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HOW MANY *COMEDIAS* DID LOPE DE VEGA WRITE?

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INSTITUTO DE INVESTIGACIONES

To that ancient friend and present gardener
Mr. Aubrey Bell
with the warm regard of
S. Griswold Morley

HOW MANY *COMEDIAS* DID LOPE DE VEGA WRITE?[1]

I

Following are the statements which Lope de Vega and others have left us with regard to his dramatic output.

1. The list of his authentic *comedias* included in the novel *El peregrino en su patria* (1604, *Prólogo* of 1603) contains 219 titles.[2] In the preface, however, he states that he has written 230: "que duzientas y 30. Comedias a doze pliegos y mas de escritura, son cinco mil y ciento y setenta ojas de versos, que a no las auer visto publicamente todos, no me atreuiera a escriuirlo, sin muchas de que no me acuerdo, y no poniendo las representaciones de Actos diuinos para diuersas fiestas."[3] It has been demonstrated that a few plays not included in the list were in existence before 1603,[4] yet it is not clear why Lope should have given a figure larger than his list. Probably he simply did not bother to count accurately.

2. In his eulogy of Lope published in *La Jerusalén conquistada* (Privilege of August, 1608; published February, 1609), Francisco Pacheco, discussing the number of Lope's plays, speaks of "los titulos de ellas impressos en el libro del Peregrino ... sin mas de otras tantas q̃ despues de aquella impression ha escrito, con q̃ llegaran à quinientas."[5]

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[1] We wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to Professor W. L. Fichter, of Brown University, who kindly read this article in MS, and made many suggestions and additions.

Italics of quoted texts are as in originals. The quotations from Lope's *Partes* are given according to the collection in the University of California Library.

[2] See S. G. Morley, *Lope de Vega's Peregrino Lists* (Berkeley, California, 1930).

[3] Edition of Sevilla, 1604. The calculation in *hojas* does not work out correctly, but comes nearest on the basis of two *hojas* to each *pliego*.

[4] Cf. Morley, "Lope de Vega's *Peregrino* Lists Not *Termini a quo*," in *Modern Language Notes*, XLIX (1934), 11–12; and C. Bruerton, in *Hispanic Review*, III (1935), 249.

[5] *La Jerusalén conquistada* (Madrid, 1609), p. 5 (the second folio numbered 4 in Pacheco's article). Pacheco, a portrait painter, was a friend of Lope's and undoubtedly got his figures from the poet himself. *La gallarda toledana* was dedicated to Pacheco (cf. *Acad. N.*, VI, 68), who made of Lope a portrait which has not been preserved if the statement in the *Jerusalén* (page, unnumbered, preceding portrait), "Adviertase que no es este el retrato que hizo Francisco Pacheco," is true.

3. In *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias* (1609), Lope wrote:

> ... tengo escritas,
> con una que he acabado esta semana,
> cuatrocientas y ochenta y tres comedias.

If one takes 230 as the number of plays written before 1604, Lope's new statement implies that he wrote in the next six years, at an average of about 40 a year, 258 plays, or more than he had written in the twenty-four or so years of his productive life before 1604. Since it may be assumed that he gained facility as he outgrew the period of apprenticeship, such production is possible, though, as will be shown, it is doubtful.[6]

4. In a preface to Lope's *Parte II* (Lisboa, Pedro Crasbeeck, 1612), the Portuguese bookseller Perreira wrote that "eran ya más de quinientas las comedias de Lope representadas."[7]

5. Cervantes, in the *Prólogo* to his *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses* (1615), said that "...passan de diez mil pliegos los que tiene escritos [Lope]."[8] Reckoning at 12 *pliegos* per play, the usual number, we have 833 plays. On what Cervantes based his information we do not know; obviously it was a guess in round numbers.

6. In the *Prólogo* to *Parte XI* (dated February 6, 1618), Lope declared that he had ready for the press 12 more plays, "otras doze Comedias, que me quedan de las mas famosas que su dueño ha escrito, con llegar ya el número a ochocientas."[9] Taking this at its face value, we have 317 plays in nine years.

7. The 1618 edition of *El peregrino en su patria* contains an addendum (P^2) to the original P list, with 230 titles, of which 210 are new. We thus get, through these lists, a total of 429 titles which Lope in 1618 acknowledged or claimed as his own. It is not known whether P^2, somewhat less carefully made than P, was drawn up by Lope or another,[10] but "one derives from the scarcity of traceable

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[6] There is an unimportant discrepancy between Pacheco's 500 and Lope's 483. Pacheco is using a round number and Lope one which will appear genuine as well as give the requisite number of syllables for his line of verse. In spite of Morel-Fatio's argument (*Bulletin Hispanique*, III [1901], 366) and Rennert and Castro's (*Vida*, p. 186, n. 2), there seems to be no reason why the *Arte nuevo* should not have been written in the latter part of 1608.

[7] Salvá, *Catálogo*, I, 537. Cited by Restori, in *Archivum Romanicum*, XI (1927), 390, n. 2.

[8] Ed. Schevill and Bonilla, I (Madrid, 1915), 8.

[9] Cf. Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

[10] Cf. Morley, *"Peregrino" Lists*, p. 365, n. 70.

omitted titles the impression that P and P^2 were compiled with considerable care, and omit few of his authentic dramas, for the periods they cover."[11] Moreover, the statement in the *Prólogo* of 1603, quoted in paragraph 1, has been altered to read: "que 462 a 50. ojas y más de escritura suman 23,100 hojas de versos, que a no las auer visto ...," etc.[12] Whether 462 or 449 or 429—the exact figures correspond as badly as before—the discrepancy between these numbers and 800, announced in the same year, gives one pause. If we subtract 230, the number of plays claimed by Lope in 1603, from the 800 he claimed in 1618 in the *Prólogo* to *Parte XI,* we have 570 which he would have us believe he wrote in the intervening fifteen years, or an average of 38 a year. And, subtracting the 210 new titles in P^2, we have left 360 plays forgotten in the 1618 list. Did Lope, or whoever made P^2, forget the titles of nearly two-thirds of the plays composed since 1604? It seems incredible. Today, at least, we can point to but 7 plays not in the lists which belong without doubt to the period covered by them.[13]

8. In 1620 (*Parte XIV, Aprobación* of October 23, 1619), Lope printed *El verdadero amante,* which he said was written at the age of twelve, and in the dedication to his son he declared: "Yo he escrito novecientas comedias."[14] Here we have an assertion that Lope composed 100 plays between February, 1618, and October, 1619, some eighty-five weeks; at the rate, therefore, of more than one a week.

9. In the *Prólogo* to *Parte XV* (1621, *Aprobación* of September 24, 1620), Lope wrote: "Lea, pues, el desapasionado el libro, *el que no quiere con una comedia sola escurecer novecientas y veynte y siete, que este Autor ha escrito,* contando las que se llaman Autos ..."[15] Since the number of *autos* which Lope had at this time

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[11] Morley, in *Modern Language Notes,* XLIX (1934), p. 12. See also below, p. 228.

[12] Edition of Madrid, 1618. The calculation is correct this time, on a basis of four *hojas* to each *pliego.*

[13] *Los hechos de Garcilaso de la Vega* (four acts); *Don Juan de Austria en Flandes* (played before June 29, 1604); *La desdichada Estefanía* (autograph, 1604); *La discordia en los casados* (autograph, 1611); *La reina Juana de Nápoles* and *El mejor maestro el tiempo* (both in *Parte VI,* 1615); *La fortuna merecida* (in *Parte XI,* the dedication of which is dated February 6, 1618). There is a very fair chance that some of these titles may be in the P and P^2 lists in an alternate form.

[14] Cf. Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.,* p. 172.

[15] Cf. Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.,* p. 283.

Siguiente

written is unknown, this figure cannot be compared with the preceding.[16]

10. In *La Filomena* (*Aprobación* of May 31, 1621), Lope exclaims:

> Mas haced reflexión en la memoria
> de novecientas fábulas oídas
> por toda España, y muchas dilatadas
> al pacífico mar.[17]

Here we have the same figure as that given in paragraph 8.[18] On the other hand, in the introduction to the short story *Las fortunas de Diana* (*La Filomena,* ed. of 1621, fol. 59v; *Rivad.,* XXXVIII, 1*a*), Lope remarks that he may well write a *novela,* "habiendo hallado tantas invenciones para mil comedias." This vague numeral does not merit listing under a separate head.

11. Tirso de Molina, in *La fingida Arcadia* (1621),[19] declares that Lope had written 900 plays: "Cuántas / ha compuesto? — Novecientas." This figure was doubtless lifted directly from *La Filomena.*

12. In the *Prólogo* to *Parte XX* (1625, *Aprobación* of September 29, 1624), Lope raises his figure: "los ingenios cándidos desearán que como tuve vida para escribir mil y setenta Comedias, la tenga para imprimirlas."[20]

13. In the closing lines of *La moza de cántaro* the author remarks:

> ... si perdiere este pleito,
> apela a Mil y Quinientas:
> mil y quinientas ha escrito.

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[16] For want of taking into consideration this fact, Rennert and Castro (*op. cit.,* p. 283), wrote, comparing the statement in paragraph 9 with that in paragraph 6, *"de tal suerte, que entre febrero de 1618 y setiembre de 1620, Lope escribió 127 comedias, más de una por semana."* The same error is committed in note 1 of the same page. But, as we have just shown in paragraph 8, the rate of composition is not incorrect.

[17] *Rivad.,* XXXVIII, 491*b*.

[18] The date of composition of the passage above may be a year and a half before the date of publication. In the Dedication of *La villana de Getafe* (*Acad. N.,* X, 366) in *Parte XIV* (*Aprobación* of October, 1619, *Privilegio* of December 26, 1619), Lope refers to *La Filomena* as a project in hand; so that the "novecientas fábulas" may have been written at the same time as the dedication of *El verdadero amante* (see paragraph 8 above).

[19] It was published in his *Parte 3a* (1634), but the allusion to Lope's *Parte XVII* (1621) and the statement that *La Filomena* appeared "en este último [año]" show that it was performed in 1621 or 1622. See *N.B.A.E.,* IV, xxv and 436*a*.

[20] Cf. Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.,* p. 300.

There is a pun on the Court of Appeals called *sala de mil y quinientas*. The date of this play is not known; printed in 1646, it contains a topical sonnet on an event in 1625, and was probably performed in that year or the following. Because of the phrase cited, giving the same figure as in paragraph 15, Hartzenbusch thought that these lines were added or altered in 1632. Cotarelo y Mori, however, believed the number correct for 1625.[21]

14. Pellicer de Salas (*El Fenix y su historia natural* [Madrid, 1630], fol. 14v), stated: "Oy viue [Lope], despues de auer dado a los Teatros Españoles ... mil y quinientas Comedias, seiscientos Autos sagrados ..."[22] Quevedo signed the *censura* for this book on February 3, 1628, so that it was probably written in 1627.

15. In *Para todos* (1632), Juan Pérez de Montalván, Lope's closest friend and disciple, included in a list of Lope's compositions "veinte tomos de comedias impressos, y mil y quinientas que se han representado, sin Autos y obras sueltas, cuyo número es casi infinito."[23]

16. Printed in 1637, but written in 1632 or earlier, the autobiographical *Egloga a Claudio* contains the well-known boast:

> *Mil y quinientas fábulas* admira,
> que la mayor, el número parece,

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[21] *Rivad.*, XXIV, v, and *Acad. N.*, XIII, xxxvi. Restori developed a compromise. In *Saggi di Bibliografia teatrale spagnuola* (Genève, 1927, pp. 73–74), he brought forward two alternatives: either (1) Lope, with customary exaggeration, wrote "mil y quinientas" in 1626, although he had not actually attained that number then, and kept repeating it until he did (*ca.* 1631); or (2) the original version bore either "mil y dozientas" or "mil y trezientas," this being changed in print to "mil y quinientas." In a later article (*Archivum Romanicum*, XI [1927], 389–90) he mentioned only the second. This seems to us untenable, however, because the pun already mentioned holds only for the number 1500. Restori must have been unaware of the existence of a *sala de mil y quinientas* (see *Diccionario de la Acad. Esp.*, s.v. *"sala"*). We believe (though one can be sure of nothing) that *La moza de cántaro* was written and performed in 1625 or 1626; and Restori's theory No. 1 appears preferable to Hartzenbusch's. For one thing, it would account for the statement of Pellicer de Salas (see paragraph 14). It is evident that, in most cases, the outsiders merely repeated Lope's own figures.

[22] Noted by Restori in *Archivum Romanicum*, XI (1927), 390. For the details, however, we are indebted to Professor Fichter. Pellicer may have taken the figure 1500 from *La moza de cántaro* (paragraph 13), but where did he get 600 for the *autos?*

[23] Lope is No. 222 in the *Indice de los ingenios de Madrid* near the end of the *Para todos*.

verdad que desmerece,
por parecer mentira,
pues más de ciento en horas veinticuatro
pasaron de las Musas al teatro.[24]

Treating the figures with all seriousness, more probably than they deserve, and comparing them with that in paragraph 12, we find that Lope composed 430 plays in seven years, still at the rate of more than one a week.

17. Juan Antonio de la Peña, in a foreword to his *Egloga elegiaca* (1635), speaks of Lope's "mil y seiscientas Comedias," and again: "siendo sus *Comedias* más de mil y seiscientas, los *Autos Sacramentales* más de docientos."[25]

18. Dr. Fernando Cardoso, in his *Oración funeral* (1635), says that the ancients praised a Greek "que escribió setenta Comedias, y a otro ciento; que Lope dicta mil y quinientas."[26]

19. Lastly, Montalván wrote in the *Fama póstuma* (1636), praising his master's fecundity: "las *Comedias* representadas llegan a mil y ochocientas. Los *Autos Sacramentales* passan de quatrocientos."[27] The admirer adds 300 to Lope's own asseveration of 1632—let us say two per week, in Lope's old age.[28]

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[24] *Rivad.*, XXXVIII, 434*a*. [25] Lope, *Obras sueltas*, XIX, 495 and 500.

[26] *Ibid.*, XIX, 478. [27] *Ibid.*, XX, 49.

[28] Statements made later in the seventeenth century can have no great value as testimony; but, for the sake of completeness, we note the following:

Antonio de León Pinelo, *Anales de Madrid* (1636): "Escribió mil y ochocientas [comedias] que todas se representaron en los teatros de Madrid y de toda España" (cited by Amador de los Ríos, *Historia de la villa y corte de Madrid*, III [Madrid, 1863], 333, n. 4).

Fabio Franchi (if he be the author of the spurious *Orazione* by the Cavaliere Marino in the *Essequie poetiche* [Venice, 1636]) says Lope "scrisse due mila Commedie di 12 foglj" (*O.S.*, XXI, 19); and elsewhere mentions "mille e settecento Corone, per altretante Commedie da lui composte" (*O.S.*, XXI, 109).

M. J. Bodini, *Fragmentum epistolae* (1636): "Constat, mille ac quingentis Comoediis Hispanica utriusque orbis theatra... quinquaginti & amplius annos continenter personasse" (*O.S.*, XX, 390).

Enríquez de Almansa's line "Con Hecatombe y medio los tablados" (1636) (*O.S.*, XX; 66) refers to 1,500 plays, according to Restori (*Saggi di Bibliografia teatrale spagnuola*, p. 74).

Nicolás Antonio, in *Biblioteca Hispana nova* (1672) (II [Madrid, 1788], 75*a*): "mille & octingentis comoediis, sacrisque, sive uti appellant, Sacramentalibus Actis,... supra quadringentis."

Bances Candamo, in his unfinished *Theatro de los Theatros:* "dándoles [Lope a los farsantes] mil y nouecientas comedias" (*Rev. de Arch., B. y M.*, V [1901], 928).

Disregarding for the moment other considerations, we note that the outstanding and amazing feature of our summary is the discrepancy between the figures of *El peregrino* (1618) (paragraph 7) and those of other works by Lope in the same and neighboring years (paragraphs 6, 8, 9, 10, 12). Does it not appear that when the prodigy was pinned down to an actual enumeration of titles he was compelled to renounce some of his vast claims? The compiler of the *Peregrino* lists did not limit himself to setting down the names of *printed* titles, for out of the 429 some 170 are starred (i.e., lost), and it is most unlikely that they were in print at that time. He had, therefore, other sources than printed texts, and, if he omitted half of Lope's output, it would be strange, to say the least.[29]

II

Critics are divided as to the faith which should be placed in the words of Lope and his friends. Some accept them at face value. Ticknor, Hurtado and González Palencia, and others raise no question. As recently as 1930 Federico Ruiz Morcuende thought "que no hay hipérbole ni hinchazón en hacerlas ascender en este año de 1625 nada menos que a mil setenta."[30] Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, also in 1930, believed that Lope had written a full 1,500 by 1625, and spoke of "un caudal, siempre inverosímil, pero cierto, de 1800 comedias en tres actos cada una y cerca de 400 autos sacramentales" in his whole life.[31]

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[29] Someone may inquire how many authentic plays of Lope are now extant. The border line between authentic and doubtful is hazy, but we have attempted to draw up a canon of the authentic plays, rigorously rejecting all to which a shred of doubt adheres, and the resultant figure is 331, plus starred titles, 176; making a total of 507 plays *known* to have been written by Lope.

[30] *Acad. N.*, X (1930), xxi.

[31] *Ibid.*, XIII (1930), xxxvi. He does, however, harbor doubts which appear beneath his implicit acceptance of Montalván's figures. He does not think it possible for the poet to have written 300 plays between 1632 and 1635, "porque Lope, en sus últimos años, escribió muy poco de teatro." But his attempts to reconcile the different figures lead to strange results. He thinks that *La moza de cántaro,* including the last four lines, was written in 1625, and that Lope, by that year, had written "mil y quinientas comedias, y quizá algunas más." He fails to note that the poet had set the number of his plays at 1,070 in or about September, 1624, so that, if Cotarelo is right, Lope would have composed 430 in the space of twelve or fourteen months, or one a day; and Lope himself in 1632 claimed only "más de ciento en horas veinticuatro." And in 1632 also he claimed 1,500 as a total. (See n. 21, p. 221, for a possible explanation.) If it is "completa-

Other scholars are more skeptical. Restori thought that the discrepancy between the figures of P^2 and *Parte XI* was due partly to the fact that the *Parte XI* total included *autos* and P^2 did not; but even then he acknowledges that the discrepancy is large.[32] He thinks, however, that Lope's errors in totaling his plays were made in good faith, refers to Montalván as a "pietoso ma imperterrito mentitore," and decides on a minimum, "che assai probabilmente fu nella realtà superato, di 1200 commedie ... e di 200 autos."[33]

Northup is forthright: "Neither Lope nor Montalván is a reliable witness. One may safely discount the final figures by 50 per cent without ceasing to be amazed."[34] N. Alonso Cortés, alluding to the "mil y quinientas" of *La moza de cántaro,* remarks: "Esta cifra es evidentemente exagerada; mas pasan de 1000 indudablemente las comedias que escribió."[35] Rennert and Castro are more specific: "La apreciación numérica que Lope hace de sus comedias (1500) es ciertamente muy exagerada para no hablar de las 300 más que le atribuye Montalván. Según los cálculos del mismo Lope, entre 1625 (1070) y 1632 (1500) escribió 430 comedias, o sea 61 al año, y esto desde los sesenta y tres a los setenta años. Esto es completamente inverosímil."[36]

III

The fact is that the large estimates rest entirely upon the word of Lope, Montalván, and Cervantes. The assertion of the last may be discounted simply because he could not have been in a position to know the facts, but it is nevertheless evidence that Lope's extraordinary productivity was proverbial in 1615. All other seventeenth-century statements derive from Lope or Montalván. These two distinguished men of letters, however, were not certified public accountants, but creative artists, adept at dramatizing facts and dealing

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mente imposible," as Cotarelo says, for Lope to have written 300 plays between 1632 and 1635, we have Montalván's figures rendered incredible by the same scholar who thinks them certain; the 1,800 are reduced to a few more than 1,500.

[32] In *Archivum Romanicum,* XI (1927), 387–89.

[33] *Ibid.,* p. 390.

[34] *An Introduction to Spanish Literature* (Chicago, 1925), p. 276.

[35] *Historia de la literatura española,* 2ª ed. (Valladolid, n.d.), p. 178.

[36] *Vida,* p. 379. See also p. 265 and p. 376, n. 1, where the authors speak of Lope's "cálculos fantásticos" and "su escaso cuidado en estas materias."

with huge quantities. Shakespeare, Corneille, or Ruiz de Alarcón, relatively light producers, might have kept score of their production with accuracy, but the case of Lope is very different. We have to consider, first, whether he and his friend really knew the facts, and, second, whether, knowing them, they were or were not persons who would intentionally deceive. Let us consider the two questions.

Montalván, unless he had access to Lope's data, if such existed, had no means of reaching any accurate figures. Obviously, he was not an investigator modern style, and he did not personally examine over 2,000 plays in the possession of many owners, test them for authenticity, and count those he found genuine. His total, 1,800, is a round number, though we cannot follow the mental processes by which he arrived at it. And when we evaluate his credibility, we can at once eliminate him from any consideration as a reliable witness, for the *Fama póstuma* is notoriously, and with little doubt intentionally, misleading. When its author declares that the cause of Lope's exile from Madrid was a duel, or that Lope's first wife died before he went with the Invincible Armada, he is far from the truth; and Rennert and Castro remark: "Es manifiesto que en esa narración Montalván introduce falsedades a sabiendas para despistar al lector."[37] If Montalván suppressed and altered facts in order to shield his hero's reputation, he would assuredly transform them to enhance it. He belonged to an age when there was no sharp dividing line between history and tradition; when, in political narrative as well as in holy legend, traditional accretions due to imaginative and credulous writers were treated with the same respect as facts. We consider it certain that Montalván raised his figures as high as he dared without exposing himself to mockery.

The case of Lope is quite different. He had an opportunity to know the truth, but he may not have known it; if he did, he may have distorted it.

In the first place, was he business man enough to keep track of his compositions, listing the titles as he turned them out, or at least jotting down a tally on a sheet of paper? He must have kept some record, or he would not have been able to draw up the *Peregrino* lists with the completeness which they seem to show. They are not absolutely complete, as has been seen, nor was that to be expected. We know of cases in which he did not keep copies of the plays he sold,

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[37] *Op. cit.*, p. 21.

so that, when publishing them, he had recourse to actors' copies for the *comedias* he printed.[38]

What, then, of his credibility? Did he always stick to the facts when he knew them? No. Examples may be cited.

In his sworn declaration before the court at the time of the Velázquez suit in 1587, Lope stated that he "es de edad de veinte y cuatro años, poco más o menos." Actually he was twenty-five years and four months old.[39] All his life he liked to represent himself as younger than he really was.

In the dedication of *Lucinda perseguida,* Lope alludes to "esta comedia, de las primeras que yo escribía cuando también eran mis años flores."[40] The play belongs, not to Lope's *juveniles años,*[41] but to 1599–1603.[42]

In the *epístola, El huerto deshecho,* written near the end of his life, Lope declared that he was fifteen, "en tres lustros de mi edad primera," when he took part in the Terceira expedition. It took place in 1583, when he was twenty years and seven months old.[43]

Sufficient demonstration, however, of Lope's intentional distortion of facts is found precisely in the case of paragraphs 6 and 7: that in the same year, 1618, he declared that he had written 462 and 800 plays. The saving phrase: "sin muchas de que no me acuerdo" is not enough to explain so great a discrepancy. Restori's halfhearted defense has already been mentioned (p. 224); but even he could not postulate more than 300 missing *autos.* Another conceivable hypothesis would be to assume that this *Peregrino* list and the accompanying prologue were revised by someone other than Lope, and that he was not informed of the changes. We have no evidence of that.

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[38] Cf. Lope's letter to the Duque de Sessa, referring to *La dama boba,* published in Asenjo Barbieri, *Ultimos amores de Lope de V. C.* (Madrid, 1876), p. 61, and in part in *Acad. N.,* XI, xxxv. Cf., with regard to *La burgalesa de Lerma, Acad. N.,* IV, vi. See also J. F. Montesinos' editions of *El cuerdo loco,* of *El marqués de las Navas,* and especially of *Barlaán y Josafat* for details regarding the differences between Lope's autographs and the texts as published.

[39] Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.,* p. 27 and n. 2. Cf. also p. 24, n. 6: "teniendo en cuenta lo poco veraz que fué Lope en todo el proceso, y además la facilidad con que trastornaba cifras y fechas."

[40] *Parte XVII* (1621); *Acad. N.,* VII, 324*b*.

[41] *Acad. N.,* VII, xix.

[42] Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.,* p. 536; *Revista de Filología Española,* V (1918), 263.

[43] Rennert and Castro, *op. cit.,* p. 17 and n. 1.

Lope, in fact, is just as worthy of belief as one would expect a marvelously fertile creative genius to be—neither more nor less. Imagination was the essence of his character; for him a wish was a fact. His notion of accuracy is beautifully exemplified in his statement that a list of 219 titles contains 230, and, later, that a list of 449 contains 462. We believe that when not bound down to relative realism by such lists Lope simply flourished his total by a guess in a round number, giving it sometimes an air of genuineness by making it end in a 2 or a 7.[44]

IV

Since the unsupported word of Lope and Montalván must be disregarded, what means are left us to estimate approximately Lope's production? Our opinion—it can be no more—will be based on the following considerations.

In the two *Peregrino* lists the titles of some 425 separate plays are given. Of these, about 260 are extant,[45] although some are not at all in the form in which Lope wrote them.[46] Seven, enumerated in note 13 above, can be added to the 260, although, as stated, there is always a chance that these plays may be in the lists under alternate titles. It is nothing short of amazing that these lists contain nearly 40 per cent of titles of plays not preserved, while we can find but

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[44] It is curious that critics who have accepted Lope's figures with good faith and believed that at any time in his career he could furnish offhand an accurate count of his plays have been unwilling to credit him with memory for events, places, impressions, and sensations. The fallibility of the *periodismo* theory for dating a play has already been pointed out (Morley, in *Revista de Filología Española,* XIX [1932], 151–54). To suppose that a play containing detailed references to Seville must have been written soon after a visit there, as did Menéndez y Pelayo in the case of *Los Vargas de Castilla,* is to overlook what every student of letters must know, that any great creative artist, whether novelist, dramatist, or painter, is gifted with extraordinary sensory memories, visual, aural, emotional. Lope's *periodismo* deserves more study than it has ever had. There is no reason to suppose that he was less endowed than a Balzac, a Proust, or many lesser writers for whom the power to call up remote scenes at will is the very stock in trade. But to be able to give the number of plays written at a certain date is the trick of a vaudeville performer in mathematics who can do nothing else. Lope had neither the power nor the desire to present an accurate figure.

[45] Cf. Morley, *"Peregrino" Lists,* n. 68, though the statement there made already needs revision.

[46] For example, *Antonio Roca, Arminda celosa, La difunta pleiteada, La esclava de su hijo, Santo Angelo.*

a possible 1.4 per cent of extant authentic plays surely omitted. The strong inference is that the *Peregrino* lists contain nearly all that Lope wrote prior to 1618.

It is hardly less striking that the *Partes* which Lope put together and gave to the printer from 1618 to 1625 (*X–XX*) contain so few plays outside the lists. Out of 132 titles, only about 19 (some are uncertain) fall in this class.[47] Lope was drawing on the *caudal* from which the lists were made. *Partes XXI* and *XXII* (1635) tell a different story; they contain 21 titles not in the lists, and not one of the 21 can at present be dated as of 1618 or earlier.

Can the census before 1618 be enlarged in any way? Among Lope's authentic non-datable plays are 32 which could derive from before that date.[48] Adding these for good measure to the 431 already obtained, we get as a result 463—extraordinarily close, by the way, to the Phoenix's own 462. There remains a borderland of *comedias* doubtfully ascribed to Lope which can contribute some 80 titles which might have been composed before 1618.[49] If we assume that there are enough of them, genuine and written before 1618, to make 500 (and it is large measure), we shall have a figure representing, in our belief, about the number that Lope had actually composed by 1618.

If we were to take at face value the 800 of paragraph 6, we should need to postulate an outright loss of 300 plays, of which neither manuscripts nor titles remain. To appraise properly the likelihood of so severe a wreckage, one should conduct a survey of the entire century, and we are not prepared to do so at present. However, we may glance at a few easily obtained facts.

There are only two dramatists who vie with Lope in the huge

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[47] The roster is as follows, each *Parte* containing 12 plays: *X* (1618), *Amante agradecido* (probably *Galán agradecido* of P); *XI* (1618), *Fortuna merecida; XII* (1619), *Desdichada Estefanía; XIII* (1620), *Españoles en Flandes* (probably *Vuelta de los españoles en Flandes,* P²); *XIV* (1620), *Almenas de Toro; XV* (1621), *Querer la propia desdicha, Vengadora de las mujeres; XVI* (1621), *Mirad a quien alabáis, Grandezas de Alejandro, Felisarda, Inocente Laura; XVII* (1621), *Hidalgo Abencerraje* (possibly, with a misprint, *Gallardo Jacimín* of P²); *XVIII* (1623), *Quien ama no haga fieros, Rústico del cielo* (probably *Hermano Francisco* of P²); *XIX* (1623), *De cosario a cosario, Hijo de los leones, Limpieza no manchada* (written 1618); *XX* (1625), *Discreta venganza, Lo cierto por lo dudoso, Pobreza no es vileza, Marido más firme* (written 1620–21).

[48] See Appendix A (p. 233) for the names.

[49] *Ibid.*

discrepancy between their claims and their surviving works: Tirso de Molina and Vélez de Guevara. In the preface to *Los cigarrales de Toledo* (1612?; first extant edition, 1624), the jovial monk wrote of the "trezientas [comedias] que en catorze años han divertido melancolías y honestado ociosidades." In the *Tercera Parte* of his *comedias* (1634), his editorial and supposititious nephew declared in the *Dedicatoria* that his uncle had written more than 400: "Gusano es su autor de seda: de su misma sustancia ha labrado la numerosa cantidad de telas con que cuatrocientas y más comedias vistieron por veinte años a sus profesores." These bare statements have gone unchallenged through the centuries, yet Tirso's extant plays (and titles) are some 80. Is the word of the monk Téllez more to be trusted than that of the priest Lope? May we not hazard the guess that Tirso, who followed his admired master so closely in technique, imitated him also in boasting of his fecundity and in exaggerating it?

This same *Dedicatoria* contains what appears to be a misstatement of fact, repeated in the preface *A cualquiera* to the same *Tercera Parte,* viz., that Tirso had for ten years desisted from writing plays.[50] Yet, during these same ten years he wrote *No hay peor sordo* (1625), *La huerta de Juan Fernández* (1626), *La firmeza en la hermosura* (after 1629), and probably *Del enemigo el primer consejo.* In 1629, while in forced exile from Madrid at Trujillo, he received 900 *reales* for three *comedias* sold to Josef Salazar, *autor.*[51]

The case of Luis Vélez de Guevara is similar. He himself in 1637 claimed to have written 400 *comedias:* "Hartos [consonantes de sangre] he sudado en 400 comedias que he hecho."[52] The same figure was given by Montalván in 1632, and by Vélez' son Juan and Pellicer de Salas after the dramatist's death in 1644.[53] Were we to take these statements literally, we should necessarily infer that Vélez wrote no play in the last twelve years of his life, which is not true. We have here simply another case of loose assertions. Vélez' extant plays (and titles) number about 85.

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[50] Cf. Tirso de Molina, *Comedias,* ed. Cotarelo y Mori, I (Madrid, 1906), p. xliii and n. 3; and p. lv, n. 3.

[51] Blanca de los Ríos, *El enigma biográfico de Tirso de Molina* (Madrid, 1928), p. 64.

[52] In a *Discurso jocoso* cited by E. Cotarelo in *Bol. de la R. Acad. Esp.,* IV (1917), 160.

[53] See, respectively, Montalván, *Para todos* (Madrid, 1632), fol. 358v; *Rev. Arch.,* VII (1902), 130; La Barrera, *Catálogo,* 465*a.*

Without doubt many plays disappeared in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; but there is not sufficient reason to suppose that they vanished by the hundred. Evidence of meaningless exaggeration is abundant. Juan de la Cueva declared that Mal Lara wrote a thousand plays (all lost).[54] For himself he lamented that, having composed a thousand *comedias,* he was still poor.[55] Yet, if his lost plays are only those which were to be included in his announced second part,[56] they would be no more than fourteen, the number in the first. Some plays of Cervantes have been lost, as all know. The names of Berrio, Vega, Pedro Díaz, Alonso Díaz, etc., are cited as authors of missing works.[57] Alonso Remón or Ramón offers the most striking case. Mentioned by Cervantes as the most prolific dramatist next to Lope, described in 1629 as the author of more than 200 *comedias,* he has left but 5 under his name.[58] It is supposed that he wrote none after 1615. Is this testimony altogether credible? Is any testimony as to numbers credible? Our survey has

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[54] In the *Exemplar poético* (1606): "en el teatro mil tragedias puso."

[55] Book IV of the *Viaje de Sannio* (1585). Sannio says:

"Con todo esto muero de pobreza,
i moriré, si tú no lo remedias,
sin valerme de ingenio ni agudeza,
ni averle dado al Vulgo mil comedias."

F. A. Wulff, *Poèmes inédits de Juan de la Cueva,* in *Lund Universitets Årsskrift,* XXIII (1886–87), 43. It is supposed, with very good reason, that Sannio represents Cueva himself.

[56] In the *Romance al libro* he wrote:

"... las Poesías
que daré agora a la imprenta,
que serán segunda parte
de Comedias y Tragedias ..."

Coro febeo (Sevilla, 1587), fol. 169 ff.

[57] On these names see La Barrera, *Catálogo,* and Marcel Bataillon in a recent article, "Simples réflexions sur Juan de la Cueva" (*Bulletin Hispanique,* XXXVII [1935], 320–36). The latter would see in Cueva only a relic of a prolific age, surrounded by other dramatists of equal or greater importance whose works have disappeared. Our conclusions, it is evident, point in the opposite direction.

[58] *Prólogo* to *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses* (1615): "los trabajos del doctor Ramón, que fueron los más después del gran Lope." For the statement that Remón wrote "mas de otras doscientas" *comedias,* see La Barrera, *op. cit.,* 318*a*.

not hitherto embraced Lope's *autos sacramentales*. But if we look back over the words of the different witnesses we have cited, we find that in 1627 Pellicer de Salas (see paragraph 14) attributed to Lope 600 *autos;* whilst in 1635 Antonio de la Peña (paragraph 17) gave him 200, and Montalván (paragraph 19) more than 400, the last figure being repeated by Nicolás Antonio in 1672.

It seems clear that none is, as a witness, worthy of belief. Spain in that period, as in most others, esteemed pure productivity as a sign of creative power. Ruiz de Alarcón was scorned because he wrote less than 30 plays, and claimed no more. Lope de Vega turned them out at truly incredible speed, but the truth was not enough: he must set up a fantastic mark for his rivals to shoot at, and they, unable to touch it, wrote what they could and doubled or trebled the figures in their public statements.

It goes without saying that, in the helter-skelter effort to feed the public new *comedias,* many never saw print. Yet the number lost must have diminished after the early seventeenth century. Lope was compelled to publish his own plays in order to forestall the eager booksellers: they would have been printed in any case. There was money in it. The great collections of *Diferentes autores* and *Comedias escogidas* gathered up the cream. No evidence requires us to believe that any large proportion of the works of Montalván, Ruiz Zorrilla, or Moreto have disappeared; nor, we venture to say, of those of Tirso de Molina or Vélez de Guevara. Calderón, a diligent writer, composed, by his own statement, 111 *comedias*. Lope, infinitely more fluent than the rest, provided a list which included 170 titles otherwise unknown. May not this list be regarded as nearly complete for a man of fifty-six?

V

Let us now see in what ways one may project into the later years of Lope's life the figures obtained for 1618. If, as we have assumed, 500 may represent the number written before then, and if we assume also that our Phoenix continued to write at the same approximate rate until his death seventeen years later, we should have a proportion such as this: 40 (the number of years he had been writing if he began abundant production at the age of sixteen) : 500 :: 17 : x, and $x = 212.5$. The total production would then be 712. The chances are good that he did not write so fluently after 1618 as be-

fore; one may believe that even a Lope fell off as he neared seventy-three.[59] It would be safe to reduce the amount to 700.

Another method of reconstruction is available. Up to and including 1618 we can list some 91 datable plays—and by "datable" we mean plays whose date of composition can be fixed, by internal or external evidence, within a few years. In order to preserve the parallel we exclude those listed in P, for which no other date is known. After and including 1619, there are 21 datable plays. The proportion in this trial will take the form 91 : 500 :: 21 : x, and x = about 115; total 615.

These are mere approximations, of course; but the only way to break down the inferences drawn from these figures is to assume the loss of a considerable number of manuscripts prior to 1618.[60] It is true that Lope regarded his *comedias* as the most vulgar and least estimable of his productions; and it is true, as shown by the P and P^2 lists, that up to 1618 40 per cent of his production has disappeared. But we believe that the lists are not far from complete. As against the unreliable statements of Lope and Montalván, the burden of proof seems to be on those who support them. Cotarelo asserts[61] that "el incendio del archivo dramático del teatro del Príncipe, en 1802, nos privó de centenares de comedias manuscritas de Lope, que allí perecieron abrasadas." His authority is not named. If the surmise is correct, it would be hard to show that they were not copies of plays now extant, or of plays by others ascribed to Lope in the eighteenth century.

We shall therefore, till further documentary evidence comes to light, be compelled to believe that 800 plays would be a generous allowance for Lope's total dramatic production. This number suffices to establish him as a "marvel of nature." It is hard to see why his

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[59] If his own word is to be believed (that, we know, is doubtful), he wrote scarcely any *comedias* in 1619 (Rennert and Castro, *Vida*, p. 270), and in 1629 was too discouraged in the face of public rebuff (*ibid.*, p. 316; Cotarelo in *Acad. N.*, XIII [1930], xxxvi).

[60] Those who, like the editors of the *Acad. N.* edition, seem sure that the absence of a title in P and P^2 means that a play belongs after 1618, and who, at the same time, believe in the total of 1,800 plays, are asserting that Lope wrote about 1,350 plays in the last seventeen years of his life. A choice must be made: either the P lists are substantially correct, or the nonappearance of a title in them proves nothing whatever. We, accepting the former alternative, recognize that a few titles were omitted.

[61] *Acad. N.*, XIII, xxxvi.

admirers should wish to make him out still more prolific. Surely the drama is one field of literature where quantity is of minor importance.

APPENDIX A

Authentic plays not in P or P^2 which may be before 1619: *Almenas de Toro, Bella Aurora, Caballero de Olmedo, Cierto por lo dudoso, Competencia en los nobles, Corona de Ungría, Cuentas del gran capitán, De cosario a cosario, Dios hace reyes, Discreta venganza, Felisarda, Firmeza en la desdicha, Grandezas de Alejandro, Hidalgo Bencerraje, Inocente Laura, Mayor vitoria, Mirad a quien alabáis, Nacimiento de Cristo, Nadie se conoce, Negro del mejor amo, Peligros de la ausencia, Porfiar hasta morir, Por la puente Juana, Primera información, Querer la propia desdicha, Quien ama no haga fieros, Robo de Dina, Saber por no saber, San Diego de Alcalá, Servir a buenos, Tellos de Meneses I, Vargas de Castilla.*

APPENDIX B

Doubtful plays not in P or P^2, which may be perhaps, if by Lope, before 1619: *Adversa fortuna de ... Cabrera, Alcalde de Zalamea, Aldehuela y el gran prior, Amigos enojados, Amantes y celosos, Amar como se ha de amar, Audiencias del rey d. Pedro, Bernardo del Carpio II, Buen vecino, Burlas de Benito, Cautivos de Argel, Ciudad sin Dios, Contrarios de amor, Corona derribada, David perseguido, Devoción del rosario, Doncellas de Simancas, Donde no está su dueño ..., Dos bandoleras, Engaño en la verdad, En los indicios la culpa, Esclavo fingido, Fianza satisfecha, Gran columna fogosa, Guerras de amor, Hijo por engaño, Honra por la mujer, Ilustre fregona, Intención castigada, Jardín de Vargas, Julián Romero, Lanza por lanza, Lealtad en la traición, Ley ejecutada, Loco por fuerza, Lo que está determinado, Llave de la honra, Mártires de Madrid, Más valéis vos Antona, Más vale salto de mata ..., Mayor hazaña de Alejandro, Milagros del desprecio, Mocedades de Bernardo, Nacimiento de Cristo* (MS), *Nardo Antonio, Palacio confuso, Paloma de Toledo, Pedro de Urdemalas, Pérdida honrosa, Pérdidas del que juega, Pleito por la honra, Porfía hasta el temor, Premio riguroso, Primeros mártires del Japón, Prodigio de Etiopía, Prodigioso príncipe transilvano, Próspera fortuna de ... Cabrera, Púsoseme el sol, Reina doña María, Rey*

fingido, Rey por semejanza, Rey por trueque, Santa Casilda, Satisfacer callando, Selvas y bosques de amor, Sierras de Guadalupe, Silencio agradecido, Sucesos del príncipe Lisardo, Sufrimiento de honor, Tercera orden de S. Francisco, Toledano vengado, Valor de Malta, Vaso de elección, Vencido vencedor, Venganza piadosa, Ventura de la fea, Ventura en la desgracia, Ver y no creer, Vuelta de Egipto (MS).

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