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PHILIP II AND THE ORIGINS OF BAROQUE THEATRE¹

Carmen Sanz Ayán

"...because for some people the most efficient means of fooling and concealing their troubles is to be entertained by plays and farces, which give them pleasure and great enjoyment. With the novelty and variety of the representations, misfortunes are set aside and put out of mind; I see that in a short time this sort of entertainment has become popular and widespread, and, although at times it is performed by men and loose women, who are beneath Christian excellence and honesty (...) and therefore in moral matters, one should look not so much at what might and should be done as at what is being done (...) it is quite clear how we should judge such representations, **and what should be mandated by the governors of the Republic, who sometimes allow some wrongs in order to excuse greater ones, and at others because they are not personally aware of all the harm they do**"²

This was the harsh admonishment that Father Rivadeneyra delivered in 1589 in his treatise, the *Tratado de la Tribulación*, against the rise of commercial theatre and in particular against the negligence, ignorance and pragmatism shown by the "governors of the Republic" in the face of the inexorable growth of this activity.

It is still a cause for amazement that this reprimand was ultimately destined for Philip II, a monarch who – despite the notable efforts of certain specialists³ – continues to be described as reserved, melancholic and above all a staunch opponent of the scenic arts⁴.

¹"Felipe II y los orígenes del teatro barroco" in *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna*, (1999), n° 23 Monográfico V; *Ingenio Fecundo y juicio profundo. Estudios de Historia del Teatro en la Edad Moderna*, pp. 47-78

² Quoted by COTARELO Y MORI, E. *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España*. Madrid, 1904. 1997 Granada facsímile edition used. pp. 522-523.

³ From the literary aspect, two researchers deserve special mention: FERRER VALLS, T.: *La práctica escénica cortesana: De la época del Emperador a la de Felipe III*. London, 1991. and GRANJA, A. de la: "Notas sobre el teatro en tiempos de Felipe II" in GARCÍA LORENZO, L. and VAREY, J. (Eds.): *Teatros y vida teatral en el siglo de Oro a través de las fuentes documentales*. London, 1991, pp. 19-41. A more recent work by the same author is: "Felipe II y el teatro cortesano de la Península Ibérica" in *Teatro cortesano en la España de los Austrias. Cuadernos de Teatro Clásico* n° 10, Madrid, 1998, p. 33-53.

⁴ For example, the opinion of Ludwig Pfandal during the first half of the century when he asserted that Philip II "hated the theatre" (see PFANDL, L.: *Felipe II. Bosquejo de una vida y una época*. Madrid, 1942, pp. 559) is not that different from the more recent concept held by J.H. Elliott and Kamen. On these views, see: ELLIOTT, J.H.: *España y su mundo. 1500-1700*. Madrid, 1990, pp. 193. This work includes several studies published previously. The original in English dates from 1987. In this, he holds that: "Given Philip II's pursuit of an essentially solitary way of life, more in keeping with that of a monk than a monarch (...), his serious demeanour and the sobriety of his dress (...), it is not surprising that the

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In spite of his apparent aversion, it was during his reign that scenic and literary forms of expression became firmly established, giving rise to Baroque comedy and the phenomena of professionalisation and entrepreneurship that made it possible⁵. Perhaps the first question raised by the historian is whether this all took place while the monarch maintained his personal cold indifference towards a phenomenon that was completely alien to him, or whether he adopted a moral and institutional stance that opposed the rise of professional theatre and all that it involved. Episodes of prohibition during the final years of his reign seem to corroborate this latter view, but what is needed is an overall assessment of what happened throughout his entire reign, not just the last decade.

In an important article for understanding the origins of Baroque comedy⁶, Joan Oleza suggests that from a literary point of view this was born of the coming together of several scenic practices that were essentially divergent.

On the one hand was the *scenic practice of the court*, performed with ceremonial pageantry in a private theatre, which developed throughout the 16th century, although its origins are lost in the Middle Ages. On the other hand was *popular scenic practice*, which had its roots in performances by minstrels and particularly in the religious theatre tradition of the 15th and first half of the 16th centuries. This would become independent of the Church, which saw how the "spiritual" spectacle started to escape its control and went out onto the streets to become a secular spectacle, the result of pressure from the general public and those actors who did not move in religious circles. This practice would reach maturity with the arrival of the first Italian companies of the Commedia dell'Arte and Spanish troupes who had initially performed in the religious plays of the Corpus Christi before moving on to secular theatre.

Castilian nobility were hardly tempted to stay in such a sombre Court." See also KAMEN, H.: *Felipe de España*. Madrid, 1997, p. 206 for a more recent opinion.

⁵ *El Viaje entretenido* by Agustín de Rojas, published in 1603, is a treasury of anecdotes and detailed descriptions of the world of the professional theatre. It describes real events and characters from the entertainment business, practically all of them from the second half of the 16th century

⁶ OLEZA, J.: "Hipótesis sobre la génesis de la comedia barroca" *Cuadernos de Filología* III, 1-2 Valencia, (1981) , pp. 9-44. Re-edited in OLEZA, J.: *Teatros y prácticas escénicas*. Vol. I, pp. 9-42. Another very interesting classification compatible with that of Oleza is the one by HERMENEGILDO, A.: *El teatro en el siglo XVI*. Madrid, 1994, which refers to theatre with a "captive" audience and theatre with an "open" audience, the latter being performances that took place in the *corrales de Comedias*.

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A final influence on its genesis was that of *erudite practice*. This began in humanist circles that had their origins in the reading of Renaissance comedies and tragedies and would gain momentum in the second half of the 16th century. The aim of this type of theatre – especially between 1575 and 1590 – was to break the predominance of commercial theatre by introducing the concept of a more erudite and classical theatre. If this was not achieved, it was not through lack of production but of consumption.

According to Oleza's theory, the fusion that gave rise to Baroque comedy did not take place at any one time. During the first half of the 16th century, the dominant practice was that of the Court and included dramas, pageants, pastoral poems and plays about political situations. In the second half, it was boosted by both populist practice (for example: Alonso de la Vega, Lope de Rueda, Pedro Navarro and Alonso Rodríguez) and humanist practice (Virues, Rey de Artieda and Cervantes). At first – towards 1570 – it seemed that the battle had been won by scenic practices that were either erudite or Court-related, which imposed their tastes on the dramatic production of the Valencia school and also on the early Lope de Vega. However, there was a noticeable rise in populist practice at the beginning of the decade of the 80s, due to the strong influence of Italian companies – particularly of the actor Ganassa – and the evolution of homegrown theatre companies that had made decisive strides towards professionalisation in the decades of the sixties and seventies. It was thanks to this mixture that the creation of this new genre, Baroque comedy, was made possible and it was during the very reign of Philip II that the most active period of symbiosis took place.

PHILIP II, THEATRE SPECTATOR

Scenic manifestations in the Court

In the court of Charles V, and later in that of Philip II himself, it is inconceivable that joyful dynastic or political events, such as the birth of an heir or victory in battle, were not celebrated both inside and outside the Palace, with scenic manifestations on a grand scale. The famous "tournaments" that took place within the Palace are frequently cited. These should not be interpreted merely as jousts, either on foot or on horseback,

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between courtiers and the King⁷, which simply mimicked the armed action found in books of chivalries. On many occasions they were real representations, involving elaborate and complex stage sets. Philip II's own baptism in Valladolid in 1527 was celebrated in this way⁸. Tournaments of this type were frequent during Philip II's childhood and adolescence and continued into his adulthood. Two notable examples are those that took place in Valencia in 1542, when the young fifteen-year-old prince accompanied his father to that kingdom, and in Valladolid the following year⁹. Also, in 1544, on the occasion of his first marriage to Maria of Portugal, the city of Valladolid and the Admiral of Castile, Luis Enríquez, organised a tournament for the prince Philip and his wife in which a highly nuanced plot had been devised to accompany the war games¹⁰. The most well-known example is the representation of *Amadis*, performed in Burgos in 1570 following the entrance into the city of the monarch's young wife, Anne

⁷ A well-known episode is the one in which Philip II, while still a prince, attended a tournament in Brussels on April 25th 1549, during his trip to the Low Countries, during which: "The Commander Major of Castile struck the Prince on the helmet, which stunned him and caused him to fall off his horse. He was taken away unconscious, bled and given comfrey and rhubarb to drink, which made him better." In ALENDA Y MIRA, J.: *Relaciones de Solemnidades y Fiestas públicas de España*. Madrid, 1903, list 141, p. 47.

⁸ This is mentioned by Francesillo de Zúñiga: "Adventures in the style of Amadis had been planned". However, after hearing the news of the sacking of Rome, Charles V cancelled the celebrations: "... and ordered the dismantling of all the stages, castles, palisades and other edifices erected for the festivities, on which a great deal of money had been spent." In *Crónica burlesca del Emperador Carlos V*. Barcelona, 1981, p. 159.

⁹ FERRER VALLS, T.: Op. Cit. pp.53 y pp. 22

¹⁰ The narrative content of one of these tournaments, which took place in 1565 in Bayonne, is described in *Vistas de Isabel de Valois*, who was with her mother Catherine de' Medici: "That same night after supper there was a tournament in a great hall, thirty-eight paces long and twenty wide and bordered by corridors with balustrades on two levels. Inside, part of the hall at the front was taken up by the Monarchs' dais with eight steps up to it; in the other part of the hall, facing the dais, was a castle with a bewitched lady inside. The castle was guarded by the Duke of Anamor and four or five companions. And whenever anyone came to fight, a dwarf would come out of the castle to ask what he wanted and when he replied "Battle!" the dwarf returned with the message. A knight then came out to fight and after breaking his lance and fighting with a sword, he went inside and two devils with axes came out, amid fireworks and gunpowder (...)" in AMEZÚA Y MAYO, A.: Op. Cit. Vol. III, pp. 460-461.

Another exceptional example, this time of extraordinary visual quality, is found in the work by BERTINI, G.: *La nozze de Alessandro Farnese. Feste alle corti di Lisbona e Bruxelles*. Milán, 1997, which includes the miniatures of the so-called *Album de Bruselas*. This consists of illustrations showing the carriages and tournaments in that city on the occasion of the marriage of Alejandro Farnesio to Maria of Portugal. Three of these are included in the catalogue of the exhibition: *Felipe II, Un monarca y su época. Un príncipe del Renacimiento*. Madrid, 1998, pp. 646-648.

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of Austria. As a prelude to the tournament that was to follow, ten galleys, a galleon and a frigate were installed in the square to represent a mock seafight¹¹.

However, apart from tournaments, elaborately staged Italian-style plays were also performed in the Court. Early references to these include the one organised on the occasion of the marriage in Valladolid in 1548 of the Archduke Maximilian, nephew to Charles V, and his daughter, the Infanta Maria, older sister of Philip II¹². Two exceptional chroniclers of the time, Calvete de Estrella and Besozzi, give similar complementary testimonies on the staging, in which the stage sets used perspectives as complex and sophisticated as any found in the Italian court¹³.

The courtiers, particularly the ladies, also organised and took part in theatrical shows for their own amusement, and during the 16th century the so-called *Fiesta del Zapato* and the “*mascarada de Noche de Reyes*” (the Twelfth Night masquerade) became classic representations¹⁴. These spectacles won the admiration of all the Court and of Philip II

¹¹ ALENDA Y MIRA, J.: Op. Cit. List 251, p. 78. The complete text is reproduced in FERRER VALLS, T.: *Nobleza y espectáculo teatral (1535-1622)*. Valencia, 1993, pp. 191-196

¹² This is the first documented record of the presence of Italian actors on Iberian soil, according to FROLDI, R.: “I comici italiani in Spagna” in CHIABO, M. and DOGLIO, F. (eds.): *Origini della Commedia Improvisa o dell’Arte*. Rome 1996, pp. 273-289, p. 276. Also in PRESSOTTO, M.: “Teatro spagnolo e comici italiani nel sec. XVI: un’indagine aperta” in *Anali di Ca’ Foscari*, XXXIII, 1-2, 1994, pp. 335-336. The two references are cited in GRANJA de la, A.: “Felipe II y el Teatro cortesano...”, Op. Cit., p. 35.

¹³ Calvete says: “A play by the excellent poet Ludovico Ariosto was performed in the Palace complete with all the theatre apparatus and scenery used in representations by the Romans, which was something quite regal and sumptuous”. Cited in FERRER VALLS: Op. Cit., p. 59. The quote by Calvete is from *El felicísimo viaje de el mui alto y muy poderoso príncipe don Phelipe, hijo del Emperador don Carlos Quinto Máximo, desde España a sus tierras en la baja Alemania: con la descripción de todos los estados de Brabante y Flandes*. Antwerp, 1552., p. 2v.

For his part, Besozzi asserts that: “...fe una reale, et magnifica scena con bellissime intermedis de musiche Italiane, e Spagnole, e recitar *gli suppositi* dell’ Ariosto con una breve e bellissima gionta da duttissimi huomini, et dalto ingegno composta, et con ricchi et vaghi habiti recitata, et vuole che Filippo, e Massimiliano siano i Menechini di Plauto anoi di Maria Infante, la sposa Serenísima, la qual comedia con grandissimo diletto d’ognuno durò cuasi tutta la felice notte”. Note that in Besozzi’s description, Prince Philip and the future Maximilian II form part of the storyline as characters in a Plautus comedy.

¹⁴ In PELLICER, C.: *Tratado histórico sobre el origen y progresos de la comedia y del histrionismo en España*. Madrid, 1804, edited by J.M^o Díez Borque, Barcelona, 1975, pp. 63-64, there is a reference to the customary celebrations in the Palace of the so-called “*Fiesta del Zapato*” on the feast day of St. Nicholas of Bari, with machines, performances of plays and music. After 1585, when Catalina Micaela married the Duke, this festivity was transferred to the Court of Savoy. In 1560, when Isabella de Valois arrived at the Court, which was still in Toledo, Philip II, who was very much involved in the celebrations, put on a stage play for his young wife called “*El Parnaso Regocijado*”. With respect to the participation of ladies in early farces, we know that in 1564 Princess Juana’s ladies-in-waiting staged a play attended by Philip

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himself, who, even when he was very ill and had only a few months to live, had his chair taken to one of the Palace galleries so he could see the grand masquerade he had ordered to celebrate the wedding of Doña Beatriz de Moura to the Duke of Alcalá¹⁵. In 1552 Juan Bautista Romano was sent by Fernando Gonzaga to Philip II for the express purpose of carrying out work on staging, which is yet more evidence of Philip II's liking for Italian court theatre

Very few material traces of scenographic activity in the court remain today but they do exist¹⁶; otherwise, it would be impossible to explain why, for example, in 1561, Philip II offered Guglielmo Gonzaga the services of León Leoni, his official sculptor, at the marriage of Doña Leonor, daughter of Ferdinand, King of the Romans. This great artist was sent to Mantua for the wedding on the orders of Philip II:

“..a inventare e porre in ordine, qualche bellissimo apparato e invenzione (...)”,

II, who was critical of the production, calling it “clumsy and unmoving”. In FERRER VALLS, T.: *Op. Cit.*, p. 69.

Possibly as a result of this, after 1565 it became customary to hold the famous Twelfth Night masquerade “*Noche de Reyes*”, overseen by Princess Juana and Isabella of Valois herself. This consisted of a series of theatrical tableaux in which the participants, particularly the ladies, who were divided into two groups, had to disguise the Princess and the Queen and turns were taken to guess who they were in each of the tableaux. The following text is an example of this delightful scenography:

“The Queen’s fifth invention was very good. It represented a magical scene of the “*Paraiso de Niquea*”. The beautiful theatre set was reached by seven stairs with gold columns hung with brocade and many gold candelabra with white candles. The ladies of Nicaea were here, all armed Roman-style. Some of them were sleeping and others appeared to be under a spell. The stage was very high and up above everything else was a chair decorated with countless pearls and stones on which sat Nicaea, the most beautiful thing imaginable. She was a French lady who said she was Santena. It is said that the value of the jewels and stones she was wearing was incalculable. Kneeling in front of Nicaea were two small nymphs holding a mirror. In front of all this was a veil of finely worked lace held back with a sword. When the Princess entered, the gauze was cut with the sword. The Princess was highly amused, although she did not guess correctly”.

The text Teresa Ferrer has worked on can be found in full in the Real Academia de la Historia Col . Salazar. L. I fol. 24 to 27 and is reproduced, also in full, in AMEZUA Y MAYO, A.: *Isabel de Valois. Reina de España*. Vol. III, pp. 468-472

¹⁵ PÉREZ BUSTAMANTE, C.: *Felipe III, semblanza de un monarca y perfiles de una privanza*. Madrid, 1950, p. 31.

¹⁶ We have graphic proof of this activity in a scene from the national library, the *Biblioteca Nacional*, dated for the decade of the seventies and attributed to Giovanni Romolo Cincinnato, who came to Spain in 1567 to work on the royal decorations under the orders of Gaspar Becerra.

This illustration is reproduced in the catalogue of the exhibition: *Felipe II, Un monarca y su época. La Monarquía Hispánica*. Madrid, 1988, p. 440.

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In other words, he went to work as a set designer for the festivities, which leads us to think that at some time León Leoni must have done the same at the Hispanic court ¹⁷.

We also have evidence that one of these Italian engineers disembarked during the celebration of the Duke of Savoy’s marriage to the youngest daughter of the King, Catalina Micaela. Enrique Cock tells us that just before the Duke embarked for Genoa with his now wife, his engineer organised a *son et lumière* spectacle. His chronicle gives an idea of the grandeur of the event:

“On the very day of Whitsuntide, the 9th of June, at 9 o’clock at night, the Duke’s engineer put on a dazzling display for the royal couple beside the palace by the sea. He had made an enclosure which had four carriages at its entrance, each with three wheels on which they turned, with the first two facing each other. They had a series of iron pipes full of small holes that at a given time spewed out fire (...). Then, up above, there were three castles. On one of these was a pelican with an open beak, wearing a crown, which appeared to spit out fire. On the highest point of the second one was a woman surrounded by snakes, of which I counted fifty, and three mouths that breathed out fire. The third castle had a pyramid with the world painted on it. At the end of the enclosure was a fourth castle, the biggest of all of them, embellished with numerous pillars. At the very top was a Cupid with his bow in his hand. Little by little, all these instruments of fire began to burn in the night (...).”¹⁸

Comentario [F1]: ¿a la marina? No estoy seguro si lo he entendido bien.

A year later, now in late maturity at 59 years old, Philip II greatly missed the grandeur of these Italian-style festivities. This was reflected in the correspondence he kept up with his daughter Catalina Micaela, who had lived in Savoy since 1585, to whom he wrote:

“The Carnival festivities there must be very good and quite different from those of Valencia”¹⁹.

Also very interesting is Jean L’Hermite’s chronicle of the comedies and masquerades celebrated in the Court during the 1593 Carnival. With respect to the increasingly important role of theatre in the Palace at Carnival time, he describes an instance of two

¹⁷ ANCONA, A.: *Origen del teatro italiano*. Turin. 1891. 2 vols. Vol. II, pp. 416

¹⁸ COCK, E.: *Relación del viaje hecho por Felipe II en 1585 a Zaragoza, Barcelona y Valencia*. Madrid, 1876, p. 143.

¹⁹ The letter is dated April 10th, 1586. In BOUZA ÁLVAREZ, F.: *Cartas de Felipe II a sus hijas*. Madrid, 1998, p. 138. In the letter, Philip II “complains” about the favourite entertainment in this city during Carnival, which is “to go about the place throwing oranges at each other”.

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consecutive performances, one given by the ladies, before a select audience, which included the King, and the other performed by professionals for the rest of the Court. L’Hermite says:

“Les jour de caremeaulx, je dis les trois ou quatre derniers, y avoit grand passetemps de danses, comédies et tous autres jeux de pas et pas. Les dames du palays y représentoient un jour, un très belle comédie au quartier de L’Infante que ne fust veue que de Sa Majesté, son alteza du Prince, et aulcuns des gentils hommes, les plus privilegiez; et un aultre jour y avoit aussi du mesme, une autre représentation de comédie par les comédiens espagnols; la quelle se-representoit en publicq, et fust fort louée de tous²⁰.”

Participation in scenic manifestations of members of the Court was not limited to comedic roles by the ladies of the palace. L’Hermite himself organised a masquerade styled on those of his own country at the request of the future king, Philip III, who was fifteen years old at the time. L’Hermite, determined to do his country proud, devised a masquerade that imitated a typical wedding from the Low Countries, making use of a great variety of costumes to distinguish the status and qualities of the characters who appeared in it. After its presentation, the performers danced for a while in the presence of the King and the rest of the members of Court. It finished with a “masquerade” of the wedding group, performed by a group of actor-dancers grotesquely dressed as villagers.

The main obstacle facing L’Hermite when he came to organising it was the expense he would have to incur to make a decent job of it. When he broached the subject of financing with the Prince, he found that the Prince was quite limited in what he could lay out for expenses of this kind:

“...me promist de me le payer quelque jour bien libéralement, mais pour cela je ne laissasse d’en passe oultre, et que presentment il m’ayderoit de tout son pouvoir; car dès lors commenceroit à espargner quelque peu de deniers et me les donneroit tout a l’heure. Il n’avoit alors plus de liberté que de demander a son Gouverneur jusques à 200 rèaulx à la fois, qui luy estoient ordonnez de par son père, pour d’iceulx en faire ses petits playsirs”²¹

As can be appreciated, the Prince did not have the capacity to finance this sort of festivity at his own expense. As the text shows, L’Hermite was offered a lump sum

²⁰ L’HERMITE, J.: *Les Passetemps*. Antwerp, 1890, vol. I, pp. 219.

²¹ Ibid. p. 221

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of two hundred *reales*, when he had calculated that he would need about a hundred *ducados*, in other words, almost five times more than what the Prince could offer him. His solution was to resort to various liberal nobles of the Court to cover the costs.

The day the King had chosen for the performance finally arrived: the last day but one of Carnival. L'Hermite hired a series of coaches to take to the Palace those people taking part in the masquerade that he did not know. These were possibly the "group of villagers" who did not belong to the Court and who might have been professional actors, though nowhere is this specified. The production was a resounding success. The King was very pleased with what he saw, as were his children. In palace circles, it was also a triumph, in every sense of the word, for the courtier L'Hermite²².

Popular theatre outside and inside the Palace.

Philip II and his court also watched theatre with popular origins, both inside and outside the Palace. As regards "civil" festivities²³, if we go back to the celebration of his own baptism in Valladolid, we know that under the triumphal arches specially erected for the occasion, small stages were assembled for performing religious plays. Bearing in mind that the festivities were an act of thanksgiving, most of them had a religious element²⁴ and actors who were in the city celebrating the Corpus Christi festival may well have performed in them.

It is assumed that at such an early date (1527) these performers were occasional actors belonging to guilds representing the mechanical trades; in other words, they were amateurs. Nevertheless, a document dated only a few years later, in 1530, certifies the

²² As he himself relates, the gentlemen of the Palace congratulated him and embraced him saying: "What a splendid job you've done!". Ibid. p. 230

²³ I use this term cautiously because, as we know, in the 16th and 17th centuries there was no such thing as a civil society with a church superimposed on it. It was through religiosity itself that society was built and organised. This issue is reflected upon with great clarity in CONTRERAS CONTRERAS, J.: "Espacios y escenarios; pecados y delitos. Religiosidad y estrategias de control S. XVI-XVII" in *Torre de los Lujanes* n° 32, pp. 65-76

²⁴ "There were triumphal arches with numerous altarpieces in each one (...). The fifth one was at the door inside the church courtyard. This was higher than some of the others and had an altar that formed a table with many steps up to it (...). It was here that "*El bautismo de San Juan Bautista*" was performed. In GRANJA, A. from "Felipe II y el teatro cortesano..." Op. Cit., p. 35, which also cites ALENDA, J.: "Catálogo de autos sacramentales, historiales y alegóricos" in BRAE, III, 1916, pp. 366-391, p. 389.

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professionalisation of those who took part in some of these festivities, in this case as dancers. The activity was openly recognised and had even been legalised as a monopoly through the issue of an official communication, no less than since the times of the Catholic Monarchs. I have reproduced part of the text here for its interesting content:

"Alonso Elyafiqui, Juan Alhal, Francisco Elbeznari, Cristobal Elbeznari. and Fernando Elha.... Andrés Algoden and Francisco Barrayán and Alonso Zogomby, *zambremos*, as residents of this city of Granada, we kiss the royal feet and hands of Your Majesty with humility and reverence and beseech you (...) to grant the favour that the Catholic Monarchs of glorious memory granted to Fernando de Morales Elfisteli, deceased. The said Fernando de Morales was master herdsman until he died and was charged with **commanding us, when necessary, to use our trades in processions and the reception of crusades when they come to this city, and in other festivities and the dancing of zambras** (...) and we beseech you that **the said trade** that Fernando de Morales Elfisteli plied should be passed on to a person who will take care to carry out and accomplish what Fernando de Morales carried out and accomplished, and to whom we consider it right to pay what was paid to Fernando de Morales for the said trade, and because Sebastián de Palacios, resident of this city, is a person who is well trusted for this trade and who will be able to do it better than others, we beseech Your Majesty to grant him this trade (...) as a testimony of which we hereby present this letter of petition and supplication before the public scribe and witnesses named below (...) and because we do not know how to write we ask Francisco de Mazahena to sign it for us, dated and presented in the city of Granada on the tenth day of May, in the year of our Lord **fifteen hundred and thirty**." ²⁵

Performances of religious plays like those organised for Philip II's baptism, which he obviously could not appreciate, became common events later on and throughout his lifetime. If we confine ourselves to celebrations within the Peninsula, these were subject to a municipal regulation²⁶ that automatically came into force when necessary, as described by Sebastián de Horozco writing about Toledo in 1565:

²⁵ A.G.S. Cámara de Castilla. Leg. 201, pp. 104. I am conscious of the fact that there are many problems with this document: the names of the Moorish "zambremos" which could be related to the activity of Alonso de Morales, who came later; the "professional" dedication of the Moors of the kingdom of Granada to this type of activity at such early dates; the need for these occupations to be regulated in some way by the civil authorities, etc Nevertheless, it is useful for resituating the phenomenon of professionalisation of the performers, and evaluating the context of the "dances" as both the school and source of future professional actors, not only in the second half of the 16th century but also in the first.

²⁶ In the particular case of the territories of the Crown of Aragon, it seems that those responsible in the councils for mobilising the members of the guilds were the *jurados* or municipal officials, who had

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“Then justice commanded that many proclamations be made throughout the city, ordering the cleansing and adornment of the streets and notifying all the brotherhoods, both of this city and all the surrounding places, that **on the day of the entrance** they should all come and take part in the procession with their banners, crosses and candles, and the **councils of the places that they should come with their dances, and all the trade guilds of this city, that they should bring their dances like they usually do for the festival of Corpus Christi and the entrance of princes and princesses**. And many other things were ordered and planned for that day (theatrical representations would be in this category). And to schoolmasters, that they should bring out all their pupils dressed as angels with candles and other forms and **çuyzas** and dances.”²⁷

Comentario [F2]: No ha podido encontrar el significado de esta palabra. La RAE dice por “Suiza” ‘antigua diversión militar, recuerdo de las costumbres caballerescas de la Edad Media o imitación de simulacros y ejercicios bélicos.’

Like the French “*puis*” of the 13th and 14th centuries, the “mechanical trades” guilds established in the towns and cities constituted true pools of actors²⁸.

The royal entrance of the King and successive queens, farewells for *infantas* after proxy marriages, or strictly religious formalities like Corpus Christi plays, saints’ feast days or the transfer of relics that Philip II was so keen on, were all appropriate occasions for the inclusion of professional and semi-professional scenic spectacles such as these.

What was rather interesting and extremely “modern” – considering the audiovisual message repeatedly given out – was the role of theatre in the festivities that took place in Toledo during the month of November, 1565, on the occasion of the transfer from France of the body of Saint Eugene, at which Philip II was present:

“In the doorway of the town council courtrooms, an altar and a tapestried recess had been made where the story of Saint Eugene was acted out on a small stage **each day of the fiestas and many times a day** in front of crowds of people who gathered round to see it, a thing of both

jurisdiction over the different districts. This is how Enrique Cock tells it: “That night and the two that followed, lamps were made for the streets, which were brightly lit, because the *jurados* had declared three days of festivities”. In COCK, E.: Op. Cit. p. 53

²⁷ HOROZCO, Sebastián de: *Algunas relaciones y noticias toledanas*. Madrid, 1905, p. 36. This describes the formalities and festivities organised for the transfer from France of the body of Saint Eugene and its entry into Toledo. Preparations began in May and the relic made its entrance on November 18th, although festivities had begun on the 15th.

²⁸ COHEN, G. *La vida literaria en la Edad Media*. París, p. 234, in which he says that in the case of France: “the formation of casts that, if it does not seem paradoxical, we could describe as “professional enthusiasts”, in other words, “amateurs” who are expert in the field of acting, is indisputable.”

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devotion and entertainment. A table had been removed for the purpose from the iron gates from which the altar was suspended over the same square.”²⁹

This sort of staging must have been overseen by one or several small companies of semi-professional actors.

Philip II often watched amateur theatre as well. In 1567, the transfer of relics from La Fresneda to the town of El Escorial was celebrated with formalities that included a dance and a religious play:

“Then Pero Sánchez, a native of Guadarrama and overseer of the work on El Escorial, came on with a new play in which a group of pilgrims appeared, all ornately dressed and dancing, the best to be found for this purpose anywhere in the place³⁰. They acted out the martyrdom of the two brothers, Saint Justus and Saint Pastor and other important things, which they did in a way that brought tears to everyone’s eyes.”³¹”

Also, on his trip to Valencia, on the occasion of the fiesta of Saint Blas on February 3rd:

“In the afternoon, a procession of the mechanical trades guilds filed past the King and his entourage. Some of these performed live tableaux and the one by the fishermen was particularly outstanding. Using ropes, these pulled a boat fixed on wheels, which represented the holy fishermen, Peter, John and Andrew, casting their nets into the sea. With the King and the Prince fully engaged in watching them, they then took down their sails and used a cable to send a small basket full of live fish over to the Prince in the royal gallery. Another guild represented the events at Monzón with a triumphal arch, at the same time as they swore an allegiance of loyalty to the Prince. The performance of such a **burlesque spectacle** seemed ridiculous and quite unfitting for His Royal Majesty.”³²

Note the element of novelty in the last play described. It referred to a historico-political event that was highly topical at the time, in which the heir to the throne and the King, who saw the spectacle, formed part of the final scene. The guilds even dared to mimic the Prince’s oath, something the King did not like but had to watch. Cock himself

²⁹ HOROZCO, S.de: Op. Cit., p. 49.

³⁰ Bear in mind that those who danced were the same ones who acted later.

³¹ SAN JERÓNIMO, J.: *Memorias de Fray Juan de San Jerónimo, monje que fue primero de Guisando y después del Escorial, sobre varios sucesos del reinado de Felipe II* . C.O.D.O.I.N. Madrid, 1845. In the Madrid facsimile edition, 1984, pp. 52-53

³² COCK, E.: Op. Cit. , pp. 252-253

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describes the simple staging as "burlesque" and "unworthy" of being performed in front of royalty³³. We do not know if it was this performance or a similar one that Lope de Vega had in mind when, in his *Arte Nuevo de hacer Comedias*, he wrote that Philip II did not like to see representations of kings³⁴. What is certain, however, is that he saw them, and not only in plays with a historical theme, as this testimony shows.

There was also a demand in the royal residences for theatre of popular origin. It is a known fact that from July 1561 to 1568, as entertainment for the King's third wife, Isabella de Vallois, a cast of prominent actors performed in Madrid, among whom were Lope de Rueda, Gaspar Vázquez, Alonso Rodríguez, Pedro Medina, Alonso de Cisneros, Damián Rodríguez, Francisco Tabo, Jerónimo Rodríguez and Gaspar de Oropesa. Many others are known to us by name only.

Although Isabella of Valois was an undisputed defender of the theatre, her death did not bring about the disappearance of the "masters of making comedies", either in the halls of the Alcazar or in El Escorial itself. The Queen's younger sister, Juana of Austria, Princess of Portugal and sister-in-law of Anne of Austria, were staunch enthusiasts of the theatre. After she had settled in at the Court, the King's fourth wife attended a play in February 1571 at the height of Carnival which was performed, on the King's orders, in Princess Juana's quarters. Along with the Queen and the Princess, the play was also enjoyed by the King's daughters, Isabel Clara Eugenia and Catalina Micaela, at that time five and four years old, of whom the chronicler writes:

"They enjoyed the comedy as if they had been twenty year-olds. The Princes were also there³⁵."

The King himself took pleasure in this type of spectacle performed by professionals if we are to believe what Carrillo Cerón wrote some years later about Philip II's laughter:

³³ We know today that in the 17th century burlesque theatre consisted of a repertoire of some forty plays which became part of the global framework of humorous literature, most of them associated with the reign of Philip IV. Although the case referred to in the text evidently gives only one "picture", it may be the origin of a tradition that was not lost during modern times in politico-festive manifestations, as is shown in the work by DÍEZ BORQUE, J.M.: "Rey de Mojiganga" in: *En torno al teatro del siglo de Oro. Jornadas VII y VIII*. Almería 1992, pp. 13-24, with reference to the year 1704.

³⁴ The famous verses in which this opinion was included were: "... choose the subject and do not consider/ (may the precepts be excused) whether it is about kings and queens,/ though on this matter I understand that Philip the Prudent, King of Spain and our Lord was offended at seeing a king in them."

³⁵ KAMEN, H.: Op. Cit., p. 205

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"...all this drollery falls silent with that of Cisneros, who only had to set foot on stage to court laughter and make the greatest monarch in the world laugh (...). Performing in the Palace before the Solomon of our times, he was playing a mayor, and, as it was a Corpus Christi festival that had to be represented, he took the stick and started to scratch the back of his neck with it. The scribe said to him: "Watch what you're doing, Mayor. Are you scratching yourself with that of the King?" To which he replied, opening wide those eyes of his: "I swear to God, scribe, that if need be, I'll scratch myself with the King himself!". His Majesty put his gloves in his mouth to stifle his laughter and those present were greatly amused by what was said"³⁶.

Even when the date of Corpus Christi and the week it took place coincided with the King's stay in El Escorial, the town treated the monarchs to the religious plays they had prepared on behalf of and at the expense of the municipality. This was the case on June 3rd 1575. The chronicler writes in his description that he missed a more "professional" staging:

"...the script was very good, very Catholic and agreeable, but it was acted by workers on the construction (of El Escorial) who were not very skilled, and these were unable to transmit the values that the play required"³⁷.

Further research remains to be done on the theatrical activity by professionals and semi-professionals in the Madrid Court after 1581 following the arrival of the widowed Empress Maria, older sister of Philip II and a great lover of the theatre. A detailed study is also needed on the performances that took place in the chamber of the King's daughter, Isabel Clara Eugenia, during the first years of the decade of the nineties. As Jean L'Hermite recounts in 1593, following a performance given by the ladies of the Palace:

"...Un aultre jour y avoit aussi du mesme une autre représentation de comédie par **les comediens espagnols**, la quelle se representoi en public et fust fort louée de tous."³⁸

³⁶ CARRILLO CERÓN, G.: *Novelas de varios sucesos*. Granada, 1635, fols. 230-233. See ASENSIO, E.: *Itinerario del Entremés desde Lope de Rueda a Quiñones de Benavente*. Madrid, 1971, pp. 59-60, which cites at length what is possibly the only example of the work by Carrillo. Reference in PÉREZ PRIEGO, M.A.: "La evolución del teatro en el último tercio del siglo XVI" in CANAVAGGIO, J. (ed.): *La Comedia*, Madrid, 1995, p. 230.

³⁷ SAN JERÓNIMO, J.: *Ibid.*, p. 132.

³⁸ L'HERMITE, J.: *Le passtemps*.... Antwerp, 1890, Volume I, pp. 220 and 231-232.

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Two other types of theatre that Philip II watched as a spectator had a strong influence on the development of commercial theatre. On the one hand were plays by professional comedians *dell'Arte*, and on the other the collegiate theatre, which, although theoretically influenced by humanist modes and aesthetics and written by members of religious orders to be performed mostly by students, soon experienced a shift towards the repertoires of professional and semi-professional actors. As a result, it was reworked and mixed with secular themes in a way that would achieve a formula for success with the public.

With respect to the first type, Philip II's encounter with Alberto Naselli, known as “Ganassa”, in Toledo in 1579 during the Corpus Christi festivities, is well-known, although not enough emphasis has been given to the fact that Ganassa had come from Paris, where, during 1577, he had performed as much for a general audience as for the Court³⁹. In 1588, the Italian was obliged to leave following an expulsion decree issued by the Parliament of Paris, which wanted to safeguard the exclusive staging rights for performing the so-called “mystères” that the “Confrérie de la Passion” had won in 1492. Although the Italian “arte” was defended in the French Court, the rulings of the Parliament of Paris proved to be such an obstacle to the activity of Ganassa and his colleagues that they decided to leave the French capital and go to Spain.

Naselli had acted in palace theatre for the Duke of Mantua during the decade of the sixties but his true speciality lay in the scenic resources of the *Commedia dell'Arte*: stock characters who were easily identifiable by their costumes, music and gestures. Always within view of the audience, their risqué jokes and puns, which – depending on the type of public – could be quite vulgar, together with the improvisation and predetermined storylines that the public came to expect, constituted a springboard for

³⁹ The success of Italian comedians in France goes back at least to 1544 when one G.A. Romano was in charge of a group of actors in Paris, half of whom were Italian and half French. Italian actors performed in the French Court from 1548 till 1556. After 1570, two Italian companies, called by the King or princes, acted in Paris and the provinces. Ganassa performed in the French Court in 1571 and also in 1577. Henry III asked the Gelosis to come in 1576 after he had seen them in Venice on his journey home from Poland and he granted them his protection in spite of the hostility of the Parliament of Paris and the “Confrères de la Passion”. More can be found on theatrical activity in France during the 16th century in: LAZARD, M.: *Le théâtre en France au XVIe siècle*. Paris 1980. For an analysis of the presence of actors from the *Commedia dell'Arte* in Spain, see SANZ AYÁN, C. and GARCÍA GARCÍA, B.: “El oficio de representar en España y la influencia de la *Commedia dell'Arte* (1567-1587)” in *Cuadernos de Historia Moderna* nº 16, 1995, pp. 475-500.

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success. Nevertheless, we should not forget that what Philip II saw in Toledo was a performance of two sacramental plays, and that the acting skills that Ganassa showed on this occasion were largely the result of what he had learnt in the palaces of Mantua and Sienna.

With respect to drama written by members of religious orders and performed by pupils studying in their schools, the scenic activities undertaken in El Escorial by the Jeronymites and their “seminaries” deserve a chapter of their own⁴⁰. Such plays were described as “wholesome and Catholic” because for the most part they were written by friars. Some of the ones that Philip II saw there were offered as gifts by distinguished clerics. In 1594, for example, the Bishop of Segovia, Don Andrés Pacheco, sent him a “famous” comedy that:

“The choristers of that church acted very well. We all went to see it; it was very good and the Catholic King and his children enjoyed themselves immensely”⁴¹.

This was not the only occasion that Don Andrés Pacheco presented the monarch with a comedy. On August 30th 1595, during the festivities to consecrate the church of the monastery, another play was performed from the same source⁴². The Jeronymites also frequently arranged entertainment for the King and his family when they spent long periods at El Escorial:

“Besides this, they were offered short plays with holy themes that the monks had written. Spoken by the children from the Seminary these were well received and inspired devotion (...). That year, 1575, some extremely good plays were performed which gave the Queen, the Infantas and the Princes much enjoyment.”⁴³

Most of the works performed by the so-called “seminaries” of El Escorial were written by Friar Miguel de Madrid and also by Father Sigüenza. The well-known humanist, Pedro de Valencia, bears witness to this; the said dramatic plays fell into

⁴⁰ There are many references to these performances in SIERRA, J.: “La música de escena y tonos humanos en el Monasterio del Escorial” in *Música en el Monasterio del Escorial*. El Escorial, 1993, pp. 269-319, particularly pp. 277-288.

⁴¹ SEPÚLVEDA, P.J. de: *Historia de los varios sucesos y de las cosas notables que han acaecido en España y otras naciones desde el año 1584 hasta el de 1603*. Madrid, 1924. T. IV, pp. 159-160.

⁴² SEPÚLVEDA, P.J. de: *Ibid.*, p. 173-174.

⁴³ SIGÜENZA, J.: *La fundación del Monasterio del Escorial*. Madrid, 1963, I part, p. 59. Cited in SIERRA, J.: *Op. Cit.* Pp. 284.

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his hands and he took great pleasure in reading them, although he claimed that not one of them was “a play or comedy or dance that was not spiritual ⁴⁴”

Spiritual, yes, but not boring. The fact that the underlying theme of the plays had a religious content should not lead us to think they were simple sermons⁴⁵ in verse. Quite the opposite, in fact, were plays like the one brought out by Agustín de la Granja, in which a “graceful pavane” might be danced, or a ballad recited on the narrative poem, *La bella malmaridada*,⁴⁶

But these works, many of which were written totally or partially in Latin, experienced a rapid shift towards the popular repertoires of professional and semi-professional actors. A series of testimonies bear this out, some of them highly critical. Among the earliest of these is one dating from 1570 on the occasion of the transfer of some relics to El Escorial. In this case, it was the Theatine fathers from Navalcarnero who asked dancers, *serranas* (highland women) and gypsies, complete with other creations and costumes, to perform a play based on “strong doctrine and Christianity”⁴⁷, with which they no doubt complied.

Another of the more graphic episodes with respect to the symbiosis that took place between religious and secular drama is recounted by the Jesuit priest Juan Ramírez in a letter he wrote to Francisco de Borja on January 9th 1566⁴⁸:

“While I was in Medina del Campo this summer (1565), there was a performance in one of the Corpus Christi fiestas, composed by Father Boniface from our community, and in it I saw (...) that it was a story performed in a way that showed lack of respect for such a great mystery (...) with the Husband and the Wife flattering each other with words from the Song of Songs, all set in a narrative poem, and I was mortified by this performance, as were many others from our community who saw it.”

⁴⁴ SIERRA, J.: Op. Cit.: pp. 287

⁴⁵ Here too, as much clarification as possible is required when talking about sermons as we know what scenic techniques preachers used for their speeches. A very interesting study on this subject is that of ROCA VAREA, E.: “Teatro y predicación: La predicación como espectáculo en el bajo Medievo y en el Renacimiento” in *En torno al Teatro del siglo de Oro*. Actas de las jornadas XII y XIII. Almería, 1996, pp. 223-234.

⁴⁶ GRANJA de la A.: “Notas sobre el teatro.....” Op. Cit., pp. 19-41.

⁴⁷ SAN JERÓNIMO, J. Ibid., p. 61-63

⁴⁸ GRANJA de la A.: “Felipe II y el teatro cortesano...” op. Cit., p. 39 citing MENÉNDEZ PELÁEZ, J.: *Los jesuitas y el teatro del siglo de Oro*. Oviedo, 1995, p. 506.

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It was this secular interpretation of sacred drama by professional and semi-professional actors that led the Parliament of Paris in 1548 to take the drastic decision to forbid any representation of the mystery plays that had been performed by the “Confrérie de la Passion” since the end of the 14th century, in which the said secularised elements had become a prominent feature on stage throughout the 15th and the first half of the 16th centuries⁴⁹. As a result, at the beginning of the decade of the forties, the Parliament of Paris and numerous influential Catholics, together with some eminent Protestants, requested and finally achieved the suppression of holy dramatic performances, arguing that the “Confrérie” used:

“Actors who were ignorant and unacquainted with good diction, good manners and suitable theatrical gestures, who played out adulteries, fornications, scandals, digressions and disrespectful jests that made the audience uneasy and disconcerted”⁵⁰.

Such circumstances were very similar to those of the religious play at Medina in 1565, described by the Jesuit priest Juan Ramirez, although in the kingdoms of the Peninsula, unlike the Gallic capital, the religious/secular mix evolved throughout most of the 16th century without any serious hindrance and even boosted the development of commercial theatre performed in *corrales* or courtyards, where comedies about saints, often based on themes from old religious plays⁵¹ that had been performed over the previous one hundred years, were an added attraction for spectators.

It should be pointed out that even in the context of the holiest of festivals, secular and populist drama found a very successful niche. This was the case during the “fiestas and public merry-making” that took place on the occasion of the so-called “Conversion of England” in 1555⁵², following the marriage of Philip II to his second wife, Mary Tudor. In Toledo, the festivities for this event lasted from the 9th to the

⁴⁹ MARTÍNEZ PÉREZ, A. and PALACIOS BERNAL C.: *Teatro profano francés en el siglo XIII*. Murcia, 1994, pp. 14.

⁵⁰ REDOLI MORALES, R.: “Decretos y pragmáticas en el teatro francés de los siglos XIV al XVII” in *Teatro y Poder VI y VII Jornadas de Teatro*. Burgos, 1998, pp. 267-275, particularly p. 270.

⁵¹ REYES PEÑA, de los, M.: “Constantes y cambios en la tradición hagiográfica: Del *Códice de Autos Viejos* a las comedias de Santos del siglo XVII” in CANAVAGGIO, J. (ed.): *La Comedia*. Madrid, 1995, pp. 257-272.

⁵² HOROZCO, S. De: Op. Cit. ,p. 17

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25th of February and coincided with Carnival. Sebastián de Horozco gives an account of the events of Sunday, February 17th:

“On that day there were dances on the ground that in other times would have been good and worth seeing but as so much was going on on horseback, no one was taking any notice of what was on foot (...); that day, the coarse farces put on in the intervals between acts included a tooth-puller, complete with his tools, and a woman who was having her tooth pulled out. He sat her in a chair and scraped away the flesh with a horn then took out a pair of blacksmith’s pliers, with her screaming away...[at this point, some words that border on the indecent have been omitted⁵³], which produced no small measure of amusement and laughter. It is only natural that these things provoke more laughter and amusement than good things do. In a similar fashion, two sellers of offal, a man and a woman, came out riding on beasts and carrying animal entrails. She was carrying two pans in front of her in a pannier, out of which she pulled some innards with a pothook...[here too, some words are omitted for the same reason as before] and again the people did not cry, not even the ladies who were watching.”

This is a very interesting comment because, as the author of the account shows, it was not only common or uncultured people who attended these “crude” spectacles; the audience also included ladies.

We do not know the author of these short plays or those who performed them but we do know that in the mid-sixteenth century Toledo was the source of most of the professional actors found at the Madrid Court. Three good examples of these are Jerónimo Velázquez⁵⁴, Alonso de Cisneros⁵⁵ and Mateo de Salcedo⁵⁶. The seeds of professional theatre had been sown and, as we know, it was during the decades of the seventies and eighties that it began to flourish, forming a foundation without which Baroque comedy would not have become established.

⁵³ The parts of the text in square brackets are the author’s own notes.

⁵⁴ SANZ AYÁN, C. and GARCÍA GARCÍA, B.: “Jerónimo Velázquez. Un hombre de teatro en el periodo de gestación de la comedia barroca” in *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie IV, Hª Moderna, T. V, 1992, pag. 97-134.

⁵⁵ GARCÍA GARCÍA, B.: “Alonso de Cisneros. Vida y arte de un comediante entre Lope de Rueda y Gaspar de Porres” in *Edad de Oro*, XVI, 1997, pp. 171-188.

⁵⁶ SANZ AYÁN, C.: “Recuperar la perspectiva: Mateo de Salcedo, un adelantado en la escena barroca” (1572-1608) in *Edad de Oro*, XIV, 1995, pp. 257-286.

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THE INSTITUTIONAL POSITION OF PHILIP II REGARDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMERCIAL THEATRE

As well as the literary-generic origin of Baroque theatre, a closer look is needed at the political, social and economic context in which it developed. This second consideration – equally important as the first, although far less studied – explains part of the success of this theatrical formula and its later significance.

What drove the public to fill the theatres? What motivated impresarios and performers to commit themselves to this “new” professional activity? What inspired poets to produce a profusion of comedies and aspire to success on stage above everything else? What prompted many political institutions, both at local and state level, to champion (save a few temporary exceptions) theatrical activity?

In the first place, commercial theatre (in other words, theatre in an enclosed space where a spectacle was offered in exchange for an entrance fee) was an urban phenomenon that was closely linked – not only in the different kingdoms of the Peninsula but in all of Europe – to the rise of cities during the sixteenth century and the type of people they took in⁵⁷. In this respect, Madrid stands out as a prime example because the establishment of the Court there greatly accelerated a process that had begun earlier in other cities but required more years to reach maturity as growth proceeded at a slower and more “natural” pace. From a demographic point of view, these cities had not been affected by such decisive circumstances as those experienced by Madrid after 1561.

When Philip II moved his Court to Madrid in June of that year, the city’s population underwent unprecedented changes. By the end of the century, the number of inhabitants had soared from 9,000 to 83,000⁵⁸, creating an exponential increase in demand for all manner of consumer goods, including those related to leisure and social welfare. This demand was fostered on the one hand by the presence of well-to-do people who sought

⁵⁷ The comprehensive work by FERRONE, S.: *Attori Mercanti, Corsari. La Commedia dell’Arte in Europa tra Cinque e Seicento*. Turin 1993, is of great use for understanding the phenomenon from a European perspective, particularly Chapter II titled “Le stanze del teatro”, pp. 50-88, in which he describes theatrical premises in Venice, Florence, Naples, Genoa, Milan and Mantua and compares them with those of Madrid, Paris and London.

⁵⁸ These figures are taken from ALVAR EZQUERRA, A.: *El nacimiento de una capital europea. Madrid, entre 1506 y 1606*. Madrid, 1991, p. 31

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the conviviality of the Court and administrative circles surrounding the monarch, and on the other by a much larger group of ordinary people looking for a better life in the city that was the new seat of Court by supplying it with provisions or working in domestic service. For others, however, the “urban dream” did not work out. These included the sick with no fixed abode, unmarried mothers who were unemployed and unable to provide for their families, and abandoned children. The only means of survival for these people was to rely on whatever charitable institutions were available, and these soon proved to be insufficient because of the pressure exerted by the growing population.

It was as a result of this strange merging of public entertainment for those who had leisure time and the provision of aid for the needy that the right conditions were created for the commercial theatre to embark on a path of unstoppable growth.

In the shadow of these new and challenging demands for social and charitable assistance, a series of religious institutions called *cofradías de socorro*⁵⁹ began to proliferate. These “brotherhoods” practised selective charity by attending to the specific needs of certain types of destitute people. The growth of these charitable organisations satisfied two types of demand: they responded to the need to attend a growing number of people with no livelihood and at the same time provided the Madrid courtiers with a means of channelling their collective desire and religious obligation to show compassion.

In this context, the financial contributions made by the brotherhoods came from alms, donations or bequests. The money was used to build hospitals, orphanages and shelters for outcasts and the destitute but when there were not enough funds to fulfil these obligations, some of these institutions sought permission from the King to obtain additional income through concession of the monopoly on the commercial management of the city’s “public” theatre.

⁵⁹ These apparently innovative foundations nevertheless perpetuated the traditional system of poverty-charity and were intended as a response to the threats to the city from the immigration of beggars and vagabonds as a result of the new social situation. Their creation followed the purest directives of the Council of Trent, at which, as we know, the proposals of Vives on social issues, which developed the idea of the secularisation of charity, had been branded as Lutheran. On these matters of poverty and charity see CARASA SOTO, P.: *Historia de la beneficencia en Castilla y León*. Valladolid, 1991.

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As far as we know, this process began in Madrid in 1568 and was linked to the *cofradía de socorro de la Pasión*. A century and a half earlier (1402) in Paris, a *confrérie* or brotherhood of the same name had persuaded Charles VI to publish a decree authorising its members to form a theatrical association with a monopoly to perform mystery plays in permanent secure premises: the Hospital of the Trinity. This made it possible for them to make a charge for their performances, with the proceeds going to the *confrérie*⁶⁰. The fact that the name of the Parisian brotherhood coincided with that of Madrid and that the latter was founded in 1565, precisely in the middle years of the reign of Isabella de Valois, who was a great fan of the theatre, are variables that should be taken into account in any consideration of possible connections and influences, although there are significant differences between one institution and the other, particularly with regard to the social origin of their respective members⁶¹.

Once performances of comedies became linked to the *cofradía de la Pasión* in 1568, the Madrid model began to spread to most of the other large cities under the Hispanic monarchy, not only in the Peninsula, which included Lisbon, but, for example, to Naples, where as early as 1583, the Hospital for Incurables had adopted this procedure for funding social welfare. On December 3rd of that year Philip II signed a regulation affecting the Italian city:

“On behalf of those Neapolitans dedicated to the incurables of this city, and considering that the need of that institution is so great that if it were not helped out on many occasions by the Hospital of the Annunciate they would have nothing to make up for it: may it please to order that, for the expenses incurred there, half the profits from comedies performed in this city should be used, and that the said hospital should designate a person in charge of collecting whatever is allocated, **in accordance with what is done in other hospitals in the city of Madrid where my Royal Court resides**⁶².”

The intention was clearly to apply the Madrid model to the Italian city. In the meantime, other cities in the Peninsula were putting the same system into practice and dedicating

⁶⁰ PETIT DE JOULEVILLE, L.: *Les Mystères*. París, 1880, vol. I, pp. 414-417.

⁶¹ Nevertheless, this is an issue that should be studied with care. We should not forget, for example, that Jerónimo Velázquez, the most successful playwright in Madrid during the decade of the eighties was a Brother of the Passion and also a Brother of Solitude, the two brotherhoods linked to the development of commercial theatre in Madrid, according to what is written in his will. A.H.P.N.M. prot. 2445.

⁶² FERRONE, S.: Op. Cit, p. 71

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part of the proceeds from the theatre to some charitable institution or other. Some examples of these were Zaragoza in 1569, Zamora and Valladolid in 1574, Toledo in 1580, Valencia in 1582, Barcelona and Burgos in 1587, Lisbon in 1588, and Jaén, Medina del Campo and Seville in 1593⁶³. The same model spread to the Americas, where the Royal Hospital of the Mexico City Indians began to benefit from the performance of comedies at the end of the sixteenth century⁶⁴.

It was also during these years that the first and most important open air theatres, the *corrales de comedias*, appeared in the major cities, a development closely linked to the final destination of part of the profits of commercial theatre. Between 1579 and 1586, two buildings were erected in Madrid with the exclusive purpose of performing plays. These were "La Cruz" and "El Príncipe" and both were dependent on the two brotherhoods that theoretically benefited from commercial theatre performances, the *Cofradía de la Pasión* and the *Cofradía de la Soledad*. Prior to this, in the sixties and seventies, several rented premises had been used, such as "La Puente", "Burguillos" and "La Pacheca", and for some years these continued to put on spectacles at the same time as the new *corrales*.

In Valencia the "Hostal del Garmell" was used as a permanent theatre after 1577 and "La Olivera" from 1581 onwards. Other examples were the "Puerta de San Esteban" in Valladolid, the "Mesón de la Fruta" in Toledo and the "del Carbón" in Granada. Seville was an exceptional case. During the last third of the 16th century up to seven different *corrales de comedias* were built, although not all of them were in use at the same time. It was only in the decade of the seventies that the "Don Juan", the "Doña Elvira" and the "Atarazanas" were operating simultaneously⁶⁵.

⁶³ The origins of this data are highly dispersed. All the sources are included in SANZ AYÁN, C. and GARCÍA GARCÍA, C.: "Rendimiento y gestión del negocio teatral en Madrid. La cofradía de la Soledad en el último cuarto del siglo XVI". In *Studia Aurea*. Actas del III Congreso de la AISO, Toulouse 1993, vol. II. Teatro, pp. 343-360.

⁶⁴ MURIEL, J.: *Hospitales de la Nueva España*. Tomo II, p. 262

⁶⁵ The special case of Seville up to the end of the 16th century with respect to the "free" development of the commercial theatre is explained by SENTAURENS, J.: "La edad de Oro en la Comedia en Sevilla. Los malogrados caminos de una modernidad temprana" en *La Comedia*. Madrid, 1995, pp. 145-153. On p. 146 SENTAURENS says: "While cities like Madrid, Valencia and Valladolid, through privileges granted to certain charitable organisations, followed the lines of an official monopoly, which restricted

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In short, the association of commercial theatre with the funding of social welfare was the perfect way of overcoming the moral prejudices promulgated by numerous preachers and clerics, as well as some contemporary intellectuals, who considered its existence and development to be a fount of sin and bad habits. The solvency and maintenance of charitable institutions began to depend to a large extent on theatre performances, and those who clamoured for prohibition were always confronted with the argument that they served a useful social purpose. It has been shown that the *Cofradía de la Soledad* in Madrid, which between 1586 and 1604 was responsible for looking after foundlings, relied on proceeds from this source for approximately a third of its income⁶⁶.

During almost the whole of the second half of the century, the institutional attitude that Philip II adopted towards this “theatrical boom” was to leave commercial theatre unhindered and at times even to foster it, either directly or indirectly. One of the clearest boosts it received was the royal backing given to the *Commedia dell’Arte* comic, Ganassa, after he had performed for the Monarch in Toledo. Philip II was so impressed by the Italian’s talent that he granted him something he had been unable to obtain in Paris: a special permit to perform in the *corrales de comedias* that opened on workdays, as well as on Sundays and Feast Days.

This permit constituted a gesture of great significance for the development of commercial theatre as homegrown actors and playwrights soon learnt from the Italian and claimed the same privilege for themselves. They did this first in Madrid, where, in the decades of the sixties and seventies the fame and tradition of Corpus Christi religious plays had far less significance than in Seville or Toledo. Rather than find itself with no prestigious companies left to perform for the King on such an important day, the Council, agreed for the groups to perform in the *corrales de comedias* on weekdays to make up for the time they were staying in the city with some sort of theatrical activity and in addition obtain part of the money that they invested in religious plays. This way

profits or investment opportunities for the owners or landlords of the *corrales*, Sevilla left the field wide open for private entrepreneurial initiative.”

⁶⁶ SANZ AYÁN, C, and GARCÍA GARCIA, B.: “La cofradía de la Soledad....” op. Cit.

Para citar este trabajo: SANZ AYÁN, C.: "Philip II and the origins of Baroque Theatre". Documento de Trabajo 2. Proyecto NOBINCIS, 2013. (Añadir enlace WEB). Versión completa en SANZ AYÁN, C.: *Hacer escena. Capítulos de historia de la empresa teatral en el Siglo de Oro*. Madrid, RAH, 2013. pp. 13-56

the Madrid municipality avoided the risk of these actors leaving to take up more tempting offers from the councils of Seville or Toledo.

Just as the example of Ganassa served as a stimulus for homegrown companies performing in Madrid, so the example of the Court served as an incentive for trying to obtain a similar daily comedy regime in other cities.

Arguments against "daily" theatre, in evidence in the Madrid of the eighties and nineties, were put forward by moralists and in some cases by the municipal authorities themselves, who criticised the damage non-stop leisure might do, the main fears being public disorder and lower labour productivity.

Another bone of contention used by detractors of commercial theatre was the presence of women on stage⁶⁷. It has often been assumed that women in Spain began acting when homegrown actors saw them perform with Italian *Commedia dell'Arte* companies⁶⁸. However, documents show that women were performing at least as far back as 1534⁶⁹ and that from the sixties onwards, they performed uninterruptedly up to 1586, when the first prohibition was pronounced:

"to... all persons who have theatre companies, do not bring for acting any of the characters in them any woman, on pain of five years of exile from the Kingdom and payment for each of 100,000 *maravedís*⁷⁰."

This break with the former practice of admitting women on stage may have been due to censorial pressure exerted by different groups of opinion originating in religious circles,

⁶⁷. The "problem" of women as public in the *corrales de comedias* was solved during the decade of the eighties. The separation of men and women was established in Madrid between 1582 and 1585, in the Olivera de Valencia in 1583, in Zaragoza in 1589 and in Granada and Valladolid from 1590. In GRANJA A. from: "Notas sobre el Teatro..." Op. Cit. pp. 35-36.

⁶⁸ Another problem was that of the "professionalisation" of actresses which also took place during the second half of the 16th century. On this matter, see: RODRÍGUEZ CUADROS, E.: "Autoras y farsantas, la mujer tras la cortina" in REYES PEÑA, M. (ed.): *La presencia de la mujer en el teatro barroco español*. Seville, 1998. Pp. 35-65. particularly pp. 38-39

⁶⁹ ROMERA NAVARRO, M.: "Las disfrazadas de varón en la comedia" *Hispanic Review*, vol. II n° 4, octubre, 1934, p. 269. This cites a fragment of the royal edict on costume pronounced on March 9th, 1534 which states: "Item: We hereby order what is prohibited and what is commanded with respect to costume ... understood likewise for actors, men and women and other people who attend plays to sing and play instruments..."

⁷⁰ A.H.N. Consejos, lib. 1197, fol. 175 r. MARTÍNEZ BARRA, J.: "Algunos aspectos del Madrid de Felipe II (segunda parte) *Anales del Instituto de Estudios Madrileños*, n° 2, 1967, p. 163.

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especially those of Jesuits and Franciscans, in the face of scenes of sensuality in dances, short plays and the comedies themselves, resources used specifically by women. One of the most attractive practices was to dress the woman up as a man. Literary traces of this practice are found in the early productions of Lope de Vega, for example, in “Los Hechos de Garcilaso” (1583?)⁷¹. Together with the forbidden dances, these were two of the theatrical manifestations that were most criticised by the moralists.

In his work *Agricultura Christiana* Friar Juan de Pineda (1581), a Franciscan from Medina del Campo, says:

“...to be avoided at all costs are those indecent performances in which bad language is heard and indecent body movements are seen, and where the souls of unruly men and women churn with evil desires, which with few words could inflame even worse acts⁷²”.

Nevertheless, the actresses showed a united front and reacted swiftly to the prohibition. Towards the middle of March 1587, a year after the prohibition, fourteen of them, led by two of the most famous actresses of the day, presented a memorandum to the Council of Castile in which they pointed out:

“... that they are undergoing great need and their consciences and those of their husbands are in danger because of their absence, and this has caused the aforesaid husbands, in order to make up for their absence in the performance, to bring in lots of boys of certain refinement and they dress them in costumes and headdresses as if they were women, with much greater indecency and scandal than women ever caused. This would cease if women were given permission to perform, with two conditions. The first, that each person represents their own sex and figure (...), and the second, that no unmarried woman should appear or perform in comedies or with theatre companies, that any woman should be married and should bring along her husband⁷³”.

Their proposal was supported in July 1587 by the procurator general of Madrid, Don Gonzalo de Monzón, in the name of the two brotherhoods, the *cofradía de la Pasión* and the *cofradía de la Soledad*, and by the representatives of the General Hospital who

⁷¹ WEBER de KURLAT, F.: “La formación de la Comedia Lope-Lope y Lope-prelope” in RICO, F.: *Historia y Crítica de la literatura española*. Vol. 3, Barcelona, 1983., p. 329.

⁷² COTARELO Y MORI, E.: *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España*. Madrid, 1904., p. 506

⁷³ A.H.N. Consejos lib. 7048, doc. 89. Reproduced in DAVIS, Ch. Y VAREY, J.: *Los corrales de comedias y los hospitales de Madrid: 1574-1615*. Study and documents. London, 1997, p. 125, doc. 29.

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were faced with a sharp decrease in the amount of alms they received from the proceeds of the comedies⁷⁴.

The reply Philip II gave to the Council of Castile at the end of October 1587, following their consultation on this matter, can be found in the archives of the municipality of Valencia de Don Juan:

"... I have seen what you say in your consultation of the 24th of this month concerning the pretext in theatrical performances for dressing boys up as women, styling their hair and painting their faces, and although painting the face is fine, look how doing away with everything else would hinder the performances, and if it is not done away with, **it would be advisable to make room for married women who brought their husbands along with them to perform in women's attire** (...). San Lorenzo, October 31st, 1587⁷⁵."

At last, in November, a month after the consultation, the order against the presence of women on stage was lifted and a licence was sent to all cities permitting them to resume their acting, on the condition that they were married and that their husbands were part of the same troupe. As we have seen, the attitude of the King towards the reincorporation of women in the theatre was one of understanding. It can generally be said that the enemies of the commercial theatre of the *corrales* indirectly accused the King of negligence and of being too "practically-minded"⁷⁶ in these matters.

Among those who were scandalised was Friar Diego de Tapia, an Augustinian, who in 1587 in his work *De Eucharistia*, based on testimonies from the Holy Fathers, expressed his amazement that in Spain the sacraments were given to theatre people⁷⁷. This example clearly shows that the image of romanticism, victimisation and indeed commercialisation applied by certain actors of today to people in the Hispanic theatre at that time has a lot of fantasy but little of true substance.

⁷⁴ A.H. N. Ibid. doc. 44

⁷⁵ A version of this consultation is reproduced in *El Escorial, biografía de una época*. Madrid, 1986, p. 224. Its catalogue number is AVDJ (Archivo Valencia de Don Juan) Envío 21, fol. 320, but another exists with catalogue number AVDJ, Envío 86-I, fol. 120. in which the annotations are in the Kings own hand.

⁷⁶ It should not be forgotten that without the presence of women on stage, the revenue from plays destined for hospitals dropped drastically.

⁷⁷ COTARELO Y MORI, E. :Op. Cit. p. 563. Friar Diego de Tapia, in Chapter VIII of his Book II, devotes a passage titled "trum hoc sacramentum dari posit hystrionibus" to this issue.

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Seen from the strict viewpoint of the detractors, there was still cause for protest after women returned to the stage. The moral cover of marriage in troupes of actors was often no more than a legal requirement⁷⁸, and relationships between members of the company were frequently conducted along more casual lines. Likewise, women's control of clothing and particularly the phenomenon of transvestism⁷⁹ on stage rose considerably⁸⁰ after the nineties.

PROHIBITIONS DURING THE TWILIGHT OF THE REIGN.

It was during the last decade of Philip II's life, when his mood was more receptive to the opinion of the upright men of the Church, that his spiritual guides put pressure on him first to repress and then to prohibit theatrical performances⁸¹. This campaign coincided with a situation of crisis in the long reign of the "old king", dominated by economic problems, political unrest and virulent epidemics, which had the effect of concentrating all the complaints made to the King throughout his reign with a hitherto unknown intensity⁸². Against this very sombre backdrop, the moral reprimands would have a much greater effect on the already dispirited King.

Despite the pressure for prohibition, this was pre-empted by the period of official mourning following the death of Catalina Micaela in Turin on November 6th 1597. A few days later, the closure of Madrid's theatres was decreed as a sign of mourning, a closure that would last into the following year. It was in these circumstances that on

⁷⁸ SANZ AYÁN, C.: "Teoría y práctica de la intolerancia moral en la literatura y el teatro de los siglos XVI y XVII" in MARTINEZ RUIZ, E. and PI CORRALES, M.: *Instituciones en la España Moderna. Dogmatismo e intolerancia*. Madrid, 1997, pp. 295-314

⁷⁹ A classic work that has recently been re-edited deals with the opposite phenomenon, men dressed as women in CANAVAGGIO, J.: "Los disfrazados de mujer en la comedia" in MARTÍNEZ BERBEL J.A. y CASTILLA PÉREZ, R. (Eds.): *Las mujeres en la sociedad española del Siglo de Oro: Ficción teatral y realidad histórica*. Granada, 1998, pp. 458-469.

⁸⁰ According to Melveena McKendrik, the masculine woman begins to appear regularly in plays after 1590, although the really significant examples in her study are from after 1595. In MCKENDRIK, M.: *Women and society in the Spanish drama of the Golden Age: a study of the "mujer varonil"*. New York-London, 1974.

⁸¹ Among these are Don Pedro Vaca de Castro, Archbishop of Granada and Seville, who in 1593 asked the King to prohibit them throughout his dominions, and, with the same motive, he went to the Council of Castile and spoke to the confessor, Friar Diego Yepes, to García de Loaysa, the Prince's teacher and to his confessor Friar Gaspar de Córdoba.

⁸² The monographic report that appears in the journal *Studia Histórica*. Vol. 17, 1997, titled *Felipe II, el ocaso del reinado (1589-1598)* and coordinated by BOUZA ÁLVAREZ, F. provides an updated reflection on the particular socio-political environment of these last ten years of the reign.

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May 2nd 1598 the King, visibly ill and depressed and with the theatres already closed, decreed a general prohibition of performances of comedies, notifying all the places dependent on the Crown of Castile⁸³. He died four months later on September 13th of that same year and his death marked the beginning of another period of official mourning that once more overlapped prohibition.

But the silence of the stage was short-lived. There was constant pressure to lift the decree from organisations that relied for their maintenance on the financial returns from the comedies, mainly hospitals and social welfare institutions. At Easter, on April 17th, 1599, coinciding with the wedding of Philip III to Margaret of Austria, the actors returned once more to the stage. The next general prohibition, apart from periods of official mourning, would not come into force until the fourth decade of the 17th century. Once again, this would be in the middle of a huge personal and political crisis affecting Philip IV, who, strangely enough, was the Habsburg monarch who most enjoyed the theatre.

⁸³ "Know ye that we were informed that in our kingdoms there are many men and women who move around in companies, whose trade is to act in plays and that they have no other means of sustenance, which creates considerable problems. And, as approved by our Council, it was agreed that we should command that this letter be given to you for this reason. And we have reached a decision whereby we command you for the time being not to give a place in this city or its lands for the said companies to perform in public places destined for that purpose, nor in private houses, nor in any other part, and do not go against this, on pain of our displeasure." In COTARELO Y MORI, E.: *Bibliografía de las controversias...* Op. Cit., pp. 620-621.