

New Art of Bodily Care in the Works of Lope de Vega and López Pinciano

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Abstract: *Treatises on acting appeared on the Spanish scene in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, especially due to the development of the dramatic genre known as the nueva comedia—a new style of play where both tragedy and comedy coexisted. Spanish rhetoricians, such as Félix Lope de Vega and Alonso López Pinciano, believed the actor’s inner actions or state of mind easily influenced the outward form of the body, manifesting the same body-mind relation of Richard Shusterman’s somaesthetics. From a somaesthetics perspective, these early modern acting treatises provide an innovative performance method on the art of bodily care, synthesizing physical movements with those of experience as a means for dynamic action.*

Keywords: *López Pinciano, Lope de Vega, comedia, Spain, theater, actor, actress, gesture.*

Treatises on acting appeared on the Spanish scene in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, especially due to the development of the dramatic genre known as the *nueva comedia*—a new style of play where both tragedy and comedy coexisted. Spanish rhetoricians, such as Félix Lope de Vega and Alonso López Pinciano, believed the actor’s inner actions or state of mind easily influenced the outward form of the body, manifesting the same body-mind relation of Richard Shusterman’s somaesthetics. Lope de Vega’s *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en nuestro tiempo* (1609; *New Art of Making Plays in our Time*), a treatise written in the form of a performance piece, continues the advice first revealed in his saints play *Lo fingido verdadero* (1608; *The True Deceiver*). Lope experiments with acting techniques that underscore how an artist’s lived experiences and emotions unite in the interpretation of art. On the other hand, López Pinciano’s *Philosophía antigua poetica* (1596; *Philosophy of the Ancient Style of Poetry*), a manual on the art of acting, advocates proper exercises that build upon the actor’s somatic skills when preparing for a role. From a somaesthetics perspective, these early modern acting treatises provide an innovative performance method on the art of bodily care, synthesizing physical movements with those of experience as a means for dynamic action.

Pragmatic Somaesthetics

Richard Shusterman’s somaesthetics, the first systematic framework structured for mindful-somatic enhancement, proves useful in examining how seventeenth-century Spanish actors might have conditioned their bodies in an effort to prepare for a role. Pragmatic somaesthetics, in particular, offers practical means to improve embodied experiences and somatic awareness, thereby functioning as a tool to explain how an artist’s lived experiences and emotions unite in the interpretation of art. Its objectives are threefold: the desire to improve the function of the body; self-knowledge of one’s somatic habits and lived experiences that affect one’s moods and

attitudes; and an “effective will” to act on the self-knowledge.³² In theater, an actor must draw from her inner emotions or experiences in order to control or change a particular ingrained movement or gesture that prevents her from effectively performing. The three dimensions of pragmatic somaesthetics (representational, experiential, and performative) with their various technical methods work to improve the actor’s appearance, experience, and performance on the stage – and beyond. All three dimensions work toward a freedom of movement through somatic sensibility, which can be associated with the acting techniques found in Lope de Vega’s manifesto.

The New Art of Acting in Their Time

Félix Lope de Vega y Carpio, one of the most prolific playwrights from the seventeenth century, promoted a pragmatic approach to acting in *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en nuestro tiempo*. Lope expounds on dramatic theory and practice, offering a specific formula for writing and performing plays that depart from neo-Aristotelian precepts. For example, he rejects the three famous unities found in Aristotle’s *Poetics*: the unity of time, place, and action. Lope prefers representing life as Nature intended, uniting tragedy with comedy for a more realistic and entertaining new *comedia*: “Lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado,/ ... que aquesta variedad deleita mucho. /Buen ejemplo nos da naturaleza, que por tal variedad tiene belleza”³³ (Tragedy mixed with comedy ... for this variety causes much delight. Nature gives us good example, for through such variety it is beautiful).³⁴ Edward H. Friedman describes it perfectly when he states that Lope “seems to intuit that the humanist shift from logic to rhetoric makes sense for the theater, which is both art and craft.”³⁵ Furthermore, Lope defends the value of modern Spanish theater with the actor center stage: “Oye atento, y del arte no disputes/que en la comedia se hallará modo/ que, oyéndola, se puede saber todo” (Let one hear with attention, and dispute not of the art; for in [a play] everything will be found of such a sort that in listening to it everything becomes evident).³⁶ He appreciates the actors’ commitment to the plays and their ability to embody their roles, something fundamentally paramount to the *comedia*’s success.

In *Arte nuevo*, Lope suggests a form of pragmatic somaesthetics when he instructs the playwright to create dynamic characters that transform the actors. His instructions, “Describe los amantes con afectos/que muevan con extremo a quien escucha; / los soliloquios pinte de manera/ que se transforme todo el recitante y, con mudarse a sí, mude al oyente” (Describe lovers with those passions which greatly move whoever listens to them; manage soliloquies in such a manner that the [actor] is quite transformed, and in changing himself, changes the listener),³⁷ reflects the experiential dimension of somaesthetics, which “refuses to exteriorize the body as an alienated thing distinct from the active spirit of human experience.”³⁸ This reasoning applies to actors as well. Lope interconnects the performative form with one’s inner feelings in his dramatic interpretation of the Saint Ginés.

In the *comedia Lo fingido verdadero*, a Roman actor named Ginés experiences a religious

32 Richard Shusterman, *Performing Live*, (London: Cornell UP, 2000), 138-39.

33 Lope de Vega, *Arte nuevo*, (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, S.A., 1967), vv. 174.

34 Lope de Vega, *The New Art of Writing Plays in Our Time*, trans. William T. Brewster (New York: Dramatic Museum of Columbia U, 1914). All translations of Lope de Vega’s *Arte nuevo* are Brewster’s translations unless otherwise noted.

35 Edward H. Friedman, “Resisting Theory: Rhetoric and Reason in Lope De Vega’s ‘Arte Nuevo,’” *Neophilologus* 75, no. 1, (1991), 92.

36 Lope de Vega, *Arte nuevo*, vv. 387-89.

37 *Ibid.*, vv. 272-76.

38 Richard Shusterman, “Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 57:3 (1999), 306.

conversion before the emperor Diocleciano while preparing for the role of a Christian. Through the voice of his protagonist, Lope advises that, in order to realistically “imitate a lover,” the actor must tap into his lived experiences, “Una ausencia, unos celos, un agravio, un desdén riguroso y otras cosas que son de amor tiernísimos efectos, harálos, si los siente, tiernamente; mas no los sabrá hacer si no los siente”³⁹ (The pain of absence, jealousy, the flaring of violence and hate, these are the feelings which we live, the stock in trade of the actor’s art).⁴⁰ Lope focuses on the qualities inherent to experiential somaesthetics with the belief that the emotions of pain, envy, violence and hate reside in the interior depth of a person’s somatic as well as psychological memory. Only when the actor calls on his own experience can he realize the full potential of his character, endowing it with human depth. The actor’s experiential somaesthetics fills in the gaps left by the play’s text, providing meaning through representation and interpretation. In turn, the actors’ embodiment of the characters actively engages the spectators, who experience a transformation of their own.

Lope de Vega, well aware of the power that the popular classes had over the success of the actor and ultimately of the *comedia*, emphasized the importance of playing to them, especially since they were the bulk of the paying audience in the playhouses. Spectators, who were active participants in the world of early modern theater, responded to the actors’ performances through physical awareness, employing somaesthetic practices that empowered them.⁴¹ For example, audience members, especially those from the plebeian class who made up a good portion of the playgoers, expressed their disapproval of a performance by verbally and physically attacking actors on stage with “a torrent of insults, rotten fruit, and any other objects on hand.”⁴² Friedman affirms that “the pragmatics of the stage—the need to keep the people happy—and the overwhelming response to the *comedia nueva* make it worth Lope’s while to stress the significance of reception, to blend means with end, the popular with the cultured, *lo justo* with *el gusto*.”⁴³ Lope knew that pleasing the audience hinged on the actor’s skill; consequently, he instructed the actor to practice representational and experiential performance techniques in order to develop their acting skills.

In order to prevent gross errors in a characterization, Lope first encourages actors to practice forms of representational-performative somaesthetics on stage: “Let not ladies disregard their character, and if they change costumes, let it be in such wise that it may be excused.”⁴⁴ Audiences of all types found the “male disguise very pleasing.” The use of male costumes, or *mujer vestida de hombre* (women dressed as a man), was a common trope frequently employed by playwrights. Spectators’ sensorial perception of the characters increased when actors played roles that represented genders other than their own, especially women who dressed in men’s attire. The masculine woman or *mujer varonil* adopts various forms. Historian Melveena McKendrick explains that the *mujer varonil* represents the woman “who shuns love and marriage, the learned woman, the career woman, the female bandit, the female leader and warrior, the usurper of man’s social role, the woman who wears masculine dress or the woman who indulges in

39 Lope de Vega, “Lo fingido verdadero,” (Barcelona: Editorial Iberia, 1967), 232.

40 Lope de Vega, *The Great Pretenders and The Gentleman from Olmedo*, Trans. David Johnston (London: Oberon Books, 1993), 48-49.

41 For an in-depth discussion on early modern Spanish audience embodiment, see my article “A Mindful Audience: Embodied Spectatorship in Early Modern Madrid.”

42 Jodi Campbell, *Monarchy, Political Culture, and Drama in Seventeenth-Century Madrid: Theater of Negotiation* (Burlington, V.T.: Ashgate, 2006), 40.

43 Edward H. Friedman, “Resisting Theory,” 89.

44 Lope de Vega, *The New Art*.

masculine pursuits.”⁴⁵ Just as in somaesthetics, the practice of self-stylization goes beyond the aesthetic changing of the body; it becomes the locus for which the individual exhibits her style or identity.⁴⁶ Illustrating the interconnectedness of representational and experiential somaesthetics, theater theorist Patrice Pavis asserts, “A body is ‘worn’ and ‘carried’ by a costume as much as the costume is worn and carried by the body. Actors develop their character and refine their underscore while exploring their costume; one helps the other find its identity.”⁴⁷ In other words, it is not enough to dress the part; the actor must also feel the part. Audience members responded with pleasure to actors who embodied their characters, especially those who played transgender roles. Therefore, many playwrights incorporated these types of personas in their plays. In fact, at least one hundred of Lope’s plays included female and male gender-bending characters.

In the process of creating a role, Lope’s *Arte nuevo* declares that one should “be on his guard against impossible things, for it is of the chiefest importance that only the likeness of truth should be represented.” However, from Shannon Sullivan’s standpoint, “when considering the truth of a claim, one is not asking whether it mirrors reality, but whether it satisfies various desires and needs.”⁴⁸ In somaesthetics, exercises intensify emotions and thoughts that lead to heightened insight and clarity. For that reason, “rather than relying on a priori principles or seeking necessary truths, the pragmatist works from experience, trying to clarify its meaning so that its present quality and its consequences for future experience might be improved,”⁴⁹ much like the professional actor who builds on her own training and experience to master her craft.

Seventeenth-century Spanish actors subscribed to Lope’s instructions in *Art nuevo*, which connect the actors’ inner emotions with their physical actions. For instance, the manifesto coaches actors to tap into their experiential somaesthetics when developing a role: “If the king should speak, imitate as much as possible the gravity of a king; if the sage speaks, observe a sententious modesty.” As Isabella Torres submits, Lope “credited actors with the ability to delve into the depths of their ‘type’ and to draw their audience into the play’s deceitful hall of mirrors.”⁵⁰ Evident in the character Diocletian’s proclamation: “Mas pienso que es artificio / Deste gran representante, / Porque turbarse un amante / Fue siempre el mayor indicio”⁵¹ (I think it’s the artifice of this great actor, because being upset is always the best sign that someone’s in love).⁵² Actors oftentimes led peripatetic lives, traveling from city to city and performing as many as 44 shows a month. Therefore, actors who neglected to cultivate appropriate somaesthetic habits would find themselves unable to sustain these intense schedules, let alone highly emotional characters. Moreover, ineffectual somaesthetic awareness could result in the development of “highly neurotic actors,” a fear expressed by early modern critics. According to Joseph R. Roach:

The desperate prejudice against actors in the seventeenth century was motivated in part by superstitious fears of their unnatural practices on the audience ... However, the principal danger was to the actor himself. The same physiological model that explained his powers

45 Melveena McKendrick, *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age; a Study of the Mujer Varonil* (London: Cambridge UP, 1974) ix.

46 Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2012), 27.

47 Patrice Pavis, *Analyzing Performance: Theater, Dance, and Film*, trans. David Williams (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 2006), 175.

48 Shannon Sullivan, *Living Across and Through Skins: Transactional Bodies, Pragmatism, and Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2001), 142.

49 Shusterman, *Performing Live*, 96.

50 Isabella Torres, “Introduction to *The Great Pretenders and The Gentleman from Olmedo*, by Lope de Vega, trans. David Johnston (London: Oberon Books, 1993), 10.

51 Lope de Vega, “Lo fingido,” 243.

52 Lope de Vega, *Acting Is Believing*, trans. Michael D. McGaha (San Antonio: Trinity UP, 1986), 76.

of bodily self-transformation also demonstrated his acute vulnerability to the forces that he summoned.⁵³

It was common practice for performers to focus on emotion rather than on the message to persuade their audience (28). Well aware of this custom, Lope de Vega creates a scene in which the protagonist envisions how he would gesticulate his emotions:

¿Cómo haré yo que parezca
Que soy el mismo cristiano
Cuando al tormento me ofrezca?
¿Con/qué acción, qué rostro y mano
En que alabanza merezca?⁵⁴

How shall I do to convince them that I am that very Christian when they lead me off to be tortured? How shall I move, what kind of facial expressions, what gestures shall I use to win their praise?⁵⁵

Initially, Ginés contemplates adopting the cliché mannerisms of a ‘Christian’:

Derribaré con furor/Los ídolos que desaman./Quiérome sentar aquí
Como que en un gran tormento/Me tienen puesto, y que vi
Que se abría el firmamento, /Que ellos lo dicen así.
Y que/algún mártir me hablaba,
O que yo hablaba con él:
¡bravo paso, industria brava!
Llamaré al/César cruel,
Como que a mi lado estaba.
Perro, tirano sangriento
(bien voy, bien le muestro furia); ...
¡Qué bien levanto la voz!⁵⁶

I’ll furiously knock down the idols they hate. I’ll just make believe that I’m being cruelly tortured and that I see the firmament open, for that’s what they all say, and that some previous martyr is talking to me, or that I’m talking to him. Oh, what a clever idea, what a great scene! I’ll call Caesar cruel, right to his very face. “You dog, you bloody tyrant!” Oh, this is good! I’m really getting mad! ... I sound terrific when I shout!⁵⁷

This monologue exposes the pitfalls of inadequate somaesthetic practices that succumb to “highly neurotic” acting. By relying on stereotypical gestures that lead to ‘overacting’ as he begins to shout, Ginés’s character “lacks the sincerity of nature,” in the words of Roman rhetorician Quintilian. In order for an actor to build a character that lives through him, Quintilian advises one “to excite the appropriate feeling in oneself, to form a mental picture of the facts, and to

53 Joseph R. Roach, *The Player’s Passion: Studies in the Science of Acting* (Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1993), 27-28.

54 Lope de Vega, “Lo fingido,” 264-65.

55 McGaha, *Acting Is Believing*, 90.

56 Lope, “Lo fingido,” 265.

57 McGaha, *Acting Is Believing*, 90.

exhibit an emotion that cannot be distinguished from the truth.”⁵⁸

In rejecting conventional acting practices that contrast with the *comedia nueva*'s form and style, Lope interweaves somatic techniques that connect experiential and representational forms. His protagonist discovers the need for somatic sensibility in order to make his performance effective without weakening his will to perform. In a moment of clarity, Ginés acknowledges that only by intimately connecting the mind and body does the character come to life. He considers how the “ears play the part of a deaf man ... eyes play a blind man ... smell is like those people who, according to many writers, live off the fragrance of flowers ... because it is fated to be frustrated rather than bear fruit ... touch plays the part of a madman who tries to touch heaven with his vain thoughts,” and taste, “the greatest and best actor of all, now plays the part of a lover who persists in his mistaken path.”⁵⁹ Subsequently, failure to will one's body to perform the simple physical functions such as breathing could result in a poor performance, which would be devastating to an actor's career.

The practice of physical exercise stems from the school of ancient philosophers who advocated, in Shusterman's viewpoint, corporeal training, “since fit bodies provide sharper perceptions and more discipline and versatility for adapting oneself in thought.”⁶⁰ Somaesthetic practices can “reveal and improve somatic malfunctionings that normally go undetected even though they impair our well-being and performance” (303). Quintilian endorsed a strict regimen of “walking, rubbing-down with oil, abstinence from sexual intercourse, an easy digestion” when training for a performance. He illustrates how even hidden “somatic malfunctionings” can deter actors from genuinely portraying their characters on stage: “If gesture and the expression of the face are out of harmony with the speech, if we look cheerful when our words are sad, or shake our heads when making a positive assertion, our words will not only lack weight, but will fail to carry conviction. Gesture and movement are also productive of grace.”⁶¹ Quintilian suggests the actor adopt techniques similar to ancient Greek orators, “It was for this reason that Demosthenes used to practise his delivery in front of a large mirror, since, in spite of the Greek that its reflexions are reversed, he trusted his eyes to enable him to judge accurately the effect produced” (11.3.67-68). The practice of using mirrors to improve one's physical behavior was seen in seventeenth-century theater as well.

Speaking through his character Betterton in *The Life of Mr. Thomas Betterton* (1710), Charles Gildon (1665-1724) suggests the same exercise as Demosthenes', recommending “extensive practice before a mirror to perfect ‘the whole Body likewise in all its Postures and Motions.’”⁶² The Italian singer and actor Cavaliere Nicolini Grimaldi (1673-1732), also known as Nicolino, prepared himself for a performance by exercising daily in front of a mirror “to practice deportment and gesture” (68). By active observation, the actor becomes aware of his posture, movement, and changes in equilibrium, and hence “should be able to infer from his proprioceptive feelings what his posture from the back would look like in actual performance (without using any mirrors), even though he does not strictly see himself from the back.”⁶³ Consequently, Lope de Vega endorsed a form of performative somaesthetics, recognizing the

58 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, ed. Lee Honeycutt, trans. John Selby Watson (Iowa State, 2006), 11.3.61-62.

59 McGaha, *Acting Is Believing*, 70.

60 Shusterman, “Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal” (*The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57, no. 3, 1999), 302.

61 Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, 11.3.67-68.

62 Roach, *The Player's Passion*, 55.

63 Shusterman, “Body and the Arts: The Need for Somaesthetics” (*Diogenes*, 2014), 141; In “Proprioception as an Aesthetic Sense,” Barbara Montero defines proprioception as “the sense by which we acquire information about the positions and movements of our own bodies, via receptors in the joints, tendons, ligaments, muscles, and skin.” She claims “that proprioception is an aesthetic sense and that one can make aesthetic judgments based on proprioceptive experience” (231).

importance of the actor's continued refinement of his craft. Some ten years after writing *Arte nuevo*, Lope emphasizes the actor's skill and its impact on the success of the *comedia* in his *Dozena Parte*, an anthology of some of his works published: "I know that in reading them you will remember the deeds of those who served this body of work, for the movement of the figures alone will grace you with pleasure."⁶⁴ It makes sense that Lope would dedicate much of his treatise to the method of acting, since actors ultimately brought the plays to life, a point also made in Alonso López Pinciano's *Philosophía antigua poetica*.

A Somatic Philosophy on the Art of Acting

López Pinciano's *Philosophía antigua poética*, the first major Spanish work on the art of poetry, comprises 13 *epístolas* or letters dealing with the distinctions among the poetic genres. The treatise, written in three-person dialogues, dedicates the thirteenth letter to the art of acting. López Pinciano focuses mostly on the somatic components of acting, declaring that the actor, through the manifestation of his character, gives force to the playwright's words.⁶⁵ In emphasizing qualities inherent to representational and experiential somaesthetics, López Pinciano advises the actor to study the physical movements of the person he wishes to imitate, "conuiene, pues, que el actor mire la persona que va a imitar y de tal manera se transforme en ella, que a todos parezca no imitación, sino propiedad" (in order to transform himself into the person he wishes to imitate, in a manner that will not seem an imitation, but rather the person himself" (502). Furthermore, López Pinciano challenges Cartesian dualism by affirming, like somaesthetics, that the human self thinks, acts, and exists as a soma – a unified body-mind. The rhetorician believes "que no la ánima anda, ni come, ni bebe, ni discurre, consulta y elige, sino el hombre, que es decir, ánima y cuerpo unidos, andan, comen, beben, discurren, consultan y eligen ... las acciones dramáticas y de representantes tienen mucho más de lo sutil y espiritual que no las de los volteadores" (that the soul neither walks nor eats, nor drinks, nor runs, nor consults and chooses, but man, that is, soul and body together, walk, eat, drink, run, consult and choose . . . [and that] dramatic actions and actors are much more delicate and soulful than those of acrobats) (496). In other words, acting consists of more than mere physical imitation since both body and mind compose man. The actor who practiced experiential and representational somaesthetics enhanced her performative skills, empowering her to better embody her character.

In order to achieve total embodiment, López Pinciano, like Lope de Vega, insists that the character develop from the actor's inner and outer actions "porque las personas graves y trágicas se mueven muy lentamente, las comunes y cómicas con más ligereza, los viejos más pesadamente, los mozos menos, y los niños no saben estar quietos" (because serious and tragic people move very slowly, the common and comic folk more lightly, the old more heavily, the young men less, and children do not know how to stay still) (504). López Pinciano describes how natural gestures vary from person to person, depending on the individual: "Los cuales vemos mueven diferentemente los pies, las manos, la boca, los ojos y la cabeza, según la pasión de que están ocupados; que el tímido retira los pies y el osado acomete, y el que tropieza pasa adelante contra su voluntad" (Those who, as we can see, move their feet, their hands, their mouths, their eyes, and their heads differently, according to their mood; the shy draw back their feet and the bold move forward, and the one that stumbles advances against his will" (504). Focusing his attention

64 Victor Dixon, "Manuel Vallejo: un actor se prepara: un comediante del siglo de oro ante un texto (El castigo sin venganza)," (Actor y técnica de representación del teatro clásico español: Madrid, 17-19 de mayo de 1988, edited by José María, Díez Borque, London: Tamesis, 1989), 74.

65 Alonso López Pinciano, *Philosophía Antigua Poética*, ed. Peña P. Muñoz (Valladolid: Impr. y Librería Nacional y Extranjera de Hijos de Rodríguez, 1894), 504. All of translations of López Pinciano are my own.

on the hands, López Pinciano connects experiential somaesthetics to representational forms, directing the actor in the process:

Si es grave, puede jugar de mano, según y cómo es lo que trata, porque si esta desapasionado puede mover la mano con blandura, agora alzándola, agora declinándola, agora moviéndola al uno y al otro lado; y si está indignado la moverá más desordenadamente, apartando el dedo vecino al pulgar, llamada índice, de los demás como quien amenaza. (505)

If he [the person the actor is emulating] is serious, you can use your hands to play him, according to the situation; because if he is dispassionate, you can move the hand with gentleness, raising it now, dropping it now, moving it now from side to side; and if the mood is outraged, moving it more wildly, pressing the thumb to the forefinger, called the index finger, in a threatening manner.

López Pinciano further advises exercising the technique of observation, especially since those mentioned in his gestural exposition “sean unos ejemplos pocos de lo mucho que hay que considerar en esta parte, que son casi infinitos” (are just a few examples of the many, which are nearly infinite, that should be considered) (505). By exploring such methods, the actor pulls from experience or self-knowledge of lived experiences to create an awareness of human behavior, giving the character depth without losing her own sense of identity. Eric Mullis explains, “in order for technique to be authentic, practitioners must take the pervasive power of daily technique and cliché into account and explore various methods of modifying them, that is, of walking a path that avoids their limitations and strives to move beyond them.”⁶⁶ Early modern Spanish actors incorporated into their characters the movements and behavior found in everyday functions of the people they observed in society, such as hand gestures or facial expressions of people who frequented public spaces.

To illustrate this idea, many performances integrated dance and fencing pieces into their productions, which, according to Lynn Matluck Brooks, reflected the “austerity of Spanish etiquette and movement in general.”⁶⁷ Early modern Spanish actors, some of whom were trained in dance and stage combat, practiced the exercise of cultivating habits of certain individuals or groups of people found in manuals such as Juan de Esquivel Navarro’s *Discursos sobre el arte del danzado* (1642; *Discourses on the Art of the Dance*) and Luis Pacheco de Narváez’s *Libro de las grandezas de la espada* (1600). For example, skilled actors danced with an upright carriage, as instructed by Esquivel Navarro, “Ha de ir el cuerpo danzando bien derecho sin artificio, con mucho descuido,”⁶⁸ a stance that resembled the posture and attitude of aristocrats. Pacheco de Narváez’s handbook focuses on the actor’s proprioceptive feelings to develop somatic habits appropriate for stage combat specific to the Spaniards. In addition to geometric diagrams, the author provides precise instructions on the proper body posture for swordplay: “Han de tener primeramente, la cabeza derecha, los ojos vivos, despiertos, la voz gruessa, el pecho alto” (First of all, one must maintain the head straight; the eyes alive, awake; the voice coarse; the chest high).⁶⁹

Laura Vidler, author of “Bourdieu, Boswell and the Baroque Body: Cultural Choreography

66 Eric C. Mullis, “Performative Somaesthetics: Principles and Scope,” (*The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 40, no. 4, 2006), 111.

67 Lynn Matluck Brooks, *The Art of Dancing in Seventeenth-Century Spain: Juan de Esquivel Navarro and his World* (Lewisburg, P.A.: Bucknell UP, 2003), 90.

68 Juan de Esquivel Navarro, *Discursos sobre el arte del danzado*, (Lewisburg, P.A.: Bucknell UP, 2003), f. 20.

69 Luis Pacheco de Narváez, *Libro de las grandezas de la espada* (Madrid: Por los Herederos de J. Iñiguez de Lequerica, 1600), f. 6v. Translation of Pacheco de Narváez is my own.

in *Fuenteovejuna*,” explains that these tactics “are a direct result of the principles of Euclidean geometry used to develop the Spanish combat style ... the most effective thrust was accomplished with the sword at a right angle to the body as the radius drawn by such an angle has the farthest reach relative to the opponent’s position,” see figure 1.⁷⁰ Narváez cautions the swordsperson not to “draw back” since “El que se hace atrás, además de no ser tan largo, va con menos certeza. Y lo que es mas de considerar, que cualquier movimiento que se hace, echando pie atrás, que no es para herir (siendo el tal movimiento desde el medio de proporción) de lo cual os resultará tener mas lugar para ir adelante” (One who draws back, in addition to not going far, goes with less certainty. Another thing to consider is that any move you make where you fling your foot back without the intention to hurt (being that such a move is proportionately made) will result in you having more room to go forward).⁷¹ Narváez’s advice is analogous to López Pinciano’s, who states, “El tímido retira los pies y el osado acomete, y el que tropieza pasa adelante contra su voluntad” (The shy draw back their feet and the bold move forward, and the one that stumbles advances against his will).⁷²

A skilled actor connects with her audience by consciously attending to the gestures, voice inflections, or physical movements indicative of her character. Therefore, in addition to merging her own inner spirit or experiences with representational forms adopted from people she observed in society, an actor must continue to build her somatic skills by following the acting and movement directives found in the aforementioned treatises, which seek to “refine and magnify the body’s gestures, movements, and vocalizations.”⁷³



Figure 1: Proper posture and sword position. *Libro de las grandezas de la espada* (f. 40r).

70 Laura Vidler, “Bourdieu, Boswell and the Baroque Body: Cultural Choreography in *Fuenteovejuna*” (*Comedia Performance* 9, no. 1, 2012), 46.

71 Pacheco de Narváez, *Libro*, f. 52r.

72 López Pinciano, *Philosophía*, 504.

73 Mullis, “Performative Somaesthetics,” 6.

Conclusion

Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias* and López Pinciano's *Philosophía antigua poética*, when viewed from a somaesthetics lens, assists one in understanding the intricate process of building a character in early modern Spanish theater. Lope de Vega and López Pinciano coach the actor on the importance of somatic awareness to develop internal and external performance techniques. The rhetoricians insist that art is not a mere copy or mimesis, as Plato's *Republic* proposes, but an interpretation of experiences put forth by the artist that is further interpreted by the receiver. For this reason, the actor's portrayal of events or actions that ring true to real-life lends an empirical credence to the *comedia*, further enhancing the audience's embodied aesthetic experience. As a playwright, Lope desired that his plays experience life through actors on stage; therefore, he experimented with somaesthetic techniques in his new form of *comedias*. Through his protagonist Ginés in *Lo fingido verdadero*, Lope demonstrates the importance of developing a role through exercises that enhanced the actor's internal and external gestural language, an essential practice for a successful play. Moreover, in publishing his plays, Lope had hoped scholars, present and future, would read them in the spirit in which they were written—*comedias* for live performances in the Spanish playhouses.⁷⁴

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⁷⁴ Dixon, "Manuel Vallejo," 74.

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