaks each day, I would compose emails to Johnston outlining that day's proposed cuts and changes as discussed in rehearsal. I also served as a conduit from the rehearsal room to the academic advisors hired by the RSC to ask questions about the text. After nine weeks spent rehearsing in Clapham North, in London, excitement was mounting as the opening of *The Dog in the Manger* grew closer and the company packed up and made the move to Stratford.

Although I continued to work under the title of 'script consultant' in Stratford, my role changed during rehearsals for *Pedro, the Great Pretender*. Alfreds's approach was much less text-based than Boswell's had been. While Boswell suggested frequent changes to the script while rehearsing it, Alfreds made only minimal changes once the script was delivered to the actors. Alfreds spent each morning for the first few weeks of rehearsals in movement and character work, and my role was to research the period and provide explanations for references to Spanish and seventeenth-century customs and vocabulary which were not contextually explained in Osment's translation. I provided translations of *La gitanilla* (*The Little Gypsy Girl*) and *La ilustre fregona* (*The Illustrious Kitchen-maid*), Cervantine novellas with similar themes and characters to *Pedro de Urdemalas*, and I was much more on hand to explain lines rather than to change them. The translator Osment was present for the first two weeks of rehearsal, eliminating the need for the email process of changing lines during *The Dog in the Manger* on the occasions when alterations were made.

Surrounding the performances, the RSC Education department ran a series of talks and symposia offering the audience access to the theatre practitioners and academics working on the season.<sup>9</sup> The consultants who had initially been involved

<sup>9</sup> These sessions ran twice, once in August and once in September: 'Relay Writing', 'Shaping Words', and 'The Writer, the Director, the Actors and Their Audience', Swan Theatre and The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, 19–21 August 2004. 'Questions of Love and Honour', 'Addicted to Love', 'Revenge, an Honourable Act?', and 'Soap Stars', Swan Theatre and The Other Place, Stratford-upon-Avon, 23–25 September 2004.

in the play selection and explication process in the time before rehearsals began were able to share their knowledge with the audience. In addition to sessions about the structure of Golden Age acting companies and the *corrales*, they also included a performance of *House of Desires* for which the audience experienced the segregation of the audience typical in the *corrales*.<sup>10</sup> The Education events represented one aspect of the ensemble's work in which the scholarly input to the project, normally received by the audience indirectly through the performance, made direct contact with the audience by engaging them with both the period and the process.

The strength of the collaborative relationships developed in this season was evidenced by the presence of Boswell and members of the acting company at the 'Language and Meaning' conference at King's College, London in 2006, the fruits of which were published in *The Spanish Golden Age in English: Perspectives on Performance*. The oft-opposing philosophies of literal and performance translation came to the round-table discussions in a live performance of interchange and debate. At that conference, in which lessons learned by both sides of the divide were shared, the ensemble nature of the company shone as a functional model of collaboration between academics and theatre practitioners. Of course, as with any artistic collaborative process, challenges faced the company and consultants, but overall, the season fulfilled Michael Boyd's purpose to create an ensemble 'greater than the sum of its parts'.<sup>11</sup> This model creates opportunities for rich collaboration and recognizes the translation process required between the different languages of those who work on the page and those who work on the stage.

## METHODS AND AIMS

It is important to contextualize my methods as a 'participant observer'<sup>12</sup> in this process, before tracing the progression of the field of Spanish Golden Age research from text-based study to the analysis of performance and translation. Richard Schechner describes the work carried out within performance studies as 'participant observation'. This term is useful for clarifying my role as both a member of the ensemble and critic of the RSC season. He defines this term:

In anthropological fieldwork, participant observation is a way of learning about other cultures other than that of the fieldworker. In anthropology, for the most part, the 'home culture' is Western, the 'other' non-Western. But in performance studies, the 'other' may be a part of one's own culture [...] or even an aspect of one's own behavior. That positions the performance studies fieldworker at a Brechtian distance allowing for criticism, irony, and personal commentary as well as sympathetic participation. In an active way, one performs fieldwork.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 'Girls on Top', Swan Theatre, Stratford-upon-Avon, 24 July 2004. I led the London repeat of the Stratford session with Fiona Lindsay, Playhouse Theatre, London, 12 February 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Boyd, *RSC Annual Report*, 3.

<sup>12</sup> Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002) 2.

<sup>13</sup> Schechner, *Performance Studies*, 2.

Once the work has been completed, analysis of rehearsal and performance processes can take many forms.<sup>14</sup> Existing models include Mark Bly's collection, *The Production Notebooks*, which provides readers with detailed accounts written by dramaturgs working on plays in the US.<sup>15</sup> In the UK, there are several accounts of rehearsal processes undertaken during RSC seasons, such as David Selbourne's *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream*.<sup>16</sup> While this present work does not imitate the diary approach taken by authors such as Selbourne, it does recognize the liminal position of the observer in rehearsal, and how the directorial and dramaturgical interruptions can affect the actors' processes of meaning creation.<sup>17</sup> Roger Warren's *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays*, 'is not a blow-by-blow rehearsal diary'.<sup>18</sup> However, this work does not treat the plays one at a time, as is Warren's model. Rather than studying each production process in the season individually, this book puts forth a model that has wider implications for translated drama in other genres and languages, since its focus is on the roles and responsibilities of the consultants and collaborators.

The aim of this book is not to reconstruct a performance, or the experience of the spectator, but to view the performances as the final phase of a translation and collaboration process. Performance analysis is a multifaceted undertaking, as each viewer's experience of a theatre production will always differ based on his or her cultural membership, previous experience with the genre, and general horizon of expectations as a theatrical spectator on a visit to the theatre.<sup>19</sup> Writing particularly about performance has been eased through the methods of analysts such as Pavis.<sup>20</sup> Pavis's instructions for using his questionnaire are revealing of the similar strategies I employ in analysing performance:

Usually performances work *on* the spectator, providing an 'experience', and we rarely differentiate between the different means by which that experience is created. Our aim here, however, is to analyse how this is achieved, and, by requiring us to view the event's components separately, the questionnaire forces us to consider how each generates part of the overall meaning. But if you repeat observations as they reoccur you will make new connections between the work's elements—finding an idea, strategy

<sup>14</sup> For a thorough description of contemporary rehearsal process from the perspective of the actor, see Kevin Quarmby, 'A Twenty-fifth Anniversary Study of Rehearsal and Performance Practice in the 1980 Royal Court *Hamlet* and the Old Vic *Macbeth*: An Actor's View', *Shakespeare* 1.1/2 (2005) 174–87.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Bly (ed.), *The Production Notebooks: Theatre in Process*, vol. 1 (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1996).

<sup>16</sup> David Selbourne, *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream: An Eye-Witness Account of Peter Brook's Production from First Rehearsal to First Night* (London: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>17</sup> Selbourne, *The Making of A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 3 and 253.

<sup>18</sup> Roger Warren, *Staging Shakespeare's Late Plays* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990) 4.

<sup>19</sup> See also Wolfgang Iser, 'Interaction between Text and Reader', in Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman (eds), *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>20</sup> Patrice Pavis, 'Theatre Analysis: Some Questions and a Questionnaire', *New Theatre Quarterly* 1/2 (1985) 208–12. See also Colin Counsell and Laurie Wolf (eds), *Performance Analysis: An Introductory Coursebook* (London: Routledge, 2001) 229–32; and Patrick Campbell (ed.), *Analysing Performance: A Critical Reader* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996). Reception in the theatre is also treated by Herbert Blau, *The Audience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

or motif which was evident in the organization of space, perhaps, also at work in performers' movements. You will thus reassemble a whole, but one strung together with connections of an analytical order.<sup>21</sup>

Though this book analyses individual scenes, characters, lines, and moments in each of the plays, sometimes looking at the same scene from more than one angle, it is designed to recreate a sense of how the process came together as a whole. As a participant in the rehearsal process, my expectations of the productions as a spectator were different from those of someone who came to the theatre to see the plays only once. Acknowledging that this analysis may thus be subjective, it focuses on the model of interaction between the members of the ensemble in order to posit a system for best practice. As with any performance practice, there were positive and negative aspects to some of the choices made during the process. The performance analysis in this book illustrates the fruits and problems such a system generates.

Yet the fusion of Hispanic *comedia* expertise with the process of drama translation has had its share of obstacles to overcome. Returning to the translation of the text, critics such as Victor Dixon and Gwynne Edwards both take issue with the process undertaken by translators such as Adrian Mitchell.<sup>22</sup> He describes the process used by the National Theatre as well as the RSC when working with Mitchell, namely using a literal translator to deliver a quick rendition of the play to an established poet-playwright (who does not speak the language of the source text) who will write the final version for the stage.<sup>23</sup> Edwards raises concerns that the version of the play presented to English audiences in this way is at odds with his notion of the original text. The echoes of these reservations about the nature of adaptation strike out when one surveys some of the reviews of the translations in the RSC season:

Spanish playwrights in the 17th century wrote about the same themes as Shakespeare: for instance seduction, honour and revenge. But on the evidence of *The Dog in the Manger*, that's where the similarity ends. The Bard is revered so much that to change his language is considered sacrilege. There are no such reservations about tampering with Lope de Vega's work. [...] This is undeniably not Shakespeare: the language is easy to understand and sounds modern. It doesn't have the richness nor the depth of the Bard's works but it has a more universal appeal.<sup>24</sup>

The values of fidelity and accuracy, prized by academics and marketing departments alike, have different meanings for each discipline; to scholars, these terms are requisites to the quality of the work and to theatre companies, these terms are desirable as a selling point of the theatrical product. This literal-to-renowned-writer process was instituted by the RSC in the selection and translation processes for the

<sup>21</sup> Pavis, 'Theatre Analysis', 230.

<sup>22</sup> Victor Dixon, 'Arte nuevo de traducir comedias en este tiempo: hacia una versión inglesa de *Fuenteovejuna*', *Traducir a los clásicos: Cuadernos de Teatro Clásico* 4 (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1989) 17.

<sup>23</sup> Gwynne Edwards, 'La traducción de textos clásicos dramáticos españoles al inglés', *Traducir a los clásicos: Cuadernos de Teatro Clásico* 4 (Madrid: Ministerio de Cultura, 1989) 35.

<sup>24</sup> Steve Orme, review of *The Dog in the Manger* by Lope de Vega, trans. David Johnston, dir. Laurence Boswell, *British Theatre Guide* (2004) <<http://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/dogmanger-rev.htm>>.

RSC season, and it is one of the crucial aspects of *comedia* performance in translation that I will examine in depth in this book.

The notion that the original text needs to be ‘protected’ and is inalterable is a relatively new idea, and not one to which all Shakespearean directors and dramaturgs subscribe.<sup>25</sup> Dramaturgs and script consultants, spanning the divide between academia and the practicalities of the rehearsal room, can run into problems of negotiation. Georgia Shakespeare Festival dramaturg Andrew Hartley describes one such situation: ‘On walking into a rehearsal recently, the director, nodding toward me, said to the actors, “Everybody stop what they’re doing. We’ve been busted. The Shakespeare police have arrived”’.<sup>26</sup> The perception that the representative of ‘the original’ in the rehearsal room will somehow be in charge of protecting the text from the onslaughts of performance is one that needs to be challenged by rehearsal room practices that feed the production in ways that are ‘faithful’ to both its origins and its destination. There are two approaches here, as Hartley writes: ‘one that is historicist and seeks to provide information based on how the play might have been originally perceived, another that is more interested in creating a world or ambience for the production based on what the play *can* mean’.<sup>27</sup> It is the challenge of the rehearsal dramaturg or script consultant to bring these approaches together. In order to be successful in that aim, the consultant can benefit greatly from tools such as those in this book. For example, the visual models of the plays’ versification that support the third chapter of this book enable a rehearsal consultant to suggest both what the play *was* to its Golden Age audience and how this information *can be* translated for a twenty-first-century production.

Trends in critical work on *comedia* performance intersect with the theoretical and practical problems of collaboration. Louise and Peter Fothergill-Payne’s *Prologue to Performance* provides the critic and practitioner with a discussion of the primary issues surrounding *comedia* translation: from audience reception to relationships between men and women in the plays to concerns of speakability, this book covers the range of principal concerns facing a *comedia* translator.<sup>28</sup> The notion of ‘adaptation’ is an important example: ‘Adaptations of classical drama make it clear that the bridge-building process is a “sharing of meaning” [...] that opens the past to the present, that frees the language of the text from its original constraints so that it appears to us similarly yet differently than as spoken to its original audience’.<sup>29</sup> This is an issue not only in *comedia* translation, but in performing the plays for

<sup>25</sup> See Andrew James Hartley, *The Shakespearean Dramaturg* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) 88. Also, Carol Bingham Kirby, ‘On the Nature of *Refundiciones* of Spain’s Classical Theater in the Seventeenth Century’, in Charles Ganelin and Howard Mancing (eds), *The Golden Age Comedia: Text, Theory, and Performance* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press, 1994) 293–308.

<sup>26</sup> Hartley, *The Shakespearean Dramaturg*, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Hartley, *The Shakespearean Dramaturg*, 167.

<sup>28</sup> Louise and Peter Fothergill-Payne (eds), *Prologue to Performance: Spanish Classical Theatre Today* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991).

<sup>29</sup> Charles Ganelin, ‘The Art of Adaptation: Building the Hermeneutical Bridge’, in Louise and Peter Fothergill Payne (eds), *Prologue to Performance: Spanish Classical Theatre Today* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1991) 45–6.

a contemporary Spanish audience as well, as has been noted by Susan Fischer.<sup>30</sup> In her book, Sofia Eiroa describes the process of preparing a modern version for the Spanish stage:

El cambio de las condiciones de recepción hace posible eliminar algunos pasajes de la obra que no añaden nada nuevo en la trama sin que el resultado vaya en detrimento de la comedia. [...] El editor y el adaptador del texto dramático se convierte en una especie de puente entre el dramaturgo y el público a quien van orientadas bien la lectura de la obra, bien la representación.<sup>31</sup>

[The change in the reception conditions make it possible to eliminate some passages of the work that do not add anything new to the plot without a detrimental effect on the play [...] The editor and the adapter of the dramatic text are converted into a type of bridge between the playwright and the public, whether they are oriented to the reading or the performance of the text.]<sup>32</sup>

The realities of preparing a text for the stage are often at odds with traditional scholarly regard for the text, and this is one of the problems of merging theatre practice with a discipline well-versed in analysis from the page; it is also one of the opportunities for interdisciplinary work that is becoming more popular.<sup>33</sup> Scholarly engagement with performance (both imagined and actual) using stage directions, text, and details of production history from the Golden Age, as well as recent productions such as those at the Festival Internacional de Teatro Clásico de Almagro, has been relatively rare, pioneered by scholars such as Fischer.<sup>34</sup> Consultants and critics doing this work are spanning the traditional divides between scholarship and practice. As Thacker writes in the Foreword to Fischer's *Reading Performance*:

At a time then that interest in Golden Age theatre as theatre is increasing both in Spain and beyond its borders, that a tradition of performance is starting to build and emerge, it is particularly important for both academics and theatre practitioners that a figure sympathetic to both worlds should provide an overview and a sustained commentary on the process.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Fischer quotes the Spanish director Marsillach on this point in 'Calderón and "L'illusion Cinématographique" Subverted: *Antes que todo es mi dama* (*Above All She's My Lady*)', in *Reading Performance: Spanish Golden-Age Theatre and Shakespeare on the Modern Stage* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2009) 21–42. See also, David Johnston, 'Translator's Note', *Two Plays by Lope de Vega: The Great Pretenders and The Gentleman from Olmedo*, Lope de Vega, trans. David Johnston (Bath: Absolute Press, 1992). See also Fischer, 'Calderón and semiological self-exorcism: *El médico de su honra* (*The Physician of His Honor*)', in *Reading Performance*, 3–20.

<sup>31</sup> *Estudios de teatro del siglo de oro: técnicas dramáticas de Tirso de Molina* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, Servicio de Publicaciones, 2002). For views on this process from Spanish directors and actors, see Juan Antonio Hormigón (ed.), *V Jornadas de Teatro Clásico Español: El trabajo con los clásicos en el teatro contemporáneo*, Almagro 1982 (Madrid: Forma, 1983).

<sup>32</sup> Translations of secondary material such as this are mine unless otherwise noted.

<sup>33</sup> The programme for Boswell's Spanish production of *El perro del hortelano*, for instance, credits 'Laurence Boswell y Rakatá' for the version, and as Rakatá is the name of the theatre company it implies a collaborative text-editing process.

<sup>34</sup> Bárbara Mujica and Anita K. Stoll include six articles on contemporary *comedias* in performance in *El texto puesto en escena: estudios sobre la comedia del siglo de oro en honor a Everett A. Hesse* (London: Tamesis, 2000). See also Thacker, "'Puedo yo con sola la vista oír leyendo': Reading, Seeing, and Hearing the *Comedia*", *Comedia Performance* 1.1 (2004) 150. See also Eiroa, *Estudios de teatro*, 136.

<sup>35</sup> Thacker, 'Foreword', in *Reading Performance*, xiv–xv.



Both the number of performances of Spanish Golden Age plays and the field of associated performance criticism have grown substantially since the close of the 2004–5 RSC season, a theme I will return to in the first and sixth chapters of this book.

There are myriad sites of opportunity and challenge when proposing a model for the successful collaboration between scholars and practitioners engaged in the ever-evolving process of bringing translated drama to the stage. This book proposes such a model, centring its findings on five aspects of the RSC's Spanish season. The chapters of the book trace the process and offer communication strategies for future collaboration teams: first, the Spanish Golden Age contexts of performance, criticism, and the play-selection process; second, the literal translation and notions of equivalence; third, verse, and why, as Pavis puts it, 'The translation should restore the aural and rhythmic quality of the source text';<sup>36</sup> fourth, characterization, an aspect of rehearsing plays which is instrumental to the process, but underdeveloped in *comedia* scholarship; and fifth, aspects of metatheatricity in the plays and productions. The sixth and final chapter looks to the future of *comedia* translation and productions that have taken place since the close of the RSC season. Each chapter is designed to bring together problems at the forefront of *comedia* research with contemporary theatre practice, with examples drawn from the RSC's Spanish season and beyond.

The first chapter provides an overview of the Golden Age performance and cultural contexts in which the Spanish source texts were written, followed by an in-depth examination of the play-selection process for the season. This chapter provides the foundation for an understanding of the season both in an exploration of the Golden Age birthplace of the plays, and the period of infancy and development of the texts for the RSC season.

The second chapter draws on the work of translation theorists in order to contextualize and interpret three of the plays' translations in the RSC season, specifically in their use of 'literal' translations in the process. The use of a literal translation is both a theoretical and practical problem, yet it can be a valuable and useful step in a wider and more complex collaboration. This chapter suggests a model for how this step in the process might be improved, allowing for a more symbiotic relationship between the ensemble and a translator who may only be involved in the process for a very brief commission. The chapter treats literal and performance translation in light of the priorities of the translators at various stages of the process. Those priorities shift with each 'concretization' of the text, in the journey from source text to literal translation to a version for the stage. Literal translation is a tool that enables the collaborators to learn the language of the play in a formal, functional, and dramatic sense, constituting a series of interpretive acts on the part of the literal translator. Engaging with terms such as 'speakability', 'performability', 'faithful', and 'literal', I use the RSC translation processes to exemplify a collaborative model in

<sup>36</sup> Patrice Pavis, 'Problems of Translation for the Stage: Interculturalism and Post-Modern Theatre', in Hanna Scolnicov and Peter Holland (eds), *The Play Out of Context: Transferring Plays from Culture to Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) 43.

which literal translation plays a problematic, but ultimately valuable role, suggesting means of improving this model for future work in the wider field of translation for performance.

Chapter Three engages with the plays' versification. Mapping the verse structures visually offers translators, actors, and directors a method for interpreting the plays' verse patterns that may have been effaced in translation. Building on the work of Marc Vitse, Fausta Antonucci, and Monica Güell, this chapter starts with an investigation into how *comedia* critics have interpreted verse's structural function.<sup>37</sup> I then develop a method for communicating verse using visual methods, for the purpose of increasing the arsenal of communication strategies at the *comedia* rehearsal consultant's disposal. As Pavis writes: 'It is none the less self-evident that each culture appreciates and evaluates rhythmic and tonal qualities, and syntactic construction in a different way and thus that the transfer of the aural and rhythmic qualities is not mechanically applied to that of the source text and culture'.<sup>38</sup> In the RSC season, Johnston and Osment employed verse in a more formal manner than Fenton and Boyle, who translated with varying line lengths to convey the rhythms and sounds of the original in different ways. Developing a model for future collaboration between those who work with the plays in Spanish and those who wish to convey its metrical features in English, I analyse all four plays in the season.

Characterization, an aspect of the *comedia* which has enjoyed more attention since the passing of Parkerian notions that 'the plot and not the characters is the primary thing', is the subject of Chapter Four.<sup>39</sup> Critics such as Ruano de la Haza and Ruiz Ramón have engaged the subject, reclaiming Golden Age characters from the realm of mere types, and calling for increased communication between theatre practitioners and scholars in achieving fuller characterizations in productions for the stage.<sup>40</sup> Focusing on the characterizations of familiar faces, places, and conflicts, I examine minor characters, such as the Count Federico in *El perro del hortelano*, 'types' such as Mayors in *Pedro de Urdemalas*, and how 'Spanish honour' is characterized and interpreted on the twenty-first-century stage.

<sup>37</sup> Fausta Antonucci (ed.), *Métrica y estructura dramática en el teatro de Lope de Vega* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Pavis, 'Problems of Translation', 43.

<sup>39</sup> I do not wish to overstate his disparagement of characterization, for surely the effect of his description of the 'hints and touches' of character as left to the imagination was unintended. Parker made the point that 'the characterization of Spanish plays is, in general, schematic: the details are suggested but not necessarily filled in, and our imaginations, as we read or listen, must construct the rounded character' (683). Alexander A. Parker, 'The Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age', *Diamante* 6 (1957), revised as Eric Bentley (ed.), 'The Spanish Drama of the Golden Age: A Method of Analysis and Interpretation', in *The Great Playwrights*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1970) 679–707. I refer to this revised version.

<sup>40</sup> José María Ruano de la Haza, 'Trascendencia y proyección del teatro clásico español en el mundo anglosajón', in José María Díez Borque and José Alcalá-Zomara (eds), *Proyección y significados del teatro clásico español: Homenaje a Alfredo Hermengildo y Francisco Ruiz Ramón* (Madrid: SEACEX, 2004) 233–44. Also, Francisco Ruiz Ramón, 'Sobre la construcción del personaje teatral clásico: del texto a la escena', in José María Díez Borque (ed.), *Actor y técnica de representación del teatro clásico español* (London: Tamesis, 1989) 143–53. See also Fischer, 'The Psychological Stages of Feminine Development: A Jungian Approach to Calderón's *La hija del aire*', *Bulletin of Comediantes* 34 (Winter 1982) 137–58.



The fifth chapter focuses on metatheatre and its role in the plays staged in the RSC season.<sup>41</sup> There is a well-established history of studying metatheatre and role-play in the *comedia*, yet investigations into how this attribute of theatre functions on the stage are relatively rare.<sup>42</sup> This aspect of the plays, namely their overt theatricality, is one which became more observable to me in the latter part of the season, when the plays had been running in repertory and the actors began to play with the audience more directly. Taking a broad view, the chapter traces connections and shared observations between baroque *desengaño* and its postmodern echoes, in scholarship and on the stage. As Counsell and Wolf write: 'If there is any common ground to the theories which dominated twentieth-century thought, it is their collective recognition of the distance separating the material world from our perception of it'.<sup>43</sup> *Comedia* critics such as Catherine Connor (Swietlicki) and Edward Friedman have seen connections between ideas underpinning Golden Age theatre and those of our postmodern era, and using Richard Hornby's categories to examine the effects of metatheatre in the RSC season, the chapter shows how those critics' observations applied to this season of plays, and suggests new connections that build on their work.<sup>44</sup>

The sixth and final chapter looks at the reception and impact of the season now that over ten years have passed since it closed. In every year since the RSC season, there has been at least one English-language production of a Golden Age play in the UK. There have been many performances in the US, including an afterlife for the translations of *The Dog in the Manger* and *House of Desires*. Boswell, for his part, continues to direct plays from other genres (including *Hecuba* with Vanessa Redgrave), but he was able to stoke his passion for the *comedia* by directing twice in Madrid with Spanish actors in the years immediately after the RSC season. The Association for Hispanic Classical Theater held an academic symposium around the major offshoot of Boswell's work, which was his 2013–14 season of Golden Age plays at the Ustinov Studio, Bath Theatre Royal. The impact of that season and its tour to London and Coventry is too recent to gauge fully, but the life of a UK performance tradition featuring the best comedies and tragedies from Spain's *siglo de oro* is strong and encouraging.

<sup>41</sup> For a survey of the subject with bibliography, see Catherine Larson, 'Metatheater and the *Comedia*: Past, Present, and Future', in Charles Ganelin and Howard Mancing (eds), *The Golden Age Comedia: Text, Theory, and Performance* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1994) 204–21. See also Fischer, 'Psychological and Social Implications of Role-Change in Selected Plays by Calderón', diss., Duke University, NC, 1973. See also Thacker, *Role-Play and the World as Stage in the Comedia* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002) and Elaine Canning, *Lope de Vega's Comedias de Tema Religioso, Serie A: Monografías 204* (Woodbridge: Tamesis, 2004) 87–140.

<sup>42</sup> One such engagement with the subject is Fischer, 'Calderón and "L'illusion Cinématographique" Subverted'. Another example is Anita K. Stoll, 'Una puesta en escena reciente de *La villana de la sagra*: máscaras y metateatro en el siglo de oro', in Bárbara Mujica and Anita K. Stoll (eds), *El texto puesto en escena: estudios sobre la comedia del siglo de oro en honor a Everett A. Hesse* (London: Tamesis, 2000) 174–80.

<sup>43</sup> Counsell and Wolf (eds), *Performance Analysis*, 1.

<sup>44</sup> Catherine Connor (Swietlicki), 'Postmodernism *avant la lettre*: the Case of Early Modern Spanish Theater', *Gestos* 9 (1994) 43–59. Edward H. Friedman, 'Postmodernism and the Spanish *Comedia*: The Drama of Mediation', *Gestos* 9 (1994) 61–78. Richard Hornby, *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* (Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1986).

Performance and rehearsal analysis can and should supplement traditional literary interpretations of the *comedia*. While scholars are making progress in contemporary studies of performance by studying playhouses and theatre company financial and administrative documentation (principally drawing on the work of Shergold, Varey, Davis, and Ruano de la Haza), as well as actors' scripts and manuscripts,<sup>45</sup> analysis of twenty-first-century performance illuminates these fields by serving as a laboratory or fieldwork capacity to these more theoretical studies. My analysis from the perspective of a participant observer is therefore more concrete and perhaps more practical than a traditional academic study because its conclusions are based on observations made while mounting an actual production. Over the course of the six chapters, this book analyses how collaboration between the academy and the theatre practitioners was instrumental in the success of the season at every step of the process. In order for a collaborative working method to be established which balances the interrelating needs of 'equivalence' in translation and the practicalities of theatre that 'works', an effective model for such a collaboration requires a representative from the fields of academic study of the play in the original, a translator writing for the stage, and a director charged with realizing the production. All five productions (including the radio play of *Daughter of the Air*) enjoyed deep collaboration between scholars and practitioners. The lines between those disciplines are helpfully blurring, as Johnston, Osment, Boyle, Fenton, and Woods are men and women of the theatre, writers for the stage, their scripts nourished in rehearsal by the practice of research and dramaturgical support. The result was a reproducible collaborative model for producing richly interrogated translations of classical foreign texts for the English stage.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Susan Paun de García, 'Between the Page and the Stage: Prompter's Copies as Performance History', *Comedia Performance* 1.1 (2004) 46–76.

# 1

## Pre-Rehearsal Questions of Performance Tradition and Play-Selection

### WHAT IS THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE AND WHY SHOULD WE STAGE ITS PLAYS NOW?

The Royal Shakespeare Company's Spanish Golden Age season opened in 2004, but my account of it begins with the year 1616. It is apt to begin with 1616 because it marks the death of Cervantes on 23 April, remarkably the same day and year as the death of Shakespeare. This historical moment represents the theatrical milieu which the RSC brought to the English stage (and toured back to its 'home' in Madrid). By way of introduction to the plays performed in the Golden Age season, let us imagine this moment in the lives of the playwrights. By 1616, Cervantes's two parts of *Don Quixote* were in wide circulation and his *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nunca representados* (*Eight Plays and Eight Interludes, Never Before Performed*), including *Pedro de Urdemalas* (*Pedro, the Great Pretender*), had been published the year before he died. In 1616 Lope de Vega (1562–1635), perhaps the most innovative writer of the period and responsible for setting many of the dramaturgical trends of the era with his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (*New Art of Writing Plays in this Time*), was fifty-four years old and in transition between two of his many lovers. He had already written some of his greatest plays, such as *El perro del hortelano* (*The Dog in the Manger*) (1613) yet some were still to come, such as *El castigo sin venganza* (*Punishment without Revenge*) (1631). Perhaps the best-known playwright of the Spanish Golden Age is Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600–81), known to theatre students for his *La vida es sueño* (1636) (*Life Is a Dream*),<sup>1</sup> the play by which the Spanish Golden Age is often solely represented in anthologies of world drama. In 1616 and still in his teens, Calderón was yet to begin his playwriting career. The previous year, the young Calderón had lost his father, an overbearing figure whose final will specified that the young man join the clergy as so many of his contemporaries did, but which he did not do until he was fifty-one, closer to the time when he wrote the mythological play *La hija del aire* (1664) (*The Daughter of the Air*). In 1616, the Mercedarian friar Tirso de Molina (c.1579–1648) (whose real name was Gabriel Téllez), then thirty-seven years old, was in the Caribbean; he and six of his brothers in the Order of Mercy spent two years in the West Indian island of Santo Domingo. By 1616 he had already sold

<sup>1</sup> Dates given for plays are those of first publication.