

## Parallel Lives: Shakespeare and Lope de Vega

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### INTRODUCTION

This curriculum unit is aimed at fourth year Spanish Advanced Placement Literature students. Senior Advanced Placement students will read Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*. These two plays will allow them to study and compare two different cultures whose theaters reached their peak simultaneously during one of the most convulsive and exciting periods in European history. Some of my Hispanic students will hear echoes of their own ideas in the works of Lope de Vega, while these ideas will seem foreign to us. My non-Hispanic students will probably find Shakespeare's ideas more attuned to their ideas. This unit will examine these two cultures through their plays. Students will be asked to detail these differences. Why is Shakespeare so popular in Europe and on an international stage, whereas Lope's popularity is limited largely to the Iberian Peninsula? This unit will try to answer this and other questions.

Non-native English speakers will receive training in English verse scanning as they focus on the language of these poets, because in both Shakespeare and Lope de Vega the language is everything. For approximately five weeks, students will focus on the plays: their structures, rhyming schemes, theatrical and other conventions forced upon them by the cultural and physical limitations of their respective stages. By coordinating with the Advanced Placement English Literature course, the students will receive an intensive lesson on the Elizabethan theater to prepare for their Advance Placement Literature tests.

### OBJECTIVES

The objectives in this unit are based on the Houston Independent District's Language Other Than English (LOTE) Vertical Alignment Matrix for Fourth Year Spanish Students (see Appendix A for appropriate numeration).

### RATIONALE

The seminar: "This Rough Magic: Teaching Shakespeare's Plays" is a choice I made because I want to inspire in my students the same love of Shakespeare that my high school English teacher inspired in me. Because I am a Spanish teacher, however, this choice might seem incongruous. How could I introduce Shakespeare, the greatest English playwright, into Advanced Placement Spanish Literature courses? I failed to grasp the importance of Shakespeare in non-English speaking countries, an importance revealed by reading one simple fact: "As in other countries of Europe, Shakespeare's work has a noticeable presence in contemporary Spain. Suffice to say that according to studies reported by the University of Murcia regarding Investigations by the Education and Science Ministry [of Spain] by the end of the 20th Century, *more Shakespeare was being staged in our theaters than Lope de Vega, Tirso and Calderón put together*" [Italics mine] (para. 1). Another reason was suggested by our seminar leader, Dr. Sidney Berger, who pointed out that the two playwrights who created the National Theaters for England and Spain, respectively – Shakespeare and Lope de Vega – were contemporaries during a period in which the public theater became the most popular entertainment form available.

## UNIT BACKGROUND

### Historical and Cultural Background – Reemergence of Classical Learning and Striving for a National Language

A concentrated wave of intellectual and creative energy swept through Italy and spread throughout the European continent. Europeans began to collect, study, and translate the writings of classical Greek and Roman authors. During this rebirth, the works of many ancient Latin and Greek playwrights, including the comedies of Terence and Plautus, were translated into the emerging Italian, French, Spanish, and English languages. Latin continued to be the language through which scholars engaged each other at the universities. However, a great majority of people had no knowledge of Latin, much less Greek, and it was during this period that some authors who were thoroughly versed in Latin began writing works in their vernacular tongues; for example, Dante wrote his *Divine Comedy* in Italian, but his *De vulgari eloquentia* (*On the Eloquence of Vernacular*) is written in Latin.

In the middle of fifteenth century, a new and pervasive attitude emerged in regard to the significant aspects of life. Europe and England were changing. The “Great Chain of Being” theory based on man’s predetermined position in the Universe was being challenged by a new intellectual, artistic, exploratory, and scientific spirit. During the Renaissance, humanists like Copernicus, whose motion of the planets theory was to revolutionize astronomy and theology, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, author of *On the Dignity of Man* (1486), Galileo Galilee, Leonardo Da Vinci, and other Renaissance men, contribute to shift the interest from the external universe to man. Man becomes the measure of all things. New ideas are hotly debated in universities and the debate spills onto the stage. The conflict between the medieval beliefs and the renaissance ideas is reflected in Shakespeare’s plays and in the works of some of his contemporaries. Christopher Marlowe’s *Dr. Faustus* embodies the tragic consequences of this new spirit, driven unchecked into uncharted seas.

Elizabethan men had greater self-assurance, were more adventuresome, and reflected a cavalier spirit that accompanied a growing pride in being Englishmen. Elizabethans felt they could do anything they put their minds to. The same nationalistic spirit was growing in Spain. Ferdinand and Isabella were cementing the first modern state. The Moors had been driven from their last foothold in Spain, Granada, and the Jews were soon to follow. The discovery and conquest of the New World had provided Spain with enormous wealth and a vast overseas empire. By the late seventeenth hundreds, however, Spain had squandered its wealth in luxuries and wars and during Philip the Second’s reign, the Spanish Empire began its steady decline. Ironically, it is also the period in which Spanish literature reaches its zenith, what we now call Spain’s Golden Age.

The development and establishment of diverse languages throughout Europe filled a need that was addressed as early as 1492 when Spanish scholar Antonio de Nebrija presented Queen Isabella of Spain the first Spanish grammar. Nebrija then told her “Madam, language is the instrument of empire” (Hale 67).

In 1591, Francis I of France issued an edict proclaiming the French spoken in Paris and outlying areas to be the official language of France. As early as 1490, William Caxton questioned the use of different English dialects, and a 1589 treatise suggested that the language of the court and of London and shires up to sixty miles from London be used as a model for an official English language. Languages, however, continued to be in flux. English had reemerged as the dominant language in England, having contested with French spoken in court after the 1066 Norman invasion. Spanish had absorbed a large number of Arabic words during the Moors’ seven hundred year occupation of southern Spain (711-1492) and was currently adopting words from

the inhabitants of the recently discovered New World. Not only were new words being admitted into different languages, but authors were constantly coining new words.

In addition to Elizabethan and Spanish interest in their native languages, England and Spain were both caught up in a voracious appetite for new plays. During the boom, approximately from 1600-1610, three open-air theaters: Theater, Globe, and Fortune, and two indoor theaters provided over two million seats a year when the population of London was about two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants. These theaters could seat up to eight thousand spectators in one day. This huge appetite for new plays forced actors to have an extensive repertory and playwrights to produce new scripts rapidly to meet the public's demands. The same appetite for new works plagued Spain, where Lope de Vega, nicknamed "The Monster of Nature" by Cervantes, turned out about 1,500 plays during his lifetime of which only 400 survive (Brenan 204). John Hale comments, "Never before in Europe had there been so heavy a vote of confidence in a single form of cultural activity" (346-7).

### **Shakespeare -- A Short Biography**

We do not know the exact date on which William Shakespeare was born, but contemporary records indicate that he was baptized in Holy Trinity Church on 26 April 1564 in Stratford-upon-Avon. His father was John Shakespeare, a tanner, glove-maker and trader, and his mother was Mary Arden. Shakespeare was the third child and eldest son.

Little is known of Shakespeare's education, but it is safe to assume that he attended the King's New School at Stratford-upon-Avon, a free school, where he studied rhetoric and moral philosophy and acquired the little Latin and less Greek attributed to him by Ben Johnson.

A marriage license was issued on 27 November 1582 to William Shakespeare and Anne Hathaway, who was eight years his senior. In 1583, Shakespeare's daughter Susanna was born, and in 1585 twins Hamnet and Judith. No further mention was made of Shakespeare in contemporary records until 1592, when Robert Greene, a rival playwright and pamphleteer, referred negatively to Shakespeare (Shake-scene) as an actor and playwright calling him an "upstart crow" ("Shakespeare Timeline").

When Shakespeare arrived in London is not known, but by 1592, when attacked by John Greene in his pamphlet, *Groatworth of Wit*, he must have been acting and writing for several years. In 1594 Shakespeare was reported as a member of the Theatrical Company Chamberlain's Men. And in 1603, upon the death of Queen Elizabeth and the succession of James I to the English throne, the Chamberlain's Men became the King's Men. Shakespeare became considerably wealthy as an actor and playwright. He held a one-tenth interest in the Globe Theater and shared profits. Granted a coat of arms in 1596, Shakespeare was now considered a gentleman. With his earnings, circa 1597 he purchased New Place, the second largest house in Stratford, and he invested in Stratford's real estate business. Shakespeare died on 25 April 1616 and was buried in the church at Stanford. Thirty-seven plays and some non-dramatic poems constitute Shakespeare's authentic body of work.

### **Félix Lope de Vega Carpio – A Short Biography**

Lope de Vega was born in Madrid, Spain, on 25 November 1562. A year before Lope's birth, King Philip II of Spain had moved the Spanish capital from Toledo to Madrid. Lope's father was an artisan from Santander who was impulsive and unstable, combining erotic susceptibility with religious fervor, and had an inclination for writing verses. These traits were inherited by his son, Lope. He was educated at the Jesuit College in Madrid and, after that, at the University of Alcalá.

Lope's impulsive temperament became evident early. At twelve, he ran away from home. At eighteen, he fell madly in love with Elena Osorio, the wife of an actor, and having libeled her

parents, he was exiled from Madrid for several years. At twenty-six, he eloped with the daughter of the King at Arms, Isabel de Urbina Alderete y Cortinas, and abandoned her to join the Spanish Armada sent by Philip II to invade England. Upon his return to Spain in 1588, after the Armada's disastrous defeat, Lope lived in Valencia until 1590, when his banishment from Castile ended. He moved to Toledo and then to Alba de Torres where he served the Duke de Alba.

After the death of his wife in 1595, he was involved in a series of romantic adventures until he married Juana de la Guardia in 1598. He began an extramarital affair with actress Micaela de Luján who bore him several children. In 1613, after the death of his second wife, Lope became a priest. In 1615, he began an affair with Marta de Nevares Santoyo. Although Marta was married and had been living in Madrid with her husband, she agreed to move in with Lope. Later, Marta became blind and insane and died in 1632. In 1634, Lope's favorite son, Lope, was drowned in the Caribbean, and his daughter, Antonia, ran off with a courtier protected by the King. Lope died a year later on 27 August 1635.

### **The Elizabethan and Spanish Theaters in the late 1500s and early 1600s**

The theater, the predominant literary genre during the late sixteenth century, boomed simultaneously in England and in Spain. Public hunger for plays sparked the building of new playhouses in England. The *Theater* (1576), the *Curtain* (1576), the *Rose* (1587), the *Swan* (1595), the *Globe* (1599), the *Fortune* (1600) were open-air public theaters built in London during a thirty year span to satisfy the demands of the public. Public theaters were purposely built outside of the city of London's jurisdiction to escape the unfriendly puritanical government. Private theaters, like *Blackfriar's Hall* (1576), were established in the city of London and offered their wealthier clientele a roofed area with seats, artificial lighting and music.

In Madrid, the *corrales*, originally the yards of houses, were transformed into theaters. In 1565 the *Cofradía de la Pasión* (Brotherhood of the Passion), comprised of charitable citizens of Madrid, was granted the privilege of providing a place to perform the *comedias* in Madrid. The *Corral de la Pacheca* was built in 1574. An increase in demand for plays induced the building of other open-air theaters including the *Corral del Puente* and the *Corral de Valdivieso* (1579). Other brotherhoods, comprised of traveling companies or guilds of actors, built the permanent open-air *Corral de la Cruz* (1579) and the *Corral del Príncipe* (1582). These two were the only public *corrales* that remained after 1584. Rennert remarks that "Their glory in the annals of modern drama is surpassed only by the *Globe* and *Blackfriars* in London" (36).

Although the private theaters would become the model for our modern theaters, it was the public or open-air theaters that generated the greatest excitement and the largest crowds during the hey-day of the English and Spanish theaters. Though both shared many similar characteristics, there were differences.

### **The Elizabethan Theater**

The stage, or raised platform, of the Elizabethan open-air theater projected into the spectator area approximately twenty-eight feet and was about forty-three feet wide. It stood about five and a half feet from the ground. A trap door in the middle of the stage allowed actors to ascend or descend the platform.

The back of the theater, known as the *tiring-house*, was used as dressing rooms by the actors who entered and exited through two doors. The stage had two columns rising from the stage which supported a "cover" or "heavens" that thrust out from the tiring-house's façade. These heavens could be lavishly decorated with symbolic figures. Above the doors were the lords' rooms, numbering five or six in different theaters.

Above the stage covering on the fourth floor was the ‘hut’ which housed the machinery used to raise and lower actors simulating flight, and to produce thunder and lighting. The courtyard open area in front of the stage was called the pit. It was usually paved with rocks or bricks. Here the rowdy *groundlings* stood throughout a performance. They were feared by authors and actors because the success or failure of a play often rested on the groundlings’ whims.

Three stories of galleries, one above the other, encircled the yard. Each gallery was accessible by exterior staircases. Because of their better location and greater comfort, these were the most expensive seats in the theater. Seating on the stage was reserved for the nobility and high government officials.

Prices for the Elizabethan theater were accessible to the general public. General admission, which allowed a person entrance to the theater on a standing room basis, i.e. the pit, was one English penny (a penny could also buy a pot of ale.) Entrance to the lords’ rooms was sixpence. An unskilled worker earned five or sixpence a day. A seat under cover cost an additional penny. A cushioned, more comfortable seat with a better view cost another penny (McDonald 45-52; Schoenbaum 40-51).

### **The Spanish *Corrales***

Rennet describes the Spanish *corrales* as courtyards where houses came together with a stage that did not project into the audience. Its two sides were covered with *paños*, or hangings, from which actors could make their entrances or exits. The *vestuario* or dressing rooms occupied the two sides and the back of the stage. Balcony scenes, mountains, towers, city walls, and other high places were staged in a gallery raised some distance from the stage.

Nearest the front of the stage was a row of *bancos* (benches) often protected by a canvas cover. Behind the benches was a large open area or *patio*. Here, a rough, boisterous crowd known as the *mosqueteros*, the counterpart of the Elizabethan *groundlings*, viewed the plays standing.

To the sides of the patio were *gradas*, or tiers, built like an amphitheater and protected under a projecting roof. At the extreme opposite end from the stage was the *cazuela*, or stewpot, a gallery for women, also known as the *corredores de las mujeres* (women’s gallery). The women in the *cazuela* were just as boisterous as the *mosqueteros*. The *aposentos*, stalls or boxes, were the *ventanas* (windows), with their traditional *rejas* or *celosias* (grills and latticed windows) that extended from the principal house around the three sides of the courtyards. These and some windows constructed exclusively for viewing plays were the most expensive locations in the theater.

Rennert adds that the stalls or boxes on the upper floors were called *desvanes* (attics); the ones on the lowest floors were *aposentos* (apartments or rooms). These boxes were rented and occupied by the rich and the nobility. Women who viewed the performances from these stalls wore masks (118-119).

The Spanish *comedias* were all the rage in the early 1600s. During the Golden Age, the Spanish people were notably illiterate, and this oral literature was the only literary form available to them. The increase in the number of spectators attending the open-air theaters made these theaters a lucrative business. The prices for admission and seating to the *corrales* in Madrid were established by a decree issued on 21 March 1606 as follows: *gradas*, 16 maravedis, *cazuela*, 20 maravedis; *aposeno*, 12 reales; *banco*, 12 reales; *celosias*, 12 reales, general admission at the main door, one cuarto.

### **Shakespeare and Lope: The Original Manuscripts Issue**

How faithful to Shakespeare’s original manuscripts are the plays that we read and listen to today? We cannot say, because Shakespeare wrote his plays for performances that might last four

to eight days and then he forgot them. The play became the property of the theater manager who could do as he pleased with the manuscripts he purchased.

About sixteen of Shakespeare's plays were first printed in quartos, or books made from printer's sheets folded twice to make four leaves or eight pages size 17cm x 21cm. Not all these quartos were printed under his name. These are known as the "good" quartos. Another group of quartos were pirated editions copied by spectators during a performance or from an actor's copy of the play. These are known as the "bad" quartos.

In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, John Hemmings and Henry Cordell, two of Shakespeare's fellow actors belonging to the King's Men, collected, edited, and printed thirty-six plays in one volume known as the First Folio which is recognized by scholars as the most reliable source available for Shakespeare's plays. A folio is a printer's sheet folded once to make two leaves or four pages size 21cm x 34cm. Three more folios appeared in 1632, 1663, and 1685, and even these are not exactly alike.

Lope's plays suffered much the same fate. He, like Shakespeare, wrote his plays to be performed and sold the originals to the theater manager who did as he pleased with the plays. Lope's plays were also subject to piracy, resulting in many spurious and adulterated texts of his comedies being printed. In 1617, after eight volumes of twelve plays each had been printed without his approval, Lope began to edit and print his own plays. Because many of the original manuscripts were lost, Lope often had to use defective copies. Although a great number of Lope's plays have been lost, we are fortunate that his Maecenas, Don Luis Fernandez de Cordoba y Cardona y Aragon, the Duke of Sessa, was an avid collector of his *autógrafos*, or original manuscripts, and Lope was able to use them for his editions. However, only about four hundred of his alleged fifteen hundred plays have survived.

## **Actors and Actresses**

### ***Actors in Elizabethan England***

In Elizabethan England acting was not considered a profession, and under the city of London's vagrancy laws actors could be arrested for vagrancy. This is one reason that London open air playhouses were built across the Thames River outside of the city's jurisdiction. Sam Schoenbaum comments that in Shakespeare's day, an adult troupe consisted of eight to twelve "sharers," who shared the production costs and divided the profits (52-3). Because there existed such a great demand for new plays and the average run for a new play was four to five days, actors had to memorize a large repertoire and constantly memorize new ones in order to make a living.

Rennert states that during the height of the Spanish *comedias*, approximately 1610 to 1640, the average Spanish company had sixteen to twenty players, besides the *autor*, or theater manager. Because some plays had more roles than the number of actors in a company, actors were often forced to play two or three parts. He adds that two types of companies existed in Spain: companies in which the director paid the actors a salary, and *companies de parte* in which the actors were each paid a share of the company's profits (145-7).

### ***Shakespeare's and Lope's Portrayal of Women***

In Spain, women were allowed to perform at public squares and in *corrales* at an early date. Women performed at the Corpus Christi celebrations and *autos* and *entremeses* very early. Women were performing in Madrid perhaps even before the 1570s, but a license to act in the public theaters in Madrid was not issued until 1587. Married women were allowed to perform with their husbands as part of a company. Quoting from the same license Rennert adds, "They

should not be permitted to appear in the habit or dress of men, and ... 'henceforth they should not be allowed to act attired as men' ” (142).

Women were not allowed to perform on the Elizabethan stage; therefore, women's roles were played by boys who still were beardless, handsome, and whose voices had yet to change. The ancient Greeks had anticipated this practice. In the Greek theater, young men wore larger-than-life masks to play the role of women. Although the convention was established in the Elizabethan stage, it was still cause for some public uneasiness, not to mention the reaction of some Doctors of divinity who viewed the practice as provoking lewd and wanton behavior diverting sexual desires towards the young men dressed in women's attire. Hugo Rennett recounts that in 1629 a French company which included women performed in a farce at Blackfriars. The London audience was so unaccustomed to having women on stage that when the actresses appeared on stage they were pelted with rotten apples (139). Women were not officially allowed on stage until 1660, after the Restoration of Charles II.

Because women's parts were played by men, Shakespeare was able to play off the androgynous aspect of this convention. He has men playing the role of women who are disguised as men. For example, in *The Merchant of Venice* Portia impersonates a doctor of law, Nerissa, a lawyer's clerk; in *As You Like It*, Rosalind and Celia impersonate men; and in *Twelfth Night*, Viola, impersonates a young man. The sexual ambiguity adds another dimension to these characters. The portrayal of an intimate relationship between a man and a woman played by members of the same sex, despite the obvious limitations, was a theatrical illusion at which Shakespeare excelled.

Among Shakespeare's most interesting characters are the strong women portrayed in many of his plays. From the beginning of the theater, strong women captured the attention of male dominated societies. In Greece, women were not seen arguing in the Athenian *agora* or attending the religious Dionysian theater festivals. But, the most memorable women portrayed on the Greek *orchestra* were often very powerful women. Where the Greek poets give us Clytemnestra, Electra, Antigone, Lysistrata, and the foreign sorceress Medea, Shakespeare gives us Lady Macbeth, Cordelia, Goneril, Regan, Volumnia, and Kate.

Lope gives us few strong women that can compare with Shakespeare's, but he does give us Laurencia, who spurs on the men of Fuente Ovejuna to seek revenge for the dishonor brought upon them by the Grand Commander of Calatrava. (*Fuente Ovejuna* 3.117-32)

LAURENCIA: Liebres, cobardes nacistes;	<i>Rabbits, you born cowards;</i>
bárbaros sois, no españoles.	<i>You are barbarians, not Spaniards!</i>
Gallinas, ¡Vuestras mujeres	<i>You hens! You let other men</i>
sufrís que otros hombres gocen!	<i>enjoy your wives!</i>
Poneos ruecas en la cinta.	<i>Strap spindles to your belts.</i>
¿Para que os ceñís estoques?	<i>Why buckle on a sword?</i>
Vive Dios, que he de trazar	<i>God, that I must contrive for</i>
que solas mujeres cobren	<i>women alone to recover</i>
la honra de estos tiranos,	<i>their honor from these tyrants, and</i>
la sangre de estos traidores,	<i>spill these traitors' blood, and then</i>
y que os han de tirar piedras,	<i>cast stones at you,</i>
hilanderas, maricones,	<i>spinners, faggots,</i>
amujerados, cobardes,	<i>sissies, cowards,</i>
y que mañana os adornen	<i>and may you flaunt</i>
nuestras tocas y basquiñas,	<i>our bonnets and skirts,</i>
solimanés y colores.	<i>cosmetics and rouges.</i>

Lope makes Laurencia as ingenious and as daring as any man, a sharp and ironic contrast to women's real position in Spanish society.

## **The Structure of Shakespeare's Plays Compared to Lope de Vega's *Comedias***

### ***Shakespeare's Plays***

The most important concept I have learned from Dr. Berger is that in Shakespeare the text is everything. Actors have to come to grips with Shakespeare's texts if they are to perform him as we believe he was meant to be performed.

Marlon Brando had to struggle with this concept when he performed Mark Antony in *Julius Caesar*. John Houseman describes Brando's first cast-reading as the perfect performance of a "stuttering bumpkin only remotely acquainted with the English language." Rosenthal states, "Brando sought [John] Gielgud's advice, asked him to record Mark Antony's lines, and went back to the tapes. At some point he realized that he had to set aside the method acting techniques which made his performance in *Streetcar [Named Desire]* so raw. The method is all about playing the subtext, the motivation and emotions behind what a character is saying. 'With Shakespeare,' Brando acknowledged, 'text is everything'" (54). And the language is superb.

Shakespeare's plays are divided into five acts. The Folio divided most plays into five acts and some scenes. Later editors added scene divisions to other plays. On stage, the division between scenes was signaled by the exit and entrance of the actors, or a shift in the place of the action, often accompanied by the blare of trumpets announcing the entrance of a king or some high dignitary. Sometimes the end of a scene was punctuated by a rhyming couplet such as Hamlet's "the play's thing, wherein to catch the conscience of the king."

In public performances, little if any scenery was used. In *Henry V*, the Chorus directly advised spectators to use their imagination fill out the play: "And let us ... / On your imaginary forces work." "Into a thousand parts divide one man, / And make imaginary puissance." "For 'tis your thoughts that now must deck our kings." (*Henry 5.1 prologue 18-25*) "eke out our performance with your mind." (*Henry 5.3 prologue 38*). Because there was no need to stop to change scenery, the action in a Shakespearean public performance was continuous and seamless. Similar to the time signature a composer assigns each movement in a symphony to create a musical effect, Shakespeare controlled a play's tempo to create the desired dramatic tension by the length of time he assigned to each scene of a play.

### **The Language of Elizabethan Plays**

Blank verse (unrhymed iambic pentameter) was the playwright's chosen meter during Shakespeare's time. In Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, Faustus speaks these memorable iambic pentameter lines (5.1.96-8):

Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?  
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?  
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

And free verse is used most effectively in Shakespeare's devastating assessment of man's life in *Macbeth* (5.5.19-28):

Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player



The struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.

A shift in meter was used to warn the audience of some change in the action, mood, or character in a play. In general, the common people in Shakespeare's plays spoke in prose. But he also used prose to emphasize a change in a character's mood, or emotion. When Iago tells Othello that Desdemona is being unfaithful, Othello maddened by anger shifts from poetry to prose. His anger and confusion is reflected in his language which is reduced to broken sentences:

OTHELLO: "Lie with her! Lie on her! We say lie on her, when  
they belie her. Lie with her! That's the fulsome. –  
Handkerchief—confessions—handkerchief--To con-  
fess and be hanged for his labour;--first to be hanged,  
and then to confess.--I tremble at it. Nature would not  
invest herself in such shadowing passion without som  
instruction. It is not the words that shake me thus. Pish!  
Noses, ears, and lips.--Is't possible?--Confess--hand-  
kerchief?--O devil!--" (4.1.43-52)

In general, the common people in Shakespeare's plays speak in prose. But Shakespeare often has noblemen speak in prose for contrast and emphasis. In *Julius Caesar*, Brutus speaks to the Roman people in prose whereas Mark Antony speaks to them in verse. To Brutus, they are not worthy to be addressed in verse, and, therefore, he talks down to them.

So prose has various uses in Shakespeare's plays. Often, his prose soars to poetic levels. As McDonald points out, some of these prose speeches gain their power from "patterns of verbal repetition" which make them as "potent as poetry" (191). Witness Shakespeare's prose in *Hamlet*: (2.2.304-308):

What a piece of work

is man! How noble in reason, how infinite in faculties,  
in form and moving how express and admirable, in  
action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a  
god! The beauty of the world, the paragon of animals!

A marvelous speech that evokes Sophocles' choral ode to mankind in *Antigone* "Many are the wonders / Yet none so wondrous as man."

A play's rhythm has to be varied to prevent its becoming monotonous, and Shakespeare used blank verse's versatility to his advantage. Often, a line of blank verse is shared by two or more characters. The actors must be alert on these occasions and maintain the unity of the line. For example, in *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare has Romeo and Mercutio share line (1.4.50-56):

ROMEO	And we mean well in going to this mask; But 'tis not wit to go.
MERCUTIO	Why may I ask?
ROMEO	I dream'd a dream tonight.
MERCUTIO	And so did I.
ROMEO	Well, what was yours?
MERCUTIO	That dreamers often lie.

In *Macbeth*, we have an example of a four-part shared line (2.2.114-19):

MACBETH I have done the deed. Didst thou not hear a noise?  
 LADY MACBETH I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry.  
 Did not you speak?  
 MACBETH When?  
 LADY MACBETH Now.  
 MACBETH As I descended?  
 LADY MACBETH Ay.  
 MACBETH Hark!  
 Who lies in the second chamber?

Another poetic device that is revived by Elizabethan playwrights is *stichomythia*, or line-by-line dialogue, as in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1.4.77-82):

LORENZO Sister, what means this melancholy walk?  
 BEL-IMPERIA That for a while I wish no company.  
 LORENZA But here the prince is come to visit you.  
 BEL-IMPERIA That argues that he lives in liberty.  
 BALTHAZAR No, madam, but in pleasing servitude.  
 BEL-IMPERIA Your prison then belike is your concern.

It is used masterfully by Shakespeare in *Hamlet* during Hamlet's exchange with Gertrude (3.4.10-17):

HAMLET Now, mother, what's the matter?  
 QUEEN Hamlet, thou hast thy father much offended.  
 HAMLET Mother, you have my father much offended.  
 QUEEN Come, come, you answer with an idle tongue.  
 HAMLET Go, go, you question with a wicked tongue.

This device was also called *altercation* by the Romans, which was a legal term for rapid-fire short questions and answer in the courts.

In a *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare has the fairies and Puck speak mostly in tetrameters, or lines of four metrical feet:

PUCK Through the forests I have gone,  
 But Athenians found I none,  
 On whose eyes I might approve  
 This flower's force in stirring love,  
 Night and silence--Who is there?  
 Weeds of Athens he doth wear  
 This is he, my master said,  
 Despised the Athenian maid;  
 And here the maiden, sleeping sound,  
 On the dank and dirty ground. (2.2.66-75)

Elizabethans loved wordplay, and Shakespeare was a master at word play. Rhetorical forms had great meaning during the Renaissance and were used effectively to indulge in word games. Elizabethans thoroughly enjoyed the clever use of language through puns, elaborate language, and double-meanings. McDonald opines that the "prominence of the pun demonstrates that words, like the human actions they describe, are subject to multiple interpretations" (189). Shakespeare was a master at ambiguity using different types of puns (i.e. homonym, paronomasia, agnomination, antanmaclasis, syllepsis, etc.) These are all figures in which one meaning is displaced by another giving words different levels and shades of meanings, adding

depth to his arguments and characters. King Lear begins with a homonym –*conceive* has the same spelling and pronunciation but a different meaning– which demonstrates Shakespeare’s love of puns:

GLOUCESTER...I have so often blushed to acknowledge  
him that now I am brazed to’t  
KENT I cannot conceive you.  
GLOUCESTER Sir, this young fellow’s mother could;  
whereupon she grew round-wombed, and had in  
deed, sir, a son for her cradle ere she had a hus-  
band for her bed. Do you smell a fault? (1.1.10-16)

Shakespeare’s puns extend to other languages. In *Henry V*, the dialogue between Princess Katherine and Lady Alice is delightful, and we can imagine the demand it makes on the two male actors playing the feminine roles.

KATHERINE Ainsi dis-je; de elbow, de nick, et de sin. Comment  
appelez-vous le pied et la robe?  
ALICE De foot, madame; et de coun.  
KATHERINE De foot et de coun! O Seigneur Dieu! ce sont mots  
de son mauvais, corruptible, gros, et impudique, et non  
pour les dammes d’honneur d’user: je ne voudrais  
pronocer ces mots devant les seigneurs de France  
pour tout le monde. Foh! le fout et le coun! (3.4.47-52)

Princess Katherine’s pronunciation of the English words *gown* and *foot* are examples of paronomasia, or puns, on the French words *con* and *foutre*. In *Henry VI Part 2*, he again puns in French when Jack Cade refers to the Dauphine of France as “Monsieur Basimecu” (4.7.26).

In 1574, the Crown established the Master of Revels whose job was to censor plays having offensive political or religious doctrine. Actors recited or gave the Master of Revels a written copy of the play they intended to perform for his authorization. The deposition scene in *Richard II* was not allowed on stage during the last part of Elizabeth’s reign because it questioned the institution of the monarchy. In 1606, after the reign of Elizabeth, the Act to Restrain Abuse on Stage was passed. It forbade profanity or the “use of the holy name of God or of Jesus Christ, or of the Holy Ghoste or of the Trinitie.” As Hughes points out, as a result there was a marked increase in the use of pagan deities” and of ‘minced oaths,’ such as ‘*sblood*, ‘*slid*, ‘*zounds*, and euphemism such as *fouter*, *footer*, and *footling* (106).

Some critics argue that the coarse side of Shakespeare played to the groundlings. In a society where men and women spoke freely of copulation and other sexual matters, it seems ridiculous to believe that only the common people enjoyed a dirty joke, especially one couched in puns and innuendo. Attacks against the coarser side of Shakespeare also seem off target because Shakespeare had an intellectual curiosity that embraced all aspects of life, including sex.

For more on these and other coarse puns see Eric Partridge’s *Shakespeare’s Bawdy*.

The poetic devices most used in Shakespeare are similes and metaphors, although he uses the entire gamut of rhetorical devices to enliven his verse. In Brutus’ speech alone Shakespeare uses the following rhetorical devices: anaphora, antithesis, and parallelism.

In *Romeo and Juliet* he piles on the oxymorons (1.1.181-185):

ROMEO Why then, o brawling love, o loving hate,  
O anything of nothing first create!  
O heavy lightness, serious vanity,

Misshapen chaos of well-seeming forms,  
Feather of lead, bright smoke, cold fire, sick health.

Shakespeare, like his contemporaries Marlowe and Kyd, uses theatrical devices, such as natural, supernatural, and personal forces, to drive his plots. In *King Lear*, Shakespeare uses the storm scene to create the chaos from whence Lear will emerge stripped down to man's essence, a "poor, bare forked animal." Unnatural occurrences in Nature are found in *Hamlet* when Horatio describes Nature's portents before Caesar's assassination (1.1.121-24): "A stars with trains of fire and dews of blood, / disasters in the sun, and the moist star, / Upon whose influence Neptune's empire stands, / Was sick almost to doomsday, with eclipse." Supernatural forces are at work in the appearance the ghost of Banquo in *Macbeth*, Caesar in *Julius Caesar*, Richard's victims in *Richard III*, and old King Hamlet in *Hamlet*. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* opens with the Ghost of Andrea accompanied by a personification of Revenge. The witches in *Macbeth* are also used to drive the plot and to fill the audience with fear and premonitions. Samuel Johnson writes that in Shakespeare's time, the doctrine of witchcraft was law and it was impolite, if not criminal, to doubt it (158). Common people believed in premonitions, witches, ghosts, and dreams, which allowed Shakespeare to base *Macbeth* and *Hamlet* on the supernatural. Without the appearance of King Hamlet's ghost we have no plot in *Hamlet*. The "murder most foul" would have become a cold case.

Shakespeare uses these devices effectively to build up tension and to forewarn the audience of an impending disaster. In *Julius Caesar*, "the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes." Calpurnia tells Caesar that the watch reports:

A lioness whelped in the streets;  
And graves have yawned, and yielded up their dead:  
Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;  
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets. (2.3.18-25)

She also dreamed that she saw Caesar's statue "Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts/Did run pure blood: and many lusty Romans/Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it" (2.2.84-87). The Soothsayer warns Caesar to beware the Ides of March, the augurers "would not have him stir forth today," and Artemidorus spells out the conspirators' plot against him. Was anyone ever more forewarned? The mighty Caesar's response is such that if it were not Caesar speaking we would mistake him for a *miles gloriosus*: "Cowards die many times, etc" and "...danger knows full well / That Caesar is more dangerous than he." He pronounces every man's fate: "...death, a necessary end / Will come when it will come" (2.3.38-39).

In *King Lear*, Gloucester sees impending doom in heaven's portents:

GLOUCESTER These late eclipses in the sun and moon  
portend no good to us. Though the wisdom of Nature  
can reason it thus and thus, yet Nature  
finds itself scourged by the sequent effects. Love  
cools, friendship falls off, brother divide. In  
cities mutinies, in countries, discord; in palaces,  
treason; and the bond cracked 'twixt son and father. (1.2.110-119)

The commoners' belief in the supernatural was real. A story told during that time was that at a performance of Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus*, a circle of actors playing devils and Faustus speaking

incantations, the circle of devils ran to each other's ear and whispered something. All the performers ran off stage and the audience fled for the exit because there was reportedly one devil too many amongst the devils on stage (Schoenbaum 53). The Elizabethans, indeed, had a very lively imagination.

Shakespeare's England, however, was undergoing great changes. Elizabethan England was a period of prosperity and wealth. Scientific and geographical discoveries were undermining antiquated beliefs. In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear and Gloucester cling to the medieval belief in omens, predictions, stars, and augury to predict man's fate.

Unlike the Greek tragic hero whose destiny is bound to *Ἀνάγκη*, or Necessity, the Elizabethans increasingly take more responsibility for their destiny. In *King Lear*, Edmund scoffs at the notion blaming the stars and the moon for our faults:

EDMUND: This is the excellent foppery of the world,  
that when we are sick in fortune, often the surfeits  
of our own behavior, we make guilty of our dis-  
asters the sun, the moon, the stars; as if we were  
villains on necessity; fools by heavenly compul-  
sion; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical  
predominance; drunkards, liars, and adulterers by  
an enforced obedience of planetary influence; and  
all that we are evil in, by a divine thrusting on. (1.2.128-136)

And later in the play (5.3.31-2) Edmund adds: "...know this, that men are / As the time is..."

The adventurous spirit of Renaissance man is manifested in his search for knowledge through the discovery and translation of classical texts, the exploration of new continents, and scientific discoveries that shook the foundation of medieval beliefs, was a subject fit to be argued on the stage. Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* explores man's limits regarding his acquisition of knowledge and the price he is willing to pay to acquire such knowledge.

Fate, or Fortune, or Destiny, however, continued to be a useful theatrical device to build tension and forewarn the audience of pending disaster.

### **Formal and Informal Form of Address: Thou and You**

During the Renaissance, Elizabethans maintained a formal and informal form for the second person address similar to the Spanish *tú* and *usted*. "You" and its objective case "ye" were the formal form of address used when speaking to someone who was socially superior, or a parent, to show respect. "Thou" and its objective case "thee," on the other hand, were the informal or familiar form used to address friends, family members, social inferiors (servants, common people) children, or loved ones. Shakespeare sometimes used this difference for dramatic effect. In *Hamlet*, when Queen Gertrude reproves her son: "Hamlet, *thou* hast thy father much offended" he quickly replies: "Mother, *you* have my father much offended" (3.4.79-80). Here, Hamlet's use of "you" is used to show how distant Hamlet has become from Gertrude.

Lope uses the familiar *tú* and the formal *vos* in the same way. In *La dama boba*, Laurencio and Liceo address each other using the *tú* form until the two friend become rivals and face each other in a duel, then Lope switches to the *vos* form to show the distance between the two adversaries. Laurencio asks: "Antes, Liceo, de sacar la espada, / quiero saber la causa que *os* obliga." "*Liceo, before we draw our swords / I want to know the reason.*" Once their friendship is renewed, he reverts to the *tú* form.

## Stage Costumes

What Shakespeare's plays lacked in scenery was compensated by the extravagant costumes worn by the actors. Clothes were very expensive in Elizabethan England, and these were often donated by rich patrons or bought by the acting company. An extensive wardrobe selection was part of a theater company's success. The spectators expected to be pleased by the actor's costume which was typically Elizabethan. Shakespeare and his contemporaries paid little or no attention to historically accurate costumes. *Julius Caesar*, *Tamburlaine*, *Coriolanus*, *Titus Andronicus* appeared in the English costume then in vogue. As late as the Eighteenth Century, actor David Garrick played *Macbeth* wearing a powdered wig and knee-breeches.

## Lope de Vega's Plays

In 1609, Lope de Vega wrote a poem titled *Arte Nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo* (The New Art of Writing Comedies in Our Time) addressed to the Academy of Madrid in which he defined the standard for the new plays, or *comedias*. The three-act play took precedence over the four- or five-act plays, which some competing authors, among them Cervantes, favored. Also, the play was to be written in verse. (Hence, the definition of a Spanish *comedia* as a play written in three acts (*jornadas*) and in verse). Lope makes the division into three acts definitive. The first act presents the exposition or introduction of the subject (*En el primer acto ponga el caso*); the second act presents the complication or building of events (*enlace los sucesos*); and the third act presents the dénouement, but Lope warns, not before the middle of the third act (*hasta el medio del tercer / apenas juzgue nadie en lo que para...*) so no one will guess how it ends – because they will head for the exits.

Lope's plays are divided into three acts. Scene divisions were added by later editors. Changes in scenes were indicated by the actors' dialogues referring to a different location, by the opening of a curtain at the back of the stage, and less frequently, by the author's stage directions. Because the Spanish Golden Age public theater, like its Elizabethan counterpart, did not usually have scenery changes (the stage was mostly bare), the Spanish theatergoers of that time had the vivacity of spirit to compensate through their own imagination for the lack of scenery. Changes, however, from outdoor to indoor scenes were sometimes ambivalent. How far the audience could stretch its imagination is evident in a scene in Lope's *The Knight of Olmedo*, which takes place at night, where Don Alonso tells his servant Tello to bring along the cape he has found because "there are lights in the windows / *que hay luces en las ventanas*," although the play was being performed in broad daylight (I. 720).

## The Language of Lope de Vega

Because Spanish plays are written in verse, before we can engage in Lope's plays, we must learn the conventions of Spanish poetry. The two most important elements in Spanish versification are the number of syllables in a line and the placement of the accent or stress. In Spanish, it is not the same to count grammatical syllables as it is to count poetical syllables, because there are certain phenomena that affect the poetical syllabic count. Spanish verse lines have three types of endings: *llano*, *agudo*, and *esdrújulo*.

In the *verso llano*, the stress falls on the next-to-the-last syllable. Thus, the number of grammatical syllables equals the number of poetical syllables. For example, in *Fuente Ovejuna* (3.650-54):

MAESTRE	
Rodrigo Tellez Girón,	Ro-dri-go Te-llez Gi-rón, (7+1) = 8
que loaros no acaba,	que lo-a-ros no a-ca-ba 8
maestre de Calatrava,	ma-es-tre de Ca-la-tra-va 8
os pide, humilde, perdón	os pi-de hu-mil-de per-dón (7+1) = 8

The first and last lines in the above octosyllables are in *verso agudo*. They contain one less poetical syllable than grammatical syllables. In the *verso agudo*, the stress falls on the last syllable. Because the last syllable is pronounced with greater intensity and requires more time, one adds an additional syllable.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (7 + 1) = 8

Ro - dri - go Te - llez Gi - rón

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 (7 + 1) = 8

os pi - de hu - mil - de per - dón

In the second and third lines, Lope uses the *verso llano* containing eight poetical syllables and eight grammatical syllables.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

que lo-a - ros no a - ca - ba 8

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

ma - es - tre de Ca - la - tra - va 8

The last type of verse ending is the *verso esdrújulo* in which the stress falls on the third-to-last syllable:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 (12-1) = 11

Bue - no es que pre - su - mien - do de te - ó - lo - gos

In the *verso esdrújulo*, one less syllable is counted because the stress falls on the third-to-last-syllable, and the second-to-last syllable is pronounced more rapidly. For this reason, one syllable is suppressed. The *verso esdrújulo* has one less poetical syllable than the number of grammatical syllables. The *verso esdrújulo* above has twelve grammatical syllables and eleven poetical syllables.

Lope writes that the author must prudently fit the verses to the subjects being treated (*Acomode los versos con prudencia / a los sujetos que va tratando*). He suggests that *décimas* should be used for love complaints, *sonnets* for soliloquies, *romances* to report events, *tercets* for serious matters, and *redondillas* for love matters. The *romance* initially used to relate events that occurred off stage was used with greater frequency and its use became more diverse until it eventually became the predominant meter, above all in dynamic dialogues that thrust the action ahead instead of merely commenting on it (*Arte Nuevo*).

Marín believes that the adaptation of the narrative romance into dramatic dialogue is one of Lope's most notable innovations (22).

Blanche points out that Spanish verse combined the meter adopted from the Italian Renaissance with its own traditional octosyllabic meter to create two distinct levels of style. What English did with verse and prose, Spanish did with the hendecasyllabic and the octosyllabic verse; the former used for more serious, elevated scenes and characters; the latter for plain, direct, ordinary dialogue equivalent to prose (23).

Spanish *romances*, or ballads, are poetical compositions formed by an undetermined number of octosyllabic verses rhyming in assonance (vocalic rhyme) in the even numbered lines and without rhyme in the odd numbered lines (Ø a Ø a Ø a Ø a Ø a). The *romance* was often used to describe events that occurred off stage. The following description of Doña Inez rhymes in assonance in the final word of alternate lines consisting of an *i-a* pattern: 'Medina,' 'amanecía,' 'liga,' 'tendidas' ... (El caballero de Medina 1.64-75):

BARTOLO

Por la tarde salió Inés	Ø	<i>In the afternoon, Inés</i>
a la feria de Medina	i-a	<i>set off for the fair in Medina</i>
tan hermosa, que la gente	Ø	<i>so dazzling was her beauty,</i>
pensaba que amanecía:	ía	<i>it seemed to dawn once more</i>
rizado el pelo en lazos	Ø	<i>with ribbons in her hair</i>
que quiso encubrir la liga	i-a	<i>which sought to hide their trap</i>
porque mal caerán la almas	Ø	<i>for if their nets were seen</i>
si ven las redes tendidas.	i-a	<i>not a soul would be caught.</i>
Los ojos, a lo valiente	Ø	<i>Her eyes, boldly moved</i>
iban perdonando vidas	i-a	<i>forward sparing lives</i>
aunque dicen los que deja	Ø	<i>but those whose lives were spared</i>
que es dichoso a quien quita,	i-a	<i>envied those whose lives they took.</i>

Line division known as shared lines common to Shakespeare are also common in Lope's plays. An example of octosyllabic shared lines occurs in "The Stupid Lady / *La dama boba*" (1.5.325-335):

RUFINO:	Estas letras son también	<i>These are also letters</i>
FINEA:	¿Tantas hay?	<i>Are there so many?</i>
RUFINO	Veintitrés son.	<i>There are twenty-three.</i>
FINEA	Ara ... vaya de lición;	<i>Now ... what a lesson;</i>
	que yo lo diré muy bien.	<i>I shall learn it well.</i>
RUFINO	¿Qué es esta?	<i>What's this one?</i>
FINEA	¿Aquesta?... No sé.	<i>That one? I don't know.</i>
RUFINO	¿Y esta?	<i>And this one?</i>
FINEA	No sé qué responda.	<i>I don't know what to say.</i>
RUFINO	¿Y esta?	<i>And this one?</i>
FINEA	¿Cuál? ¿Esta redonda?	<i>Which one? This round one?</i>
	¡Letra!	<i>Letter!</i>
RUFINO	¡Bien!	<i>Good!</i>
FINEA	Luego, ¿acerté?	<i>Then, I was right?</i>
RUFINO	¡Linda bestia!	<i>Fine beast you are!</i>
FINEA	¡así, así!	<i>Yes! Yes!</i>
	Bestia, ¡por Dios!, se llamaba;	<i>Beast, that what it's called, by God!</i>
	pero no se me acordaba.	<i>But, I couldn't remember.</i>

Some shared lines are more complicated. For example, in *Peribañez y el Comendador de Ocaña* (1.379-382), the only solution the actor's can give to maintain the octosyllabic verse in the second instance of shared lines is by using a literary device called *sineresis* that allows two vowels to sound as one. This can only be achieved if the actor speaking the second part of the shared line picks up immediately after the first part of the shared line is spoken.

LUJÁN

1	2	3	
¿	Qué	sien – tes?	<i>What are you feeling?</i>

COMENDADOR

		4	5	6	7	8	
		un	gran	de – se – o			<i>a great desire</i>
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
que	cuan – do	en – tré	no	te – ní – a.			<i>that I didn't have when I came in.</i>



LUJÁN

1 2 3 4  
No lo en – tien – do

*I don't understand you*

COMENDADOR

4 5 6 7 8  
Im – por – ta po – co.

*It's not important.*

As a result we have the following sineresis occurring in a shared line: en-tien-do Im – por – ta.

### Honor and Love in Lope's Plays

As in Shakespeare's plays, in Lope's *comedias* "the text is everything." There is no need to read between the lines to discover a Lope de Vega character's motivation. In Lope's plays, the two main themes are honor and love.

In his *New Art for Writing Comedies* Lope de Vega writes, "Affairs of honor are the best/because they deeply move everyone / *Los casos de la honra son los mejores / porque muevem con fuerza a toda la gente.*" The Spanish honor code as reflected in the Golden Age theater is extremely complex. There are two concepts of honor. One is an honor based on the one's ethics and works; the other, on the perception others have of one, known popularly in Spanish as *el que dirán*. Another aspect of the code of honor is *limpieza de sangre*, or uncontaminated blood. Lope reflects the popular Spanish opinion that peasants were as honorable as the nobility because of their uncontaminated blood, whereas, the nobility had married Jews and Moors, and their *limpieza de sangre* was often questionable.

At the time, however, the medieval concept that honor was the prerogative of the nobility was prevalent. Lope's *Fuente Ovejuna*, a play in which an entire town takes responsibility for the murder of a wicked Commander, challenges this prerogative. The Commander sarcastically asks the town Alderman: "You claim you have honor? / What next, that you are knights of Calatrava! / *¿Vosotros honor tenéis? / ¡Qué frailes de Calatrava!*" The Commander's behavior throughout the play is unworthy of a nobleman and is in sharp contrast with the conduct of the common people of Fuente Ovejuna, whom the Commander considers devoid of honor. Forced to revolt against the tyrannical Commander, the whole town participates in his murder. Lope gives his audience a graphic description of his murder: "In fact, their anger/ was so great/ that the largest slices left of him/ were his ears." When asked, under torture, who killed the Commander? all the villagers answer "Fuente Ovejuna did." The people put their faith in Divine Justice and in God's representative on earth – the King – to re-establish order. In all of Lope's plays the King is portrayed positively as the dispenser of justice and bringer of peace. He sides with the people, reflecting the reality of Spain's transition toward a strong centralized state through the efforts of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella to reduce the power of the medieval lords. In *Fuente Ovejuna*, as in other plays, the King sides with the people.

Lope had previously dealt with the theme of honor in *Peribañez and the Commander of Ocaña*. As I stated before, honor was an aristocratic concept. Lope, however, shared his contemporary Calderón de la Barca's idea that honor was the "patrimony of the soul," and, therefore, common both to the nobility and the peasantry. In *Peribañez*, the Commander of Ocaña falls madly in love with Peribañez' wife, Casilda. Overcome by his obsession for Casilda, he tries to force himself upon her. Peribañez returns in time to prevent the dishonor and stabs the Commander. The Commander of Ocaña is not the monster portrayed in *Fuente Ovejuna*. The mortally wounded Commander of Ocaña declares himself guilty, justifies Peribañez' action, and forgives him. Brought before the King, Peribañez starts to defend himself as follows: (3.27.946-49):

Soy un hombre

*I am a man, who*

aunque de villana casta,  
limpio de sangre, y jamás  
de hebreo y mora manchada

*though of common lineage,  
has untainted blood, never  
tainted by Jewish or Moorish blood*

To which the King exclaims:

¡Cosa estraña!  
¡Que un Labrador tan humilde  
estime tanto su fama!

*How strange!  
that such an lowly peasant  
should his honor so esteem!*

Once again, the King Enrique the Third of Castile, known as the Enrique the Just, sides with the peasant against the noble class. This is to be a recurrent theme in Lope's *comedias*. A powerful nobleman is killed by a peasant to restore his honor. After the facts are revealed, the King condemns the nobleman's actions and forgives the peasant.

Love, along with its corollaries honor and revenge, is also a strong motivating force in Lope's plays. In *The Knight from Olmedo*, Don Alonso falls in love at first sight with Doña Inez, but Inez has been promised to Don Rodrigo, whom she does not love. Don Alonso contracts Fabia as his go-between and soon he and Doña Inez are expressing their love for each other.

Almost the entire first act of *The Knight of Olmedo* takes place before Doña Inez's window. After Don Rodrigo places his hand on the iron grating Inez's hands have touched, he exclaims: "Oh bars made soft by my tears/Who would believe/An angel could be so hard/on one who can melt the hardest iron! / ¡O rejas, enternecidas / de mi llanto, quien pensara / que un ángel endureciera / quien vuestros hierros ablanda!" (2.640-44). The windows that faced the street were covered with iron gratings at which stood the lovers and serenaders so often mentioned in the literature of the epoch, and even today in contemporary plays like Federico García Lorca's *La casa de Bernarda Alba*, where Adela entices Pepe by standing at the window "almost nude, with the lights on and the window open." The custom was so widespread that "comer hierro," or "iron eating" was the vernacular for "courting" (Crow 176).

Don Rodrigo discovers Don Alonso is his rival. While fighting a bull on horseback with a lance, Don Rodrigo is thrown from his horse and is rescued by Don Alonso. Don Rodrigo feels he has been humiliated in front of the townspeople and dishonored by Doña Inez for having rejected him. He is driven to kill Don Alonso by the "greatest monster/*el mayor monstruo*," jealousy. He clearly states his intention, saying: "Today my jealousy and his life will end / *Hoy tendrán fin mis celos y su vida*." As in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, Don Alonso receives many warnings of his impending murder: his servant, Tello, warns him not to return to Olmedo that night, a band of traveling musicians sings a ballad foretelling the fate of The Knight From Olmedo, and a ghost warns him not to continue on the road to Olmedo moments before he is killed. Because Lope wrote to please his audience, tragic endings are uncommon in his plays. *The Knight* is one of the few with a tragic ending.

Lope's main concern was "entertaining the tastes" of his public; therefore, his characters are not drawn with the profundity that achieves great universal appeal. Lope produced no Hamlet. His characters are built on professions or ways of life – kings, mayors, nobles, knights, soldiers, and peasants. They are either good or bad. They may lack the psychological depth of a Hamlet, Othello, Lear, or Iago (they can usually be described in a few sentences), but Lope's characters are infused with enormous vitality.

Spanish plays, nevertheless, created some of most interesting characters in literature.

Lope is responsible for introducing the *gracioso* to the theater. As an example, Tello is Don Alonso's servant and trusted confidant whose common sense serves as a foil to his master. The

*gracioso* is also the source of humor, often crude, in Spanish plays. In *The Trickster of Seville*, Tirso de Molina creates Don Juan, a personification of raw, sexual energy, who will later appear in Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*, José Zorilla's *Don Juan Tenorio*, and Lord Byron's *Don Juan*. The ubiquitous go-between in many romantic comedies appears in Lope's *El Caballero de Olmedo* in the person of Fabia, who is modeled after the Fernando de Roja's *Celestina*. Lope pays homage to his predecessor by having Don Alonso refer to himself as Calixto calling on Melibea. His servant, Tello, adds, "Now all we need is old *Celestina*."

The love for wordplay that Elizabethans felt was shared by the Spaniards. Lope delights his audience with puns and other wordplay.

In *La dama boba* we have this exchange between the Finea and Nisa: (3.8.2707-14):

NISA	¿El <i>alma</i> piensas quitarme en quién el <i>alma</i> tenía? Dame el <i>alma</i> que solía traidora hermana, animarme. Mucho debes saber pues, el <i>alma</i> me <i>desalmas</i> .	<i>You mean to take my soul from the owner of my soul? Return to me, treasonous sister, the soul that would animate me. You should well know you bare my soul's soul.</i>
FINEA	Todos me piden sus <i>almas</i> : <i>almario</i> debo ser.	<i>All of you ask for your souls: I must be a soulboard.</i>

The word *alma*, its derivative *desalmar*, and *animarme* which contains the Latin *anima* from which the word Spanish *alma* evolved, appears seven times in eight lines, ending with *almario*, an invented word that puns on *armario*, which means a cupboard or wardrobe. The 1726 edition of the Academia Real Española dictionary states that *armario* was also pronounced *almario*, a common pronunciation mistake changing *r* to *l* still prevalent in some Spanish speaking areas, e.g. Puerto Rico. Obviously, the meaning Lope intends for *almario* is a place where souls are stored.

Lope's plays are driven by dynamism, vitality, complications, relentless action, and brilliant improvisation. There is no intent to moralize, as is often prevalent in other times and authors. One of the most notable characteristics of his plays is spontaneity owing to his enormous ability to improvise. This, also, explains Lope's great productivity. Lope boasts: "Y en más de ciento, en horas veinticuatro / pasaron de las musas al teatro / *And more than one hundred of them, in twenty-four hour / went straight from the muses to the stage*" (Blanche XXI). As Gerald Brenan so aptly states: "Spanish drama could never have been anything but what Lope made it – a rapid, improvised affair of action and lyric poetry."

### **Conclusion: The English Character in Elizabethan Drama and the Spanish Character in Lope de Vega's Plays**

This unit describes two contemporary writers who rose to the pinnacle of their professions and along the way created the English and the Spanish national theaters. Shakespeare and Lope de Vega share many things in common, but it is their differences that make Shakespeare's plays English and Lope's *comedias* Spanish.

Both playwrights display their nationalistic spirit throughout their plays, expressing the collective values and traditions of their respective nations, and respect for the monarchy. Shakespeare expresses the Englishman's wit; ideas in his plays often have priority over the dramatic and spectacle aspect. Shakespeare's characters are psychologically complex, well-rounded characters. If Shakespeare is the brightest, wittiest, most idealistic of the Elizabethan poets, he is also the most cynical. Although Shakespeare's characters are typical Elizabethan Englishmen in thought and action, his plays have gained a universal appeal that has been denied

to Lope de Vega. As I stated at the beginning of this unit, in Spain, Shakespeare is staged more often than Lope, Tirso, and Calderón put together. And outside of Spain, Lope is hardly ever staged.

As Lope Blanche suggests, Lope's theater is Spanish not merely because he uses Spanish historical themes in his *comedias*, but because he infuses all his materials, no matter how remote or exotic, with the way Seventeenth Century Spaniards thought, felt, spoke, and acted. Their ideals, prejudices, concept of life are identical to those of Lope and his people (XXI).

Lope's full identification with the Spanish people, which no other Spanish writer was able to reach, made him the most popular playwright of the Spanish Golden Age. He shaped a new theater that responded to the taste and problems of the Renaissance man. He became the instrument of his people; a people filled with vitality, passion and creative power; an impulsive, spontaneous people in love with its traditions. The theater Lope offered was energetic, filled with life and actuality that fit the needs of his people.

Lope's plays exalt traditional Spanish values like the Catholic faith, a strong concept of honor, nationalistic pride, and respect for the monarchy. His plays include popular Spanish music, ballads, and dances to create a real, authentic, celebration that is the Spanish national theater. He reflects the Spanish people's feeling regarding honor, uncontaminated blood, and women. The fact that Lope's plays have suffered at the hands of inadequate translators for so long, and the strong nationalistic spirit, with its exotic mixture of Visigoth, Jewish, and Moorish cultures which pervades each play, makes Lope's plays so typically Spanish that they have failed to gain universal acceptance or to conquer an audience outside of Spain.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson Plan One: Introductory Essay/Students Will Write a Short Biographical Essay on the Lives of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega**

#### ***Objectives***

The essays will be expected to meet the following objectives based on Language Other Than English (LOTE): Read, interpret, and write a comprehensive essay on the lives of the two authors.

#### ***Materials and Resources***

Students will need access to the Internet and reference books to research the playwrights' lives and the Modern Language Association's (MLA) style sheet for the proper presentation of their essay.

### **Lesson Plan Two: Learning to Scan English and Spanish Verse/Reading Selections from Shakespeare's and Lope's Play**

#### ***Objectives***

The student will learn to scan English verse as present in Shakespeare's plays and Spanish verse in Lope de Vega's plays.

#### ***Materials and Resources***

Students will receive excerpts from plays written by Shakespeare and Lope de Vega. They will apply skills learned in class regarding the scansion of English and Spanish verse. Students will need access to the Internet and reference books to complete the list of definitions needed for identifying the different kinds of verse.

### **Lesson Plan Three: Using Selections from Shakespeare and Lope to Illustrate Poetic Devices**

#### ***Objectives***

The student will receive a list of poetic devices used by Shakespeare and Lope de Vega and will use Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Lope's *Fuente Ovejuna* to provide examples of each device.

#### ***Materials and Resources***

The student will receive a list of poetic devices used by the two playwrights. They will define each poetical device and give examples from the text of *Hamlet* and *Fuente Ovejuna* to illustrate the device employed. Define: *free verse, meter, iambic pentameter, trochaic, octosyllabic verse, romance, shared line, male rhyme, feminine rhyme, pun, oxymoron, stichomythia, rhyming couplet, tercets, assonance rhyme, simile, metaphor, tetrameter, verso llano, verso agudo, verso esdrújulo, syneresis, diaeresis, hiatus, etc.*

### **Lesson Plan Four: Performance of Several Chosen Scenes from *Hamlet* and *Fuente Ovejuna***

#### ***Objective***

Students will engage in acting out scenes from *Hamlet* and from *Fuente Ovejuna*. They are to apply the tools learned in class regarding the meter, shared lines, etc.

#### ***Material and Resources***

Students may use a bare minimum of set decorations to suggest place; for example, a tree to suggest the outdoors or a forest; a dressed up chair to suggest a throne. The kings, Claudius and Ferdinand of Aragon, may wear a paper crown.

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **Unit Objectives**

From the Languages Other Than English (LOTE) Vertical Alignment Matrix Level 4 High School.

#### ***Reading***

The student is expected to:

- 1.08 - Read and demonstrate comprehension of authentic reading materials.
- 1.09 -Read selected vocabulary words and sentences aloud in chorus and individually.
- 1.10 -Interpret and demonstrate comprehension of written language, including literature, on a variety of topics.
- 1.11 - Write compositions and essays in the target language

#### ***Strand Connection***

The student is expected to:

- 3.01 - Make connections with CORE subjects through appropriate grade level content.
- 4.01 - Compare and contrast cultural practices form one culture to another culture.
- 4.02 - Use cognates to compare languages using appropriate level vocabulary.
- 4.03 - Compare and contrast on language with another language.
- 4.04 - Recognize idioms and other unique features of the target language.

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