

Sor Juana and Her *Sainete segundo*: The Creation of a Metatheatrical Encounter on the New World Stage

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The works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648?-1695) grace Spanish America's colonial period and epitomize Baroque expression in the Indies. Ranging from the intellectually challenging philosophical *Primero sueño* to the delightfully humorous satirical *Ovillejos*, her extensive literary production documents prominent people and events of the viceregal era and unveils the personal history of love, loss, and tribulation of a gifted seventeenth-century woman living in New Spain. Although best known for her poetry, Sor Juana was the most outstanding playwright writing in Spain's American colonies, and she demonstrated a marked penchant for the dramatic throughout her life. From the early age of about eight, when she won her first literary prize for a *loa* she had written, to the years she spent at court and in the convent, she wrote highly entertaining and thought-provoking plays and dramatic poetry and witnessed the remarkable success of these works with their performance throughout the Viceroyalty. As lady-in-waiting to the vicereine, she had initially been intrigued by the pageantry of Mexico City's aristocracy, and she devised *sainetes* and *comedias* for the amusement of the socially prominent. Later, as a Hieronymite nun, she composed popular *villancicos* and *autos sacramentales* to render service to the Church and to elude momentarily the worldliness that surrounded her.¹

As brilliant as Sor Juana was, however, she was never able to achieve complete and open expression of herself because the atmosphere in which she lived was mired in tradition, as attitudes stemming from patriarchy and hegemony overshadowed her intellectual and artistic ingenuity. During her youth she was confined to her grandfather's library when women were barred from the university, and in later years she was relegated to a conventual life, the only viable alternative for a single woman wishing to live outside the protection of the family unit. Sor Juana and her female contemporaries were also generally limited to autobiography and correspondence, in terms of the

forms of written discourse they could choose, and her insistence upon writing a variety of prose and poetry, not to mention dramatic works to be performed publicly, was unprecedented and at times threatening to rival male writers. Men virtually controlled the world of the theatre and presided not only over the creation of dramatic works but determined the success of their representation as well, as predominantly male audiences imposed masculine tastes upon the theatregoing public. In addition to these obstacles, the Church that had provided Sor Juana with the tangible resources for study and the time to contemplate and write would ironically, on the advice of male members of the clergy, criticize her persistence in composing secular works, the ultimate blow for one of New Spain's leading intellectuals who had been driven her entire life by the desire to be creative.

As a Creole Sor Juana, like others of Spanish descent born in the New World, felt the yoke of colonialism and regarded it as an obstacle to self-expression. While many of her fellow citizens opposed the imposition of Peninsular ideology on more general grounds because it impeded a sense of community in the region and the formulation of a truly American identity, Sor Juana focused her attention directly upon the effects it had upon art and rhetoric. It was this pressing issue, consequently, that led her to confront a very visible example of its encroachment that had precipitated the crisis facing the performing arts in the New World.

The theatre in colonial Spanish America had an auspicious beginning. Early dramatizations lessened the cultural shock created by the encounter of the New World with the Old and, moreover, often embodied the very process of transculturation by blending native American spectacle with Iberian dramaturgy. Amerindian populations, whose rich heritage included pre-Columbian enactments, anxiously gathered to watch Europeans unfold a crucial aspect of their civilization through the presentation of *autos*, or short religious plays, that had been purposefully rewritten by zealous Catholic friars to encompass their new surroundings.² With multitudinous audiences and an emerging group of budding playwrights among the clergy, prospects for the continued development and growth of the theatre seemed bright. Performances were highly accessible to the population at large, and the tendency to make them more elaborate and to include secular issues created an increased openness of expression. Fearing that what had been viewed as an effective instrument of hegemony could become a forum for dissent, however, royal and ecclesiastical officials shrouded public representation in controversy and targeted it for censorship.

On the other side of the Atlantic, Spanish playwrights were in the midst of creating a distinctive national theatre for their country based upon Lope de Vega's innovative *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (1609).³ Although the name *comedia* generally implies the predominance of comic elements in a dramatic form, Lope de Vega defines his new subgenre as one in which serious themes could be developed and tragedy intertwined with comedy. Although it did not go unchallenged by officialdom, it was permitted to flourish to such an extent that it reflected much of the brilliance that characterized Spain's Golden Age. An educated elite in the viceroyalties actively sought to have access to the works produced by Peninsular dramatists to replace its severely diminished theatre, and what began as the clandestine importation of these dramas eventually led to the open invitation of Spanish theatre companies to the New World (Leonard 41-42). By the time early New World plays had been secularized for the most part, and thus ready to take center stage over religious productions, local playwrights found themselves alienated from their own theatre. Sor Juana was one of these dramatists who actively sought to redirect the New World theatre in the fulfillment of its own destiny, but she knew that this could only be achieved by creating a better awareness among the population at large of its own uniqueness and an understanding of the forces that hindered its expression.

What better way, then, for Sor Juana to respond to the issues of power and authority and to highlight the problematic relationship of these matters to the formation of an individual and collective identity than to devise a theatrical forum of her own for their exposition and interrogation. The stage possessed unusual potential to change the way people viewed the world, and as a microcosm it offered an opportunity to challenge existing roles and try out new ones. It was also important because much of the colonial era was a transitional period from orality to a print-oriented society, and for this reason, the public theatre as a frequent form of leisure and recreation became a center of popular culture. One technical recourse stands out above all others in Sor Juana's endeavor to develop a complete self-consciousness among members of the theatregoing public, and it is precisely her use of metatheatre that brings her concerns about gender and cultural identity most appropriately and effectively to the fore. In this regard her *Sainete segundo*, as a play within her dramatic program entitled *Los empeños de una casa*, becomes the focus of an extraordinary metatheatrical encounter whose ultimate relevance is intrinsically linked to the *comedia* in which it is encased.

Sor Juana's ten-part *festejo*, *Los empeños de una casa*, was first performed on October 4, 1683 under the auspices of Don Fernando Deza, a high ranking colonial official, to celebrate the viceroyship of Don Tomás Antonio de la Cerda, the Marquis of La Laguna, and the arrival of the new archbishop Francisco de Aguiar y Seijas.⁴ The set piece of this festival is her cloak and dagger *comedia*, a three-act play that fundamentally follows the principles of this dramatic Golden Age subgenre as established by the Peninsula's most distinguished playwrights. In recent years, however, and especially in light of the strides in feminist criticism, scholars have studied the numerous discreet transgressions of the *comedia*'s formulaic composition in *Los empeños*, and their findings illuminate Sor Juana's stature as an outstanding woman playwright of the colonial period (Merrim 103-106).

The action of *Los empeños' comedia* takes place in the darkened Arellano household in Toledo, Spain, where Don Pedro lives with his sister Ana. The two siblings become involved in a night of complicated intrigue and outrageous comedy when Pedro kidnaps his lady love, Doña Leonor, just as she is leaving her house to elope with Don Carlos, who is also the object of Doña Ana's affections. All four eventually encounter one another in the hallways and bedrooms of the old home, but misconceptions and mistaken identity inhibit their understanding of the situation. Matters are further complicated by the maid, who lets an admirer of Doña Ana into the house without her knowledge, and the silly servant of Don Carlos, who dresses up in Leonor's clothing to escape from the house ostensibly unnoticed. The various love entanglements and questions of honor, however, are resolved in the end, as the work concludes with the marriage of the principal players. Pedro is the only one who remains single, a gesture on Sor Juana's part, perhaps, to punish him for taking advantage of the female characters.

Between acts two and three of *Los empeños*, the second *sainete* of Sor Juana's *festejo* was presented.⁵ Although separate from the main plot, it is linked to the framing *comedia* thematically through its exploration of perception and technically through the use of metatheatricality in understanding and developing this cognitive process. By creating different types of illusions in these two dramatic forms, one that is clearly elaborate and the other deceptively simple, Sor Juana reflects upon the previously presented acts of *Los empeños* and endeavors to change the way the audience perceives them. This self-referentiality, therefore, transforms this play within a play into a play about a play, her own play, and in this way the secondary piece calls attention to the primary *comedia* as performance. This metadramatic device

sheds light on the relationship of the theatre to itself, that is, the *sainete* to the *comedia* of *Los empeños* as well as New World drama to that of Spain's Golden Age, and it subsequently uncovers the interface between the world of the theatre and life itself.

The idea of metatheatre is not a new one, having been originally set forth by Lionel Abel in 1963, but its persistent influence on drama scholarship since then is worthy of note (Larson 211-212; Kronik 5-6, 14). Along with numerous studies such as Robert Egan's *Drama within Drama*, Sidney Homan's *When the Theatre Turns to Itself*, and Robert J. Nelson's *Play within a Play*, however, which were inspired by Abel's initiative, came significant revisions in its definition and taxonomy. In this respect, Richard Hornby's *Drama, Metadrama, and Perception* is particularly appropriate. According to Hornby, "Metadrama can be defined as drama about drama; it occurs whenever the subject of a play turns out to be, in some sense, drama itself" (31). Following this definition, then, he identifies five metatheatrical devices:

1. The play within the play.
2. Self reference.
3. Literary and real-life reference.
4. Role playing within the role.
5. The ceremony within the play. (32)

All of these devices may be found in Sor Juana's *festejo*, and all but one, the ceremony, is found in her concise *Sainete segundo*. In this *Sainete*, as well as in the works of other playwrights using metatheatre, the play within the play serves as a unifying framework within which the others are intertwined and simultaneously penetrate one another.

Although elements of metatheatre may be found in Classical and Roman theatre, the play within the play did not appear before the Renaissance. The best known works in which this device is used are Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Hamlet* (Hornby 36). In Spain Pedro Calderón de la Barca is especially associated with the metadramatic. His works more than any other Golden Age playwright influenced those of Sor Juana, and the title of her *comedia*, in fact, was suggested by his *Los empeños de un acaso* (Wilkins 109). In his masterpiece *La vida es sueño*, Calderón de la Barca explores the nature and relationship of reality and illusion through the awakening of Segismundo, the young Prince of Poland, from a drug-induced dream. Here Calderón captures the cynicism of the Baroque age in which the world was viewed as illusory, and life metaphorically became a play. Although Calderón's work may have inspired

Sor Juana's use of metatheatre, it is clear that her execution of it in her *festejo* of *Los empeños* exceeds his dramatic artistry. Francisco Monterde, who was the first to study the *Sainete segundo*, praises its autocritical dimension highly and asserts that, in this respect, it is a precursor of the modern theatre to be equaled only by Pirandello in this century (90). Octavio Paz confirms Monterde's conclusions in his book *Sor Juana or, The Traps of Faith*:

Renaissance theatre and the Baroque had introduced the play-within-the-play, as Velázquez in one of his paintings had included himself in the act of painting, but the dramatic poets of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to my knowledge, had never broken the conventions separating stage from spectator. (329)

Sor Juana's *Sainete segundo*, which consists of 177 lines of poetry, can be summarized very briefly. Ostensibly during the intermission between the acts of the *comedia* of *Los empeños*, Arias and his friend Muñiz discuss what the actors have accomplished up to that point and complain about the play's length. The former compares it to the voyage of prisoners to the Philippines, and the latter likens it to traveling on a hired mule. As the discussion continues, they both express surprise over their host's decision to stage this play, as it is common knowledge that *comedias* by Calderón, Moreto, or Rojas would have been more appropriate.

Amigo, [says Muñiz to Arias] mejor era Celestina
 en cuanto a ser comedia ultramarina:
 que siempre las de España son mejores,
 y para digerirles los humores,
 son ligeras; que nunca son pesadas
 las cosas que por agua están pasadas. (4:675)

But who could have written such a work as this one that is so lacking in plot and so filled with faltering verse? And, more important, how can it be stopped? Faced with the immediate continuation of the play, Arias suggests that they pretend to be *mosqueteros*, or spectators who remained standing throughout the performance, and hiss when the curtain opens. Although Muñiz laments the fact that as a Spanish American he is not accustomed to pronouncing the "s" sound, and therefore, cannot register his complaint, he joins the Spaniard Arias in his efforts to halt the performance. As the hissing begins both on stage and off, Acevedo, the man identified as the playwright, emerges with some of the actors. Parodying verses spoken by Calderón's Segismundo when the young prince is initially faced with adversity,⁶ he says

¡Ay, silbado de mí! ¡Ay desdichado!
¡Que la comedia que hice me han silbado!
¡Al primer tapón silbos? Muerto quedo. (4:678)

Amid singing and possibly dancing, Acevedo vows never to write another play and ultimately to hang himself, but the crowd seeks greater retribution for what it considers to be a criminal act. With the hissing growing louder, Arias announces the final sentence for having created and penned such a meaningless enactment, and he condemns the man to copy his own play over again. On hearing this, Acevedo concedes that this is too great a punishment and chooses to die of shame in a theatre resonating with hisses.

By staging a short dramatic piece to unmask her own *comedia* as performance, Sor Juana combines two of the most important metatheatrical devices identified by Hornby, the play within a play and self reference. With the intercalation of the *sainete* at this juncture, she endeavors to distance the audience from the stylized plot and characters of *Los empeños* and, in essence, to permit its members to “see double.” This technique alienates the spectators from the framing play and defamiliarizes them with the *comedia* as a subgenre of the Golden Age theatre (Hornby 32). Sor Juana’s *Sainete segundo*, then, is yet another one of her illusionary creations, but its juxtaposition with *Los empeños’ comedia* ultimately sheds light on the principal play as a work of art and underscores its relationship to the theatre in general and society at large. Sor Juana achieves these objectives by jarring the spectators into an awareness of their own cultural codes, which are notably absent from the aforerepresented play. She does this at some risk to herself, however, as offending the audience could jeopardize their later compliance with her plan. Caught up in the sheer enjoyment of Toledan society’s titillating affairs, spectators are encouraged to slip vicariously into the roles of *damas* and *galanes* in scenes that, while being delightfully chaotic, are carefully orchestrated and ultimately predictable. The spectator may even relish a marked detachment from the consequences of unfolding events and, if nothing else, may enjoy a certain confidence in the safety of his or her theatre seat. In a matter of moments, nevertheless, Sor Juana plunges the audience into a zany skit that appears to be spontaneous, and its vividness highlights the immediacy for spectators as they are urged to take up the role of participants, leaving behind the passive status of observer. Controversy is injected at a crucial point in the dramatic program suspending its progress, in effect, and it impacts an otherwise ordinary evening at the theatre. The audience probably

feels uneasy about this unexpected discord because it senses that this conflict could possibly disrupt the entire performance resulting in the cancellation of the highly anticipated and long awaited conclusion of the play.

The newly unveiled relevance that Sor Juana's *Sainete segundo* acquires amid her conventional *comedia* is mainly contingent upon what Hornby would classify as real life references, which profile semiologically life in New Spain and the place of this viceroyalty within the Spanish empire. Using allusions that were easily recognizable to seventeenth-century residents of New Spain, Sor Juana suggests a pattern of living that is truly different from that of the Peninsular Spaniard and one that ultimately calls into question the utopian vision of the New World espoused by Spanish imperialism. While the focus of controversy is clearly the theatre, Sor Juana makes passing reference to matters of real contention in the colonies which contextualize the events of her *sainete* with surprising acuteness.

The most startling allusion that Sor Juana makes regards the wealthy Manila galleon that routinely sailed to the Orient laden with Mexican and Peruvian silver to return to the Americas with silks, spices, and other exotic items to trade. This is surprising because little attention was given to the human cargo aboard these vessels, but exile to the Philippines was a common way in which colonial officials rid their jurisdictions of any vagrants.

Carefully avoiding matters that had brought previous colonial playwrights either jail sentences or exile, Sor Juana distinguishes Creoles from Peninsular Spaniards linguistically rather than politically.⁷ Some Creoles had the tendency to drop the "s" from words when speaking, while residents born in Spain generally persisted in its traditional pronunciation. Jokingly, yet with due deliberation, then, Sor Juana takes advantage of this obvious contrast to portray Creoles at the theatre unable to voice their disapproval. Although the proneness of Hispanics to produce a sharp sibilant sound or not must surely have been one of the more inconsequential differences among the subjects of the Spanish Crown during the seventeenth century, the very recognition of dissimilarity here is representative of the entire conflict between Creoles and *peninsulares* that would eventually bring about the disintegration of the Spanish empire in the New World. But more important, the question of hissing becomes one of nonverbal discourse, in which one group can utter an unfavorable judgment and the other cannot. Just as in the case of comparing a written word with an "s" to its spoken form, the failure to pronounce it does not mean that it does not exist. Similarly, then, the silence on the part of many colonial Spanish Americans does not necessarily signify an absence of protest but the lack or loss of that type of expression.

Sor Juana brings New Spain's cultural scene to the fore through real life references by mentioning plays and playwrights of the current theatre season. Literary references constitute aspects of real life in this case, and they relate her *festejo* to the complex system of theatrical production of which the works of Calderón, Moreto, and Rojas are an important part. In a sense these names serve as miniature plays within a play that is itself a play within a larger dramatic work. This multilayering technique or cascading effect of the metadramatic affords the audience an additional opportunity to "see double" (Hornby 93).

Of particular interest in *Sainete segundo* is Arias' allusion to the *Celestina*, which he contends would have been much funnier than *Los empeños*. Muñiz agrees but quickly corrects him for thinking that the play he recently saw was the *tragicomedia* written by Fernando de Rojas. As a participant in the performance, and one who may have even played the leading role, Muñiz attests to the success of the work but characterizes it as "mestiza," or patched together, the result of a collaborative effort between a Spanish writer and one from the New World. Indeed, Sor Juana was thought to have completed the unfinished work by Agustín de Salazar y Torres entitled *La segunda Celestina*. She may have used this occasion to clear up the public's misconception regarding the new play and also to call attention to its enthusiastic reception and favorable comparison to the original work. When *La segunda Celestina* was published in 1694, however, it appeared with a conclusion written by Juan de Vera Tassis. An additional ending was not discovered until relatively recently by Guillermo Schmidhuber, who uses this *sainete* to support his attribution of it to the Mexican nun (Schmidhuber 23).⁸

According to Francisco Monterde (74) and Alberto Salceda (xviii), the *festejo* of *Los empeños* was actually presented in the home of Don Fernando Deza, who is named as the host in the *sainete*, and Alférez Andrés Muñiz, a fellow official of his, was probably the long-suffering Muñiz who taunts the incompetent playwright at the behest of the character named Arias. Here, Sor Juana combines real life references with the metadramatic device of role playing within the role, which often accompanied the play within a play. It is important in this case for the audience to see actors playing real people, who are themselves spectators of the *comedia* in question. Members of the audience frequently assume the roles of heroes and heroines in a play, but in Sor Juana's *Sainete segundo*, they quite literally take center stage as themselves, as their affinity for Muñiz and Arias should be compelling. Closely identifying with the alleged spectators on stage as well as those seated next to them in the

theatre, then, the audience watches itself performing an evaluative task for which it must not only see but understand what is happening on stage and consequently comprehend how this illusion is relevant to them and the world in which they live. This raises questions of an existential nature such as where the stage ends and the auditorium begins and who is on which side of the footlights? If actors can take on the role of spectators on stage, then do spectators play roles in real life? (Hornby 71).

These issues are made even more complicated when considering the historical character of Acevedo and his function in the metadramatic device of role playing within the role, as Sor Juana not only explores identity by casting him as the playwright but introduces matters of gender as well. In the first place, why would Sor Juana designate a man as the author of the play when the theatregoing public of the time was probably well aware of her authorship? Did she secretly desire to be a man or was she forced by seventeenth-century colonial society to assume a masculine identity to meet expectations? While the first possibility cannot be discounted, there is much evidence regarding the place of women during this period to document the limitations imposed upon them in the strict patriarchy established by the Spaniards (Lavrin 25). Exceptional women who were artists and intellectuals suffered the most from such societal constraints, as they rarely got the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and creativity. To have insisted upon a woman might also have displaced Sor Juana's principal focus on perception in general, making gender the central issue rather than only one aspect of this multifaceted theme.

Sor Juana's decision to name someone else as *Los empeños*' author may have also been influenced by her vocation as a nun. The Church in reality provided a virtual enclave for gifted women where they were customarily permitted to study and write undisturbed provided that they dedicated their talents to religious pursuits. The fact that *Los empeños* is a comedy is in clear violation of this premise, and Christian tradition in general frowned upon the creation of elaborate literary illusion glorifying worldliness.⁹ This may have caused her to conceal her true identity in an attempt to defuse the growing criticism surrounding a wide variety of secular works that she produced after being cloistered, a controversy that would precipitate an untimely end to a brilliant career.

In addition to questioning Sor Juana's choice of a male playwright for her *Sainete segundo*, why did she select a real person, the poet Francisco de Acevedo? By identifying him as an inexperienced writer and a bad poet,

Sor Juana sets up a clearly biased comparison between his work and hers. The controversy that is subsequently generated provides a controlled model for the development of a critical approach to art and literature, and moreover, raises a question about the nature of artistic talent and who has it. Acevedo was also a writer of comedies, and as such he was a rival of Sor Juana. One of his plays, *El pregonero de Dios y patriarca de los pobres*, was performed in the same season as *Los empeños* but was banned by the Inquisition in Mexico City after its opening at the Coliseo de las Comedias (Monterde 75). Sor Juana makes him out to be a paragon of male mediocrity in the literary circles to which women had almost no access. If Sor Juana's work is superior to his, should gender then be important in matters of artistic creation? Apart from the gender issue, however, she continues to deride him by inferring that he, too, had assumed another role in life and that he was "playing at" being an accomplished writer. Close examination of the multilayered metadramatic technique used in the creation of the character of Acevedo, therefore, reveals the complexity of Sor Juana's identity and the shallowness of that of her adversary. One mask is stripped away, only to uncover another, and then another. Where are the real Sor Juana and the real Acevedo, then, after all disguises are removed? Ultimately, they become dual roles to be performed by a designated actor, who is himself portraying a role in the drama of life.

Sor Juana's *Sainete segundo* and its strategic positioning between the second and third acts of the *comedia* of *Los empeños*, therefore, offers a disquieting profile of society and culture in seventeenth-century New Spain and affords a glimpse at a courageous woman who dared to question its configuration. What better way to register one's general misgivings and discontent than through drama, which, as a projection of a world view, may serve as a gauge or an analytical tool with which to examine life and thus to determine one's own role in it. The particular use of the play within a play as well as other metadramatic devices is a clear assault on current theatrical trends in which the future of the performing arts in the New World is at stake and the right of a woman to participate in its direction is held in the balance. The intercalation of the *Sainete segundo*, however, does not destroy the original illusory image of *Los empeños* but permits the audience to see the *comedia* and its stereotypes as an artistic artifice and an idealized literary construct in a way that is not only self-reflective and self-conscious but also expressive (Hornby 26-27). This dual intent of metatheatre, therefore, allows Sor Juana to address both the aesthetic and existential concerns of colonial Spanish Americans. In this respect, Sor Juana's *Sainete segundo* does not

provide a solution to the dilemma of the New World theatre or the personal conflict of talented women whose desire it was to write for the stage but rather proposes the critical approach of an informed public as a means to resolve these problems. Illusion is only a deception when it lacks meaning or when one fails to understand it. Its importance lies in its interpretation and signification, which, Sor Juana proves, are vital steps in the process of perception.

With regard to the specific path dramatists in the New World should take in the face of the imposition of Spain's national theatre on local colonial stages, Sor Juana speaks through the example of her *Sainete segundo*. Brevity, topicality, and comedy are perhaps the only recourses open to artistic originality and intellectual vitality under these circumstances. In this respect, Sor Juana may have been looking back to the origins of the European theatre in the New World when the first friars carefully included Amerindian cultural codes in their autos and comic, even satiric, elements secularized and further Americanized other religious enactments with serious themes. Besides understanding the evolution of dramatic works during the first century of Spain in the New World, Sor Juana also perceived the need for continuous change within the theatre that must come from the desire to reassess itself. Only then can dramatists, both male and female, truly serve the theatregoing public they seek to entertain.

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Notes

¹ The most comprehensive study of Mexico's Tenth Muse and the times in which she lived is *Sor Juana or, The Traps of Faith* by Octavio Paz.

² Fray Toribio de Benavente's *Historia de los indios de Nueva España* contains an excellent description of one of these autos, *La caída de nuestros primeros padres*, which was presented in Tlaxcala, Mexico in 1538. The play was performed in an autochthonous language by newly converted Amerindian actors, who appeared to inhabit a garden of Eden in the New World (66-67).

³ Although the name *comedia* generally implies the predominance of comic elements in a dramatic form, Lope de Vega defines his new subgenre as one in which serious themes could be developed and tragedy intertwined with comedy.

⁴ Salceda's introduction to the fourth volume of Sor Juana's *Obras completas* provides much of the background information regarding the presentation of *Los empeños de una casa* (xviii). All quotations from *Sainete segundo* have been taken from this edition of her work.

⁵ In his essay, "The Seventeenth-Century Interlude in the New World Secular Theatre," Pasquariello traces the early development of short dramatic pieces from the church to the public corral and viceregal court and notes their later popularity as entertainment presented between the acts of GoldenAge comedias. With works from Spain monopolizing New World stages during the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries, it is no wonder that the few Spanish American playwrights who remained active concentrated on composing shorter works with the hope that they would be performed more readily to provide a respite from a longer, Peninsular program. Apart from Sor Juana, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón (1581?-1639) was the only other New World dramatist whose *comedias* enjoyed success. However, because he wrote them in Spain rather than in Mexico, he has been regarded as a Spanish playwright.

⁶ These are the opening lines spoken by Segismundo in the first act, when he discovers that he is a prisoner in a tower far from his father's court.

⁷ Sor Juana hints at the real animosity between Creoles and Peninsular Spaniards when Acevedo refers to the latter, who are doing the hissing, as "gachupines" (679). This derogatory name, signifying "those who wear spurs," was also used in the revolutionary battle cry, known as the "Grito de Dolores," proclaimed by Father Miguel Hidalgo on September 16, 1810.

⁸ Sabat Rivers discusses the validity of this discovery in "Los problemas de *La segunda Celestina*," and after examining the divergent view points of Antonio Alatorre, on the one hand, and Octavio Paz and Schmidhuber, on the other, she concludes that it is still possible that Sor Juana wrote this particular ending (512).

⁹ The Colombian Madre Castillo (1671-1742), the most prominent female writer of the colonial period after Sor Juana, mentions that she was warned about the detrimental effects that the reading of comedias would have on her attempts to secure spiritual salvation (1: 7,10).

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