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All the King's Women:
Female Agency in the Political *Comedias*
of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Spanish

by

Jesus Jose Silveyra Jr.

2018

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

All the King's Women:
Female Agency in the Political *Comedias*
of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón

by

Jesus Jose Silveyra Jr.

Master of Arts in Spanish

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Barbara Fuchs, Chair

In his political *comedias*, seventeenth-century Novohispanic playwright Juan Ruiz de Alarcón shows as much interest in criticizing the ethical behavior of male characters as he does in representing violence against the female ones. This intersection of gender and political power is analyzed in the texts from a gender-perspective and supported by recent historiography on the political agency of royal women during the Spanish Golden Age. Despite the aggressions against them, Alarcón's female characters consistently act according to reason, morality, and law. Furthermore, the decisions that restore the order lost to the intricate movements of the plots are not exclusively proposed or executed by the male characters, but usually foreseen or directly suggested by the female ones. In appropriating the functions reserved for a few privileged men, these women propose an alternative mode of government that challenges the traditional relationships between gender roles and political participation as understood in imperial Spain.

The thesis of Jesus Jose Silveyra Jr. is approved.

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2018

To Lina

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Introduction

During his lifetime, Novohispanic dramatist Juan Ruiz de Alarcón personally oversaw the publication of twenty of his plays in two separate volumes, one printed in Madrid in 1628, the other in Barcelona in 1634. A handful of previously unknown plays have since appeared as *sueltas*¹ or in unauthorized collections, though only five can be attributed to him with any degree of certainty.² Of these twenty-five plays, eight are *comedias de privanza*, political dramas discussing different aspects of the polemical figure of the royal favorite. Seven of them contain plots with acts of violence committed against women by men in power. According to editor Ysla Campbell, these *comedias* repeatedly draw upon the opposition of love and reason and the relationship between love and madness, topics that reveal Alarcón's basic political idea that the passions are incompatible with the exercise of power ("Poder" 204).³ Indeed, in these plays the conflicts are fueled by greed, envy, and lust, and resolved once passions are cooled by reason. For Octavio Paz, Alarcón was an author for whom man is a composite of good and evil, invariably subject to a reasonable and universal morality (37). However, Alarcón's interest in good behavior is as prominent as his inclination for representing violence against women. From the incessant harassment of princes and kings to acts of rape at the hands of the *grandees*, most of his political plays touch upon the intersection of gender and political power. While monarchs and royal favorites are depicted abusing their authority, the female characters, despite the

¹ Single printed plays from the early modern period, with "the gatherings 'stabbed' rather than bound, with no covers, to be sold cheaply, often by that prototype of the travelling salesman, the chapman" (Cruikshank).

² Four of these plays were collected in 1968 by Agustín Millares Carlo for the third volume of Alarcón's *Obras completas: La culpa busca la pena y el agravio la venganza, No hay mal que por bien no venga, Quien mal anda en mal acaba, Siempre ayuda la verdad* (a collaboration only partially by Alarcón). One more, *El acomodado don Domingo de Don Blas*, was edited for the first time in 2002 by Germán Vega García-Luengos.

³ All translations mine unless otherwise noted.

aggressions against them, consistently act according to reason, morality, and law. Furthermore, the decisions that restore the order lost to the intricate movements of the plots are not exclusively proposed or executed by the male characters, but usually foreseen or directly suggested by the female ones. In appropriating the functions reserved for a few privileged men, these women propose an alternative mode of government that challenges the traditional relationships between gender roles and political participation as understood in imperial Spain.

In the first part of my introduction I offer a brief overview of the playwright and the sub-genre of the political *comedia*, the *comedia de privanza*, as critical traditions have, to a certain extent, focused on other aspects and figures of the literary production of the Spanish Golden Age. The second part is dedicated to presenting my argument about the agency of the female characters in Alarcón's political comedias. I review recent historiography on the role of royal women in the political processes of the Spanish empire, as well as on the critical views of the dramatist's female characters in specific and the Iberian *comedia* in more general terms.

CRITICS AND PROPONENTS: EARLY SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY THEATER AND POLITICS

Juan Ruiz de Alarcón has been an oddity for nearly four hundred years. Contemporary writers and modern-day critics alike have attempted to explain his "strangeness" by drawing comparisons to his origins, his physical deformities, his literary style, his life's ambitions. Propelled at times by academic curiosity and at others by the sheer anxiety generated by the playwright's otherness, the results of these examinations range from illuminating analysis to ludicrous reductionism.⁴ Yet I am interested less in the man than in the dialogue between his

⁴ For an overview of the critical tradition that has centered on Alarcón's national origins and physical deformities, rather than on his dramatic production, see King ("Conclusión") and Pasto. For an overview of the dueling insults

context and dramatic production. Suffice to say, in terms of his biography, that our playwright was born in the overseas territories of the empire, somewhere in the New Spain near the end of the 16th century.⁵ He studied law at the University of Mexico before finishing his studies in Spain, at the University of Salamanca, obtaining the degree of Bachelor of Canon Law and that of Bachelor of Civil Law in 1600 and 1602 (Halpern 73). After practicing law in Seville, he returned to New Spain in 1608 and received the degree of Licentiate in Civil and Canon Law from the University of Mexico in 1609 (Halpern 73). Among other official positions, Alarcón worked in Mexico as legal advisor to the city's *corregidor*—a representative of the king with duties akin to those of a mayor—and was later appointed prosecutor in the spectacular case of the homicide of Isabel Zubiri by her husband, a notary from the state of Veracruz (King 81). Despite his studies and legal experience, due to changes in the administration of the colonies the dramatist was unsure if the new *corregidor* would renew his appointment, and he also failed to secure a steady teaching position at the University. Perhaps motivated by his dismal prospects, Alarcón embarked for the second and final time for the Iberian Peninsula, now with his sights set on the royal court (King 83-6). For the experienced lawyer, making the transatlantic voyage once again was a reasonable decision. Ever since the reign of the Catholic Monarchs, men of law such as Alarcón—*letrados* certified by recognized universities—had been able to find decent work in the tribunals of the crown, and it was not uncommon for prestigious lawyers to amass great fortunes (King 80). But by 1613, the year the dramatist arrived in Madrid, meritocracy was under the assault of the aristocrats.

between Alarcón and his fellow poets, see Kennedy, “Contemporary Satire...”; Peña, “Los varios tonos...”; and Peale, “El viejo y la pareja rara...”.

⁵ Francisco Pérez Salazar offers evidence that Alarcón was born in the City of Mexico in 1580-1581, as the dramatist himself suggested (154-68). Others, however, are not convinced, arguing instead that he was born in 1575-1576 (King 24, n. 18) in the city of Taxco (Peña, *Juan Ruiz* 85-91).

In 1598, the year of king Philip III's accession to the throne, the court of Madrid was presented with the "relative and remarkable novelty" that one man would rule "by the side, and even in the stead, of the king" (Patiño 2). This novelty was the royal favorite. I. A. A. Thompson contends that problems in the study of the royal favorite begin with definitions, since the concept of "favoritism" is "both imprecise and protean, covering different relationships and roles" (14). Nevertheless, he distinguishes four features that defined the range of political and institutional functions of the favorite: 1) he was "predominant, if not monopolist [...] in the areas of both power and patronage"; 2) he operated outside "established institutional channels", often interfering with or interrupting "the normal process of conciliar business" and ordinary dynamics of the government, while "diverting through himself the normal flow of access and information to the king"; 3) he "stood at the centre of a national network or clientage" with the "means of integrating court and country on a broad front"; 4) he promoted reforms or fiscal arrangements "designed to reinforce the authority and reputation of the state" (14-5). The advent of the favorite was a response to a crisis of government growth, but also to the burgeoning emphasis on the majesty of monarchy. On the one hand, the favorite was to protect royal dignity by taking the "excessive burden of business" off the monarch's shoulders, and to act as "the political persona of the 'Christian Prince', the negative identity of a king who could do no wrong"; on the other hand, the favorite played a central role in concentrating monarchical power by taking back control from an institutionalized and specialized government that "was obliged by law and due process to work through an administrative and judicial system that had become largely self-regulating" (15-7). Favorites fragmented and weakened the authority of the secretaries "by inserting clients into key conciliar offices", resulting in the disruption of the traditional "normal paths of bureaucratic advancement", as well as in the diversion of "essential business from

formal, institutionalized channels, the ‘via ordinaria’, to informal, hand-picked juntas or commissions” (18). In *El secretario del rey* (1620), Francisco Bermúdez de Pedraza affirmed that king Philip III never had a private secretary. Matters of State were instead resolved between king and grandees, situating the latter, the royal favorites, as de facto secretaries. Though subtle, Bermúdez’s denunciation of intrusion is unambiguous: the greatest feat of the Spanish grandees was to occupy the office of the monarch’s secretary (f. 12v).

With the acquiescence of the monarch, the favorite, known also as *valido* and *privado*, created a secondary or subjacent government that favored those whose interests aligned with the *privado*’s.⁶ The nobility found in *privados* the opportunity to “reverse what they saw as their exclusion from government and favour under Philip II” (Thompson 19), since the patronage upon which it depended was being blocked off by, among other things, the professionalization of government. The economic conditions of the nobility indeed warranted the *privado*’s intervention: “the revenues of the titled nobility in Castile in 1516 were roughly the same as those of the crown; by 1600 they amounted to scarcely more than a third of the king’s revenues, and there were twice as many *titulos* to share them” (Thompson 24, n. 21). Courtiership and court patronage increasingly became “alternative avenues of social advance and enrichment”; the strategies adopted were “opening the councils to the great nobility, splashing out on their courts, bestowing honors, freeing access to administrative office” (Thompson 19-20). For historian Francisco Tomás y Valiente, the *privado* “makes sense and stops being a peculiar figure as soon as we locate him inside this web of phenomena attempting to privatize what was public” (64). In the sixteenth century, for instance, the *oficios de pluma* allowed for a limited vertical mobility for urban, non-noble people, but in the seventeenth century the nobility, who had grown intolerant of competition, sent non-noble officials to the lower posts of the administration,

⁶ At least three Spanish synonyms exist for ‘royal favorite’: *favorito*, *privado*, and *valido* (Feros 1, n. 2).

eventually imposing an almost absolute control over the presidencies of the councils, embassies, viceroalties, and other offices of the kind. The monetization of nobiliary titles aggravated the problem, since those who bought them also bought a source of money or *rentas*, and if the acquisition was in perpetuity and by *juro de heredad*, the privatization of royal offices was absolute. In this process of re-feudalization—where almost every noble had their own *privado* and attempted to *privatize* positions, functions, and public offices—the royal *privado* emerged as the most effective means for nobility to control power permanently (Tomás y Valiente 58-64).

For instance, while Philip II's bureaucracy was configured by nobles and non-nobles alike, Philip III's was largely made up of the favorite's clientele. Bureaucratic inclusivity was contingent on loyalty to the favorite, not to the king, as the administrative center of political power moved from the hands of the ruler to the favorite's. Removed from the legal framework of the Spanish institutions, the favorite played politics on a private, personal level (Patiño 3). Still, there was nothing in the personalities or motivations, nor in the monarchs who selected them, that was interchangeable (Tomás y Valiente 36). From 1598 to 1676 four different monarchs chose seven different *validos* or royal favorites, all of whom were described with distinct epithets in both official and informal communications. For example, father Juan Everardo Nithard, *valido* to Queen Mariana of Austria from 1666 to 1669, was anonymously, and mockingly, defined as “commander of the universal Empire” (19-20); on the other hand, Luis de Haro, *valido* to King Philip IV from 1643 to 1661, was identified in official correspondence with France as Prime Minister (110-1). The two most notorious *privados* in the period, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval, the Duke of Lerma, *privado* to Philip III from 1598 to 1618, and later Gaspar de Guzmán, the Count-Duke of Olivares, *privado* to Philip IV from 1622 to 1643, seized control of the commonwealth's governmental functions, garnering the public's contempt for their perceived

corruption and responsibilities in the multifold crises of the empire. From the margins of institutionality these noblemen, through “the personal bond that tied king and *privado*”, managed to locate themselves “in the space between the synods and *Consejos* that governed the monarchy and the sovereign” (Patiño 2), becoming political actors whose authority was rivaled only by that of the monarch itself.

Tomás y Valiente’s idea of a complete handover of power from monarch to favorite now appears exaggerated (7). Gaining access to monarchical power required the creation of a personal bond with the monarch; remaining in power demanded that such bond be made permanent. To this end, the theory of the *valido* as the ruler’s closest and most loyal friend gained traction. Lerma and his cronies forcefully promoted a political model which, based on a convoluted concept of male homosocial friendship, allowed for monarchical powers to be used in the pursuit of the personal interests of the *valido* and his clientage, a model that fully outlived its proponents. In 1640, for instance, one year after the death of Alarcón, Vicente Mut wrote a defense of the *privado* as the monarch’s friend, stating that the ruler “will live safer with a friend than with someone who becomes *privado* just because of his merits. For he who has deserved to be a favorite will work for the common good, whereas the friend will look for that of the prince” (qtd. in Patiño 6). Though idiosyncratic and quite late for the present study,⁷ Mut’s defense reflects the views of an important segment of the Spanish population who, ever since 1598, had defended the practice of favoritism. Seeking advancement “defined the path in politics’ *cursus honorum*, and this happened thanks to the familiarity or *privanza* with someone in a position of power” (Patiño 3). The king was the source of this chain of dependence, since it was from him that “favor and rewards flowed” (Sieber, qtd. in Patiño 3). In the royal court that Alarcón arrived at in 1613 the figure regulating the flow of *mercedes* to a highly selective and questionable

⁷ Alarcón published his second and last volume in 1634, wrote his last *comedia* in, perhaps, 1636, and died in 1639.

system of clientage was Lerma. Just the year before, king Philip III had signed an official document instructing the Consejo de Estado to obey everything that Lerma said or ordered (Tomás y Valiente 157). This document, the *Cédula de 1612*, for the first time in Spanish history officially created an alter ego of the monarch.

Unsurprisingly, the *comedia de privanza*, or comedy of favoritism, appeared on Iberian stages following the coronation of Philip III and his favorite the Duke of Lerma. The genre was built around the dramatic conventions of the Spanish *comedia* as we know it today, but informed by the new political model of favoritism, endowing it with a sense of urgency and transgression, while marking a milestone where dramaturgy, critical reading, and historico-cultural background fused together (Peale, “Comienzos” 126). Playwrights writing in this political genre crafted dramas displaced in time and space from imperial Spain. They set their plays in medieval Peninsular or other European kingdoms, when not in classical antiquity, to create a prudent distance between themselves and the subject matter of their work. The vertiginous rises and falls of medieval political characters, whether real or not, allowed playwrights to indirectly expose and criticize the practice of favoritism, one of the most pressing problems of the day (Peale, “Comienzos” 134).⁸ Early *comedias de privanza* represented not only loyal and virtuous favorites who radically contrasted with their real counterparts, but also brought onto the stage the fact that “at the service of the favorites were corrupt clients who used their patron’s confidence and favor to enrich themselves [and] to persecute their enemies” (Feros 167). Since the favorite’s authority was born of his propinquity with the king, it is sometimes unclear if these *comedias* critiqued the *privado*’s greed and corruption or the ruler’s acquiescence in allowing him to create

⁸ Elizabeth R. Wright has studied the opposite case, political dramas composed to flatter the favorite as a strategy for social mobility. A case in point is Lope de Vega’s *El premio de la hermosura*: “Dedicated to the new royal favorite [Olivares], the drama built around a contest for the most beautiful person in the world speaks to the contest to become the most powerful person at court” (121).

a subjacent and private government. In any case, there came a time when criticizing one or the other made little difference.

Peale argues that the first *comedia de privanza* may have been Lope de Vega's *Los Guzmanes de Toral*, composed between 1599-1603. However, the honor of being the first seems to have made Lope uncomfortable. Lope's play remained unpublished until 1899, which was unusual for the poet. This irregularity, for some, can only be explained as an act of prudence: "That the slipperiness of the matter, even when elegantly treated, may seem like a satire to all those corrupt and deified ministers of Philip III and Philip IV, must have frightened the poet. How, without serious risk, to present before their eyes the eloquent mirror of a model that so much contrasted with them?" (García Soriano, qtd. in Peale, "Comienzos" 130). But the topic of *privanza* had taken hold in the public's consciousness (Peale, "Comienzos" 128), and after 1605 Lerma could no longer restrain the rumors about the corruption of his closest clients, to the point that Hans Khevenhüller, the Holy Roman emperor's ambassador to Spain, claimed that "some of Lerma's creatures had transformed the court into a marketplace where everything—justice, offices, and *mercedes*—was sold to the highest bidder" (Feros 168). Given the situation, by 1612 the *comedia de privanza* became a dramatic genre on its own merit (Peale, "Comienzos" 146).

Alarcón's earliest attempts at writing poetry can be traced back to his time at the Universidad de Salamanca, during his first stay in Spain, when he participated in a literary joust. Although concrete evidence is necessary, it is generally accepted that his production ended, or at least drastically diminished, after his appointment with the Consejo de Indias in 1626, an official title that he actively sought but did not receive until thirteen years after his arrival in Madrid (King 134-9, 155). The bulk of his dramatic work was written in this period (King 157).⁹

⁹ For differing ideas about the playwright's period of production, see Millares Carlo (I, 26-9) and Vega García-Luengos (37-42).

Between 1597 and 1617, the capital of the Spanish empire doubled in size—with about 130,000 permanent residents and around 20,000 in floating population, Madrid enjoyed a splendid cultural life (King 156-7). Theater was a booming market, with daily representations that constantly sold out (Ebersole 35). A dramatic text that made it to the stage might be seen by three to five thousand people, among them royalty and nobility (García Cárcel 20). While no one except for Lope de Vega could have made a living from the money made from their dramatic production (King 158), drama did offer some financial relief—if not directly, at least through court patronage—and, more importantly, a voice and an audience. For a playwright consistently identified as a satirical moralizer (Arellano 282-3) and an idealistic, neo-Stoic reformer (Josa 14-9; King 173), but also for an unemployed *indiano*, a man of letters constantly in need of financial assistance from his family (King 155), theater must have been an opportunity hard to dismiss.¹⁰

FEMALE POLITICAL AGENCY: ROYAL WOMEN AND POLITICAL THEATER

About one third of Alarcón's dramatic production is dedicated to *comedias de privanza*. In fact, the first volume of his collected works opens with *Los favores del mundo*, a *comedia de privanza* represented for the first time in 1618 (King 231). Critics consistently catalogue *Los pechos privilegiados* as one of Alarcón's latest works, dating its composition *ca.* 1625 (Millares Carlo I, 26-9; Josa 301), the same year it was performed for the first time in the royal palace (King 233).¹¹ *Los pechos privilegiados* is, indeed, a work of artistic and intellectual maturity, crowning the dramatist's political thought. This *comedia* presents two radical solutions to the problem of the royal favorite: 1) more than one person should counsel the king, a maneuver devised to

¹⁰ From the perspective of King, what permeates Alarcón's *ouvre* is a lesson learned at the royal court: that for those deprived of money and powerful friends, it was impossible to improve in life (86-7).

¹¹ The *comedia* has an alternative title, *Nunca mucho costó poco*, the same as a play written by Lope. It is unclear in King's work which of the two was represented at the palace.

distribute political power and cancel out the very concept of the “favorite”; 2) among the many voices counseling the king, at least one should be a woman.

The dramatic conflict of the play is straightforward: king Alfonso V of Leon has agreed to marry Mayor, the infanta of Castile, to secure the peace between both kingdoms; however, as he is madly in love with Elvira, he justifies his desire for her as a reason of state. For the rest of the play, with the assistance of Ramiro, his *privado*, the King pursues her relentlessly. As proposed by Ysla Campbell, the *topos* of powerful men deranged by passion is the narrative force that upsets the social and political order. Near the end of the play, as the King is threatened by Galician and Navarrese swords, it is Elvira who eloquently defuses the conflict, then stands up to the King and challenges him to define himself: “¿Eres cristiano? ¿Eres rey? / ¿Eres noble? ¿O eres hombre?” (vv. 2784-5) (“Are you Christian? Are you king? Are you noble? Or are you man?”).¹² Elvira’s ontological interrogation relativizes the divinity of the sovereign by confronting his irrational and illicit actions: “Por un intento que nunca / has de alcanzar [...] / ¿el suelo y el cielo ofendes? / Vuelve en ti, Rey, corresponde / a quien eres, y a ti mismo / te vence, pues eres noble” (vv. 2786-93) (“For a purpose you will never reach, you offend heaven and earth? Come around, King, live up to who you are and contain yourself, since you are a nobleman”). In underscoring his imperfections, two major concerns are brought to the fore: the humanization of the ruler and, therefore, the need to educate him. In the first act the King is warned by his favorite, Rodrigo de Villagómez, that while royal blood is indeed sacred, he can only make the right decision if sheltered by angels *and* counseled by a good advisor (vv. 193-200). Immediately after, Rodrigo is dismissed. By the end of the play the angels are nowhere to be seen, but the good advisor, the one who teaches him how to think and act as monarch and man, in accordance to the laws of heaven and earth, is Elvira.

¹² All quotes from the edition by Ysla Campbell.

This final scene takes place deep in the darkness and seclusion of the forests of Valmadrigal. Far away from the public's eye, Elvira attempts to guide the monarch through a complex decision, one which is as personal as it is political. On the one hand, because of his multiple attempts at forcefully seducing her, the King's public perception is that of an irrational tyrant; on the other, having exhausted all non-violent means of resistance, Elvira's father, a former favorite, has been forced to forge alliances with other kingdoms to protect his daughter from the ruler. With the King on the verge of losing his crown and reputation, Elvira's advice is morally and politically sound: The King should renounce the passion he feels for her and marry the infanta of Castile (vv. 2778-83), a decision that would, first, safeguard the wellbeing of the republic by avoiding a war against Castile, and, second, cast a new image of the King as a prudent monarch and man. Since she has been in love with the King since childhood (vv. 437-40), Elvira's counsel is exemplary: it entails a personal sacrifice in favor of the common good. In Golden Age theater, the young king driven by the passions of love is usually a dual character within which the divine office of the ruler clashes with the tyrannical personality of the man (Ruiz Ramón, *Historia* 137). But this "separation of the private self of the monarch from his public persona", "repeatedly emphasized in the treatises on kingship and the theater" (Quintero 28), does not ring true for Elvira: in her estimation, since the monarch is but a man with a crown, the better the man, the better the king. It is a sensible proposition. Though consistently perceived to be in crisis, the validity and acceptability of monarchy as a type of government is not questioned by the Spanish *comedia* (Quintero 1). Instead, and as a subversive response to political theories of divine right and the sacredness of royal authority, in Baroque theater the sovereign is reduced to and problematized at the human level (Jodi Campbell 1-2). Dramatized simultaneously as godlike ruler and imperfect man, the Alfonso V projected onto the stage is

doubly complex, and Elvira embraces the sovereign in all his intricacies: understanding that she is the source of the King's desire and tyrannical behavior, she offers herself in marriage to another man (vv. 2795-8). In making herself unavailable to the monarch, she attempts to liberate the man from his passions, in turn allowing the King to come back to reason. According to Rodrigo, the moral favorite in the play, what identifies true friendship is good advice, as he tells the King: "os pongo de la verdad / a los ojos el espejo, / que se ve en el buen consejo / la verdadera amistad" (vv. 173-6) ("I put before your eyes the mirror of truth, because true friendship is found in good advice"). Elvira's dual perspective on and concern for king Alfonso both as head of state and man, as well as her willingness to give up her love interest for the common good, indicate her selfless concern for the role of the king. If the *privado* was the sovereign's friend and minister, someone concerned for his personal needs and official duties (Patiño 5), it is possible that in *Los pechos privilegiados* the best *privado* is, in fact, a woman.

The idea of a woman advising the king and affecting the course of politics was not unheard of in early modern Spain, as Magdalena Sánchez's work on the political influence of royal women during the reign of Philip III demonstrates. For the historian, empress María and queen Margaret of Austria, mother and wife to the King respectively, deliberately sought a role in politics. In order "to bypass the traditional governmental networks and to use the male notions of acceptable female behavior" to their advantage, they voiced "their opinions in a fashion that was more acceptable to the male hierarchy", framing "their requests in religious and familial terms, [requests that] frequently were political in nature" (5). For example, when, persuaded by Lerma, the King decided to move the court to Valladolid, the Empress openly expressed her displeasure to the monarch. Reminding him that she was his "grandmother, aunt, and mother and was impartial about everything and did not seek any personal gain but only the good of his

kingdoms and vassals” (134), the Empress’s language of affection “was intended to alleviate her criticism of Philip’s conduct and his reliance upon Lerma” (133). The Duke, as rumors had it, wanted the court relocated to Valladolid “to remove the monarch from Empress María’s influence”, and had threatened to have the King constantly away from the court to prevent “Margaret of Austria from regularly speaking to him about political matters” (109).

For these women, having a say in politics usually involved going head to head against Lerma’s obsession with monopolizing access to the King. For instance, Sánchez relates how, “knowing that the monarchs regularly attended morning mass at the [Descalzas] convent and that the queen stayed there to eat”, in 1606 “Lerma purchased several houses across the street from the Descalzas convent” so that the King “could easily proceed to his house to eat and give audiences” (26). Until 1610 this system allowed the Duke “personal contact with the king and emphasized to others the degree of personal influence [he] had over the monarch”, while underscoring the danger posed to his authority by the Queen, one of the Duke’s sharpest critics (27). The Queen’s response was swift and blunt. She was behind the plot that in 1607 had Pedro Franqueza, one of the Lerma’s *hechuras*, his most loyal alter-egos, “arrested, imprisoned, and his goods confiscated” for his implication in “siphoning funds from the royal treasury” (33). The event prompted Lerma to claim that “his enemies (among them, Margaret of Austria) had engineered the trial [...] to strike at him indirectly”, thus evincing “the queen’s growing influence over her husband, to the detriment of Lerma” (33).

Margaret used her body, too—her pregnancies, false or not, as well as her ailments—to influence Philip. An instance of this occurred in Valladolid in 1601. When a vacancy opened in Margaret’s household, she had wanted to fill the position with the sister of her closest friend, but Lerma went ahead and appointed his own niece (164). Queen Margaret fell gravely ill after the

incident. Court chroniclers agreed that her infirmity was due to her not being allowed to organize her household as she saw fit. Upon learning of her poor health, the King “cut short his trip and returned to Valladolid”, remaining by his wife for months and deciding that, in the future, “any trips he took would have to be with the queen” (164). To keep her husband near, Margaret successfully employed the tactic of infirmity in at least two more occasions, but whether we interpret her behavior as “expressing her dissatisfaction with her husband for leaving her behind” or as a message to Lerma, “who had undoubtedly encouraged Philip III to travel alone” (164-5), the fact is that from documents produced by court chroniclers and foreign ambassadors, queen Margaret “emerges as one of the major political players at the court” (95).

Sánchez’s work demonstrates that women not only participated in politics in early modern Spain, but that they used their gendered position to affect policy, albeit indirectly and foregrounding personal wants or needs. To this end, female figures relied not only on familial and affective rhetoric, but also, as aristocrats, on the “strong network of servants who relied on them for pensions, offices, and other types of financial support” (54). Some of these servants were powerful political figures who belonged to networks which normally conflicted with those of the royal women. But the porosity of the borders dividing these political networks proved advantageous for royal women, learned in negotiating through informal and indirect means: “Ambassadors, special envoys, nuncios, archdukes, emperors, and kings readily recognized the crucial political power and positions of Empress María [and] Margaret of Austria [...] They knew to employ these women as intermediaries for them at the Spanish court and as avenues to the Austrian Habsburgs” (172).

María Cristina Quintero’s work problematizes our understanding of early modern perspectives on women “as the direct opposite of spirit and intellect”, an association with the

body natural which deemed “them inadequate for positions of power” (30). Spanish ideals of femininity like those of Luis Vives—for whom man was the quintessential socio-political agent and women nothing but the protective vessels of chastity (Ferrer Valls 8)—may simply have led women to affect politics in an indirect, secretive fashion. The tension “between the ‘official’ move to limit a woman’s range of activities, as manifested in conduct books [like Vives’], and the often-silenced history of what women really accomplished”, underlines the likelihood that “the strident rhetoric against the public role of women was a defensive response to the increasingly visible activity on the part of women” (Quintero 12).

Traditionally, gendered concepts like illness and family were used by males to “attempt to limit the influence of powerful women”, but powerful women used these very same concepts “to subvert attempts to limit their influence” (Sánchez 175). This subversion took the form of a gender-role negotiation, a kind of transgendering process facilitated by long-standing ideas of gender fluidity, like the belief that the pursuit of female virtues raised women to the moral level of men, or the Augustinian notion that women who chose to live as virgins showed virility and masculine strength (Quintero 32). Consequently, when women exhibited masculine characteristics such as strength, constancy, and wisdom, they “were said to have superseded the expectations of their gender” (Sánchez 64). For instance, the portrayal of queen Margaret as a rational person implied that she had overcome her female nature, one believed to be “dominated by passion and uncontrollable emotions” (Sánchez 74). Of course, “female nature” is a sexist construct: women proving their capacity to be as moral, rational, and virtuous as men may only have been perceived as extraordinary by men themselves. The Jesuit Jerónimo de Florencia, Margaret’s biographer, is a case in point. He described the Queen as brave and possessing a manly heart, comparing her strength to that of a military squadron (Sánchez 73-4). In

emphasizing the virtuous conducts of royal women, these biographers established standards of ideal political behaviors against which other members of the court, like Lerma, could be contrasted and measured (Sánchez 75).

Likewise, the Spanish *comedia* brought onto the theater stage a complex dynamic where “the repeated presentation of women exercising the supposedly masculine privilege of political and monarchical power would seem to be a challenge to the dominant ideology and rhetoric of masculine dominance” (Quintero 25). As Golden Age dramas consistently recycle plots, characters, situations, histories, and topics, “the plays ‘aspire to embody and replace’, through sheer repetition, certain monarchical values and virtues that were absent or had been perhaps forgotten” (Quintero 9). It is highly suggestive, as Quintero writes, “that often this surrogation materialized through the presentation of women in power on the *comedia* stage” (46). Teresa Scott Soufas reaches a similar conclusion in her analysis of *comedias* written exclusively by female dramatists like Ana Caro and Leonor de la Cueva:

In a pattern that is repeated in play after play, the men fail to live up to the best interpretation of the role assigned to them, and the women *must* step in to assume that role, only to fulfill it more successfully and to provide a model of comportment for the males around them. The assumption of a cross-gendered role or quality is not presented as a revolutionary suggestion for overthrowing the social system depicted; instead, the socially assigned roles are resumed at the end of the plays. Nevertheless, the counterdiscourse of flexible boundaries between the roles has been expressed. (20; emphasis mine)

Given recent historiography, this vision of women as perfectly suited substitutes for political men appears to have been held more broadly.

In general, the female characters in Alarcón’s *comedias de privanza* share the traits of Elvira, from *Los pechos privilegiados*. They are prudent and rational, learned in the law and with a strong sense justice. They are resolved to maintain sovereignty over their own bodies and are audacious enough to become visible and audible in situations dominated by powerful men. It is

no secret that Spain and her dramatists enjoyed transgendered characterizations—particularly of women dressed as men—but Alarcón’s female characters do not switch the legible marks of gender. Instead, as did empress María and queen Margaret, these characters use their bodies and affective rhetoric to persuade men, effectively reinforcing the dynamics of traditional gender roles along the way. Nevertheless, when they display virtues like reason, as well as other traits conventionally assigned to men, the gender divide is questioned. The unexpectedness of transgendered behavior—a rational woman, a *dama letrada*—bluntly rejects all essentialist notions of the body as a simple reflection of whatever difference lurks inside. What truly subverts the orthodoxy of gender in these plays is the enduring femaleness of bodies that comports as something else.

Evidently, Alarcón’s female characters do not work for the government, and yet certain female characters in his *comedias de privanza* act like political counselors. Women, of course, “could not hold public office or attend meetings of governmental councils” (Sánchez 54), but, then again, the *privado* did not hold public office either—as protean as the concept may be, *privado* did not mean “minister” and *privanza* was not an institutional office. And although *privados* did relieve their kings from some of the burden of their work, the bond that tied them was personal—the term itself, meaning “in private”, “designates a space for king and favorite to relate with one another at the level of the individual, far from the kingdom’s *consejos* and other institutions of government” (Patiño 5). As Sánchez and Feros demonstrate, contemporary conceptions of the Spanish court as one where “only councillors, privados, and kings contemplated and enacted policy” is not wrong, but incomplete—confessors, family associates, court attendants and royal women, “were also important political actors” (Sánchez 172). Furthermore, Tomás y Valiente has shown that certain literature on the Spanish royal favorite

advocated for the presence at court of several *privados* and friends of the king, in plural, as a prudent means to limit the powers of a single favorite (143-8). In fact, Ysla Campbell posits that this was the model of *privanza* preferred by the playwright—he did not so much oppose favoritism as propose a particular version (“Poder” 203, 207). Alarcón consistently challenges the “value” of *privanza*: *privados* in action are usually depicted as corrupt, liars, and schemers, and some of their clients as rapists and murderers. This negative representation of the nobility, albeit prudently toned down or obscured, challenges the rules for membership in the political sphere by questioning social privilege and elevating the quality of female advice over male, thus rejecting the traditional understanding that public matters were exclusively a masculine affair.

Yet, if Alarcón indeed proposed to dispense with the favorite by spreading political power among different agents, then replacing one favorite with another of a different gender resolved nothing. The problem is less complex than it seems. *Privanza* was not exclusively a political relationship, as it could take place “between husband and wife, between lord and vassal, between God and the king” (Brancalasso, qtd. in Patiño 3). In other words, it was a feature of courtly life, a relation of dependency established at the intersection of personal attachment and interest, as Javier Patiño contends (3). From this standpoint, the presence of a female counselor does not preclude the presence of a male one, but as their personal interests clash with one another’s the monopoly of a single voice is, indeed, inhibited. A second point to consider is the nature of the advice given. The main difference between the counsel offered by *privados* and female characters is intentionality. Often, Alarcón’s *privados* resort to flattery and blind obedience to the king to remain in his good graces, holding on to power and using the apparatus of the state to satisfy their personal interests. The female characters can afford to critique and confront rather than to flatter and obey. Their interests are justice and dignity, perhaps due to

their marginality and vulnerability. Ideally, the female voice would shift the focus of the *estamento gobernante* from personal interests to public ones, imagining a way to de-privatize the government by opening the ears of the monarchy to voices otherwise unheard. However, as happened with *privados* in real life, in these *comedias* sometimes the counsel of women is not heard or is simply rejected. What remains the case is their affinity for legality and reason. In Alarcón's view, these are the main requisites to advise the king: the capacity to distinguish right from wrong, the knowledge of laws and social mores. As the female characters attempt to integrate justice and dignity into the governmental processes of the kingdom, they also reinforce the image of the monarch as a reasonable, prudent, and capable ruler. In other words, through the counsel of his female characters the dramatist insists that reason is the ultimate universal, a condition for a stronger, more just society.

Alarcón's *comedias de privanza* have rarely been read from the standpoint of his female characters, with an emphasis on the violence to which they are subjected: harassment, transgression of private property with threats of physical and sexual violence, and sexual assault. Inevitably, my readings will challenge some of the orthodoxies that still dominate scholarly work on Alarcón, particularly the notion that his female characters are cynical social climbers or, simply, poorly conceived and drawn. It is hard to disagree with David J. Pasto when he writes that critics "of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's *comedias* traditionally praised his male characterizations, but condemned his portrayals of women" (227). Pasto finds the root of this superficial assessment of Alarcón's female characters in the "Victorian" view of women of Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, who in 1852 edited the complete works of Alarcón for the first time since the playwright's death in 1639. Unfortunately, and as Pasto also notes, Hartzenbusch's opinions have been repeated by scholars "for over a hundred years without questioning them" (227). For

Hartzenbusch, Alarcón's *damas* are egotistical and vulgar, "of petty nature and common features; they do ill in cold blood, their tricks are devoid of grace, and when they say they love, their love does not show" (xxxvi). In 1939, Clotilde Evelia Quirarte wrote that "Alarcón, the poet, a skillful creator of masculine characters, delineates with weak strokes the female types [...] he has numerous women who are egotistical, calculating, vain, or delicately hypocritical" (qtd. in Pasto 227). For Pedro Henríquez Ureña, Alarcón's "woman"—as though all the characters were alike—"is fickle, inconstant, false; she falls in love with good figures and pompous titles. Above all, the abominable, the petty woman from Madrid, who spends her days dreaming of receiving gifts from the shops of the silver smiths" (243). For Antonio Castro Leal, Jimena, the rustic peasant and wet-nurse from *Los pechos privilegiados*, is a unique character albeit conventional and grotesque (159, 161).

This study will focus on four *comedias* published by Alarcón in his collected works: *Los favores del mundo*, *La amistad castigada*, *Ganar amigos*, and *La crueldad por el honor*. *Los favores del mundo* depicts a prince who, with the aid of two favorites, mobilizes the resources of the state to harass his love interest, a dramatic situation like that in *El acomodado don Domingo de Don Blas*.¹³ *La amistad castigada* recalls *El dueño de las estrellas* and *Los pechos privilegiados*: in all three, the monarch harasses the daughter of his favorite with the help of another favorite of a lesser moral stature. This second *privado*, through bribes, betrayals, or lies, finds a way for the monarch to break into the house of the woman with the intention of abusing her. Since in each case the king is already betrothed in a political marriage to a foreigner, he justifies the attacks as a kind of personal reason of state. *Ganar amigos* is the only play in which an act of rape is consummated, as the *comedia* represents the epitome of corruption and

¹³ Edited in 1852 by Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch as *No hay mal que por bien no venga*, the play first appeared in an unauthorized collection published in Lisbon by Pablo Craesbeeck in 1647.

usurpation of royal functions associated with the royal favorite and his clientage in early modern Spain. *La crueldad por el honor* is also unique in that it presents female characters uncharacteristic of the playwright's work: it is the only one with a mother figure, albeit with a limited presence, and the monarch is a queen besieged by a rebellious group of noblemen, in a remarkable anticipation of what the widow of Philip IV, Mariana of Austria, would endure during her regency more than twenty-five years after the playwright's death.

To explore discursive affinities and discontinuities, I will also comment on *comedias de privanza* by other Golden Age writers. In the first chapter, I explore how the relationships between royal favorites and their female partners affect royal behavior and policy in the plays *Los favores del mundo* and Luis Vélez de Guevara's *El espejo del mundo*. In the second chapter, I examine the political role of women in kingdoms ruled by tyrants in the *comedias* *La amistad castigada* and Lope de Vega's *La reina Juana de Nápoles*. The third chapter is dedicated to analyzing the function of the queen as a kingmaker in the texts *La crueldad por el honor* and Lope's *La inocente sangre*. Finally, the fourth chapter is a study of the responsibility of the monarch in allowing his favorite to create a secondary government in the plays *Ganar amigos* and Tirso de Molina's *Privar contra su gusto*.

Loving the Favorite:
Familial Rhetoric and Bodies Unknown

The plots of both Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's *Los favores del mundo* and Luis Vélez de Guevara's *El espejo del mundo* examine the inherent inequalities in monarch-subject personal relationships. In Alarcón's *comedia*, the Prince uses the resources of the State to harass Anarda, a young noblewoman in love with the royal favorite; in Vélez's play, the whims of the King force María and her son, the family of the fallen favorite, to live in infamy. In this chapter I analyze the strategies employed by favorites and female characters to sway the monarch's will in their favor and that of their loved ones.

Los favores del mundo is the first *comedia* of Alarcón's first volume of collected works, published in 1628. The action is set in fifteenth-century Madrid, presenting a monarchy comprised of prince Enrique (Henry IV) and his royal favorite, Juan de Luna—possibly based on Henry IV's real life *privado*, Juan Pacheco (Ysla Campbell, Introducción 15-8), but also on Álvaro de Luna, John II's historical *valido*.¹⁴ The plot features a love triangle between the Prince, Anarda—an orphaned *dama* under the tutelage of her uncle—and an imaginary favorite named Garci Ruiz de Alarcón. The *comedia* suggests that the power differential precludes monarch-subject relationships from being equitable.

As the *comedia* begins, Juan, the Prince's *privado*, has a message for Anarda: “El Príncipe, mi señor, / que deste parque en la cuesta / dando está con la ballesta / lición y envidia al amor, / como vuestro coche vio, / contento y alborotado / a daros este recado, / bella Anarda, me envió. / Miraldo en aquel repecho, / sobre el hombro la ballesta, / *la mira en el blanco puesta* /

¹⁴ The list of *dramatis personae* in the edition of 1628 presents the character simply as “El Principe don Enrique” (f. 1r) (“The Prince don Enrique”). Hartzbusch added in 1852: “hijo de Don Juan II de Castilla” (1) (“son of Don Juan of Castile”). Millares Carlo followed him in 1947 (*I*, 69), adding: “Reinó más tarde (1454-1474) con el nombre de Enrique IV” (*I*, 875) (“Reigned later (1454-1474) under the name of Enrique IV”).

que sigue tan sin provecho” (vv. 117-28; emphasis mine) (“The Prince, my lord, who atop that hill is giving lessons and envy to love, saw your coach and sent me, happy and excited, beautiful Anarda, to give you this message. Look at him on that slope, the crossbow on his shoulder, *his gaze on the target which remains so unrewarding*”).¹⁵ Alluding to her honor, she rejects the Prince’s invitation: “Perdón me ha de dar su Alteza, / y porque pueda advertir / que nace en mí el no subir / de honor, y no de esquivanza, / aquí me quiero asentar / donde el Príncipe me vea; / que *ver lo que se desea / algo tiene de gozar*. / Y vos, que con él priváis, / estaos aquí, porque arguya / que esta fortaleza es suya, / pues por alcaide quedáis” (vv. 133-44; emphasis mine) (“His Highness will forgive me, and to clarify that my not joining him is due to my honor and not to my avoiding him,¹⁶ I will sit here, where the Prince may see me, since *gazing at what is desired provides some enjoyment*. And you, his favorite, stay around, so that he can argue that this fortress is his, and you the warden”). Proposing that pleasure is achievable from the act of gazing alone, Anarda fans the Prince’s desire while creating a safe distance between him and her body. The *dama*’s intervention is as complex as it is subversive: as she turns her sexualized body into a means of resistance, Anarda simultaneously rejects the monarch and accepts her subordination to him. In an aside, Julia, Anarda’s cousin, underscores that the tensions between *dama* and ruler are long-standing: “Parece que se mitiga / tu acostumbrado rigor” (vv. 145-6) (“It seems like your usual harshness is softening up”). Anarda responds: “A esto me obliga el temor / ya que el amor no me obliga” (vv. 147-8) (“To this, I am obligated by fear, not love”). Since a monarch’s

¹⁵ All references from the edition by Ysla Campbell.

¹⁶ According to Malveena McKendrick, “the phrase *mujer varonil* almost defies translation [it] can take the form of the *mujer esquivia* 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 masculine pursuits” (ix).

sexual desire may be indistinguishable from royal mandate, and a subject's refusal may be akin to civil disobedience, Anarda is, in fact, at her wits' end.

The reason for Anarda's fear precedes the beginning of the play. The Prince feels an intense desire for her (vv. 1169-80), but she refuses him because his desire is only sexual, and becoming the royal mistress is beneath her (vv. 1961-82; 3088-9). Although her rejections are not enough to keep the Prince at bay, they reveal her resolve and bravery. She is not scared by powerful men, as evinced by her irreverent treatment of another suitor, Count Mauricio, a powerful Castilian nobleman (vv. 1011-30). As for the one she truly loves, Garci Ruiz de Alarcón, a man of violence who over the course of the play will rise to become a *privado*, she has no qualms about calling him a weakling as he complains of his ill fortune (vv. 1917-8). Anarda, clearly, fears only the Prince. The scene presents her watched from above by the mighty and violent Castilian monarchy, a dramatic topography that reveals the power differential to which she is subject: The Prince wants her and has the means to satisfy his desire.¹⁷ As the Prince's alter ego (v. 719), Juan is an example of such means: he is an agent of monarchical power whose main role is to assist the Prince in his pursuit of Anarda.

For instance, in the exchange cited previously the *dama* speaks of her body as a fortress, *fortaleza*, which in Spanish means also fortitude, “valor del ánimo como de las fuerzas corporales” (Covarrubias “Fortaleza”) (“courage of mind and of physical strength”). Covarrubias rounds out his definition by quoting Cicero's *De Inventione*: “fortitudo est considerata periculorum susceptio et laborum perpressio” (“Courage is the undertaking of dangerous deeds

¹⁷ Her condition as prey is bolstered by the metaphor of the Prince-hunter, which is further reinforced by Hernando, the servant. Thinking that Julia is attracted to him and Anarda to his master, Garci, Hernando says: “Las armas de amor trajimos, / que un hombre a matar venimos / y hemos muerto dos mujeres” (vv. 438-40) (“We brought the arms of love, for we came to kill a man and killed two women instead”).

and the endurance of hardships”).¹⁸ Establishing herself as a fortress belonging to the crown, Anarda recognizes her physical subjection to Juan, the warden, the State. Her mind, however, retains her resolve and bravery, masculine traits that along the *comedia* will enable her to supersede “the expectations of [her] gender” (Sánchez 64) and raise herself to the moral level of men (Quintero 32). Thus, if Juan represents the monarch’s ability to mobilize the resources of the commonwealth towards the satisfaction of his personal interests, Anarda is the rebellious, sexualized body on which the powers of the Prince are being put to the test.

In an unrelated event six years earlier, Garci was offended by Juan, and is in Madrid is to avenge his honor (vv. 38-72). Garci attacks as Juan delivers the Prince’s message to Anarda, sparing Juan’s life at the last minute (vv. 165-82). Though the violence is rapidly contained, from Anarda’s point of view it is still a blemish on her honor, since it could be interpreted as jealousy provoked by her coquetry (vv. 221-8). When the Prince accuses her in these terms, however, she argues that he should incarcerate the man who offended her (vv. 261-85). But while assaulting the Prince’s right hand is a serious crime (vv. 1363-76), Anarda’s claim for Garci’s imprisonment is based on his offense to her, not to the monarchy, and as it often happens in Alarcón’s *comedias de privanza*, men who offend women are rarely punished by the law. Also, since Garci apologized to Anarda for his actions, Julia thinks he should be forgiven, not punished. Anarda responds that her anger is in fact an act of love: “Aquel bizarro ademán / con que la espada sacó, / el valor con que venció / y dio vida a don Juan, / la gala, la discreción en darme disculpa [...] todo / me ha robado el corazón” (vv. 286-308) (“That valiant gesture as he unsheathed his sword, the bravery with which he defeated Don Juan and then gave him back his life, the gallantry, his discerning apology, everything stole my heart”). Considering Anarda’s condition as royal prey, Garci’s offense must take second place. There is no evidence to believe

¹⁸ Cicero’s translation is by Marcia Colish (85).

that her love for Garci is insincere, but there is a practical dimension to it. Soundly and swiftly, Garci defeated one of the most powerful men of the monarchy. For Anarda, then, Garci is the best defense against a monarch willing to utilize the power of the state to dishonor her. Relinquishing her claim for Garci's imprisonment is, thus, a strategy for self-preservation.

While the Prince will indeed mobilize the royal machinery to stalk and spy on Anarda, her worst enemy is Julia.¹⁹ Also infatuated with Garci, Julia vows to keep him away from Anarda, spinning a series of lies for this purpose. For instance, as uncle Don Diego wants to marry Anarda to the Count, to which Anarda is fiercely opposed, Julia invents that Anarda is having an affair with the Prince, and that the Count is aware of it. According to Julia, Anarda's concern is that, once married, the Count will move her out of Madrid to keep her away from her lover, and Anarda would much rather marry a man who either ignores or endorses her illegitimate relationship with the Prince. Julia's advice to Don Diego is to communicate this piece of news to the King, so that he can order Anarda to marry the Count and, thus, save the reputation of the Prince and the royal family (vv. 1683-1759). To Garci, Julia tells a similar lie, making sure to strike his pride: Anarda wants to marry him only because he will not object to her relationship with the Prince (vv. 2785-2824). To Juan, she argues that the Prince should see to it that Anarda gets married to the Count, who will never notice her escapades (vv. 2111-50).

At this point, the mercy that Garci showed Juan in the beginning of the play has gained him the Prince's *privanza*. The *comedia*'s title, *Los favores del mundo*, references the constant turns of fortune which Garci must face throughout the play. At the core of his changing fate lie the tensions between Anarda and the Prince, as between Garci's own love for Anarda and loyalty to the Prince, because he cannot court Anarda without being disloyal to the crown. But this

¹⁹ Through Juan, the Prince asks Julia to keep an eye on Anarda while he is away in Toledo (vv. 2099-2102); also through Juan, Julia offers to lie to Garci about Anarda's supposed dishonor, so that Garci will disdain her, to which the Prince agrees (vv. 2460-71); Garci admits to spying on Anarda by orders of the Prince (vv. 3166-71).

conflict between love and duty is not much of a quandary for Anarda (Ysla Campbell, Introducción 44). From her perspective, in pursuing a legitimate marriage, a vassal like Garci cannot offend a Prince who wants nothing but fleeting pleasures: “En el amor es yerro y se perdona, / lo que sin él traición que se castiga, / y *el diferente fin la acción abona* / del vasallo a quien más la ley obliga; / que si casarse intenta, nada ofende / al señor que gozar solo pretende” (vv. 1961-6; emphasis mine) (“In love [disloyalty] is a forgivable error, but without love it is a punishable treason. *The end profiles the action* of the vassal, who is more obligated by the law: if he means to marry, he does not offend the lord who wants nothing but pleasure”). Garci’s dilemma, then, stems from the difficulty of harmonizing his private interests with his obligations to the Prince. Anarda advises him to act wisely: “prueban mil libros de sentencias llenos, / presto arrojarse y presto arrepentirse” (vv. 1836-7) (“a thousand books on common wisdom warn that those who act rashly, swiftly come to regret their actions”). Through her understated demonstration of prudence and wisdom, Anarda further transgresses gender boundaries by encroaching on yet more masculine traits. As Garci faces this love-duty disjunctive—to pursue his love for her, to maintain loyalty to his Prince—she proposes that to correctly assess the risks and benefits of either choice, what truly matters is the *telos*. For our *dama*, then, Garci’s problem is not political but moral, and what reveals morality is intention.²⁰

Anarda’s argument proves persuasive as Garci decides to conceal his feelings for her to the Prince and to court her in secret. Eventually, their shared mistrust of Julia leads Garci and Anarda to come up with a plan to discover the truth: Garci pretends to be the Prince and the couple gets to listen to a different version of Julia’s intrigues. When the Prince arrives, in an aside, Juan advises him to marry Anarda to the Count. Even if it means trampling his and his subject’s honor, morals, and family, the Prince agrees. He announces the news to Don Diego,

²⁰ The Prince himself states that there is no sin without intention: “sé que no hay pecado sin intento” (v. 2256).

emphasizing that the marriage will promote peace among his subjects. Anarda, however, knows that this pretended peace is only a means for the Prince to continue with his incessant harassment. But as the Prince lies in public, Anarda finds an opportunity to turn the situation in her favor: “Para hacer así las paces / menester no érades vos, / que ya fuera mi marido, / si hubiera querido yo” (vv. 3194-7) (“For a peace like this you were not necessary, since I myself could have married him [the Count] already if I had wished to”). In this dramatic irony, “peace” is revealed as a deceptive euphemism, except to Don Diego and the Count, who are blinded as much by personal interest as by Julia’s scheming. Anarda then challenges the Prince to truly procure peace among his subjects: “pues hacer las paces / el vuestro nos prometió, / y cumplirlo es imposible / si al Conde la mano doy, / para que cumplir podáis / tan precisa obligación, / a Garci Rüz la mano / con vuestra licencia doy” (vv. 3200-7) (“So that you can keep your word of making peace, which will be impossible if I marry the Count, with your permission I give my hand to Garci Ruiz”). The Prince is shaken, but Juan reminds him of Garci’s loyalty—he would never accept Anarda’s hand without the monarch’s consent. Garci agrees and the Prince, overjoyed at Garci’s loyalty, names him “mi primer amigo / y mi privado mayor” (vv. 3208-19) (“my first friend and utmost *privado*”). And yet, immediately after, Garci accepts Anarda’s hand. Following her example, Garci justifies his decision by picking apart the Prince’s words, finding his true intention, and turning it around: “si habéis dicho vos / que vuestro mayor amigo / y mayor privado soy, / lo que dábades al Conde, / ¿cómo puedo pensar yo, / que me lo neguéis a mí?” (vv. 3200-32) (“Since you just said that I am your best friend and utmost *privado*, how can you deny to me what you planned to give to the Count?”). For Serafín González, Garci’s love for Anarda, despite the Prince’s interest in her, cannot be interpreted as a lack of loyalty, but as a sign of Garci’s lack of interest in the material gains which would come from his *privanza* (122).

He notes that Garci is forced by love to lose control and act unjustly, pointing out that instead of being a completely negative character, this condition reveals an interior complexity founded on a coexistence of virtues and vices (142). While I agree that Garci is not a negative but a complex character, the text presents evidence of a man in control of his future thanks to the advice of his beloved. Once he understands the moral underpinnings of the situation, Garci freely decides to be loyal to Anarda, rather than to his Prince.

As expected, the Prince takes the wisdom in Garci's thought as disobedience and orders him to leave the realm (vv. 3234-40). Proud, almost ironical, Garci hints at a total break with monarch: "vuestro mandado obedezco / y por él gracias os doy, / pues que trueco al bien de Anarda / los males de la ambición" (vv. 3241-7) ("I obey your mandate and thank you for it, because I trade the evils of ambition for the good of Anarda"). Ambition here alludes both to Garci's own motivations for becoming the royal favorite, and the Prince's stubborn and aggressive appetite for a woman who does not want him. Julia calls Garci stubborn for falling from the monarch's grace, to which Garci responds that he has made up his mind and his peace with Fortune: "Perdilo ganando a Anarda, / favores del mundo son" (vv. 3250-3) ("I lost his grace to win Anarda; such are the ways of the world").

In the second act, both Julia and Anarda ardently defend the right of women to choose their husbands (vv. 1721-7). Anarda selects Garci as her spouse. She does so in public, not only against the wishes of her uncle and Prince, but in their presence, making it loud and clear that decisions about her body and her future are hers to make and no one else's. Garci is the one who can protect her from the crown, the one who can truly hold the peace the Prince so fondly speaks of. In the end, Anarda can finally reclaim sovereignty over her own body, proving that if physically she needs Garci's protection, intellectually she can stand up to anyone. As for the

Prince, challenged in public, he has no choice but to accept his defeat and support the legitimate resolution uttered by Garcí, yet orchestrated by Anarda since the second act, the product, as she says, of reading thousands of books.

It can be argued that, from a moral perspective, in deceiving the Prince to make the right decision Garcí is acting as a loyal *privado*. In *Idea de un príncipe político cristiano* (1640), Diego de Saavedra Fajardo posits that favorites should counsel the king with gracious, humble, and simple freedom, unafraid of expressing their opinions: “Do not shut [the Prince’s] eyes nor ears, rather work so he can see, touch, and recognize things. Show him with discretion his errors and defects, unmoved (when necessary) by his indignation” (381-2). Yet, for thinkers aligned with the theories of reason of state, like Jean Bodin, “There is nothing more dangerous nor harmful than disobedience and disparagement from the subject to the sovereign. [...] it is better to bow down submissively before sovereign majesty than, in refusing his mandates, give example of rebellion to the subjects” (140). Clearly, then, from this perspective it can also be argued that what Garcí does is betrayal.²¹ The concept of reason of state is evidently aligned with the (in)famous Machiavellian maxim that to gain and keep political power, anything goes. However, in this *comedia*, the concept of reason of state does not operate in the political world. Rather, it signifies imposition or forceful necessity, the negation of a woman’s will, as uttered twice by Julia. When Don Diego wants to marry Anarda against her will, Julia pretends to be on her cousin’s side, opining that it is tyrannical to give reason of state jurisdiction over Anarda’s taste (vv. 1723-7). Here the concept is related to the right of the paternal figure to arrange marriages for the women under his control for political and economic gain, as Ysla Campbell notes (Introducción n. 1724-6). Towards the end of the play, Julia attempts to convince Garcí not

²¹ As Campbell (Introducción 48) and Josa (130) have noted, the play is constructed based on double perspectives which reveal different facets of the characters as they face the ups and downs of fortune, forcing them to evolve.

to marry Anarda because she is planning on dishonoring him, and herself, by continuing her illegitimate relationship with the Prince, which is, of course, a blatant lie. As they are related, Anarda's honor is also Julia's, and so the latter is forced—this is her reason of state—to prevent Anarda from further damaging their family name (vv. 2780-2809). In this case, Julia aims to justify her lies with a forceful, albeit false, need to protect her dignity. The concept, then, is never tied to any political need, and as it is instead assigned exclusively to Julia, the Machiavellian liar, the concept does not mean the negation of a woman's will, but rather signals Julia's strategy to assert her own will at any cost. That Julia is one of Alarcón's most unpleasant characters (Castro Leal 115) suggests how the dramatist felt about this form of government.²²

Much like empress María and queen Margaret, throughout this *comedia* both Anarda and Julia attempt to influence the world of politics by swaying the will of powerful men in direct contact with the monarchy. Their main tool is rhetoric, and as their intentions are propelled by contrasting motivations, their rhetorical styles are also diametrically opposed, ranging from affection to desire, from strength to frailty, from dishonesty to loyalty. With the triumph of Anarda and Garcí over Julia and the Prince the dramatist highlights the difference between a *privanza* based on wisdom and honesty, as opposed to flattery and blind obedience. It also signals the need to expose the monarch to a wider range of voices, as the two most important pieces of advice are not given by the royal favorites, but by Julia and Anarda—Julia's plan to marry Anarda to the Count drives the conflict, while Anarda's realization that love is not treason brings it to an end. The advice given by women is more effective and far-reaching than that

²² On the contrary, for González Anarda is one the best characters in Alarcón's *ouvre*, as she is dignified, intelligent, and with a strong sense of honor and loyalty (140, 142). For Cynthia Halpern, she is "a typical Alarconian heroine [...] a liberated woman, unique in her independence" (81-2). Also, Halpern finds a characterological continuity from Anarda to Aurora (*La amistad castigada*) and Elvira (*Los pechos privilegiados*) (133, n. 23). While I agree with her, I think that her list is only half-full.

given by men.²³ As Anarda advocates for behaviors which are wise, moral, and legal, she demonstrates that masculine virtues are also accessible to women. It is worth noting that while the Prince likes to secretly abuse his authority—as seen in his acts of espionage and vigilance, but also in the ploy to marry Anarda to the Count—it is Anarda’s wisdom that, in the end, forces the Prince to behave ethically, at least in public. On the contrary, male *privados* are profoundly flawed characters: as Garci wounds the Count because he was in the Prince’s way, he is indifferent to another’s legal rights; as Juan encourages the Prince to follow Julia’s plan, he protects his *privanza* and procures the satisfaction of his own desires. The sole motivation behind the actions of Juan is not his obligation towards Garci for sparing his life (Josa 122): he is also the vehicle for Julia’s intrigues and the Prince’s royal pandering (Ysla Campbell, Introducción 48), both actions in which he participates willingly. *Los favores del mundo* thus questions not only the exclusive masculinity of the office of the royal favorite, but the rationality behind its very existence, regardless of gender.

Luis Vélez de Guevara’s *El espejo del mundo* is one of the dramatist’s first *comedias* to be published. It is included in the mysterious collection of 1612, *Tercera parte de las comedias de Lope de Vega y otros auctores*, though it was surely composed ten years earlier (Peale, “Los textos” 83, 97). The action is set in Lisbon, spanning from before the accession of Afonso V of Portugal, the *comedia*’s monarch, to the marriage of his sister to John II of Castile, negotiated by the Castilian *privado*, Álvaro de Luna. The *comedia*’s specular structure will confront two kingdoms, two kings, and two *privados* (Peale, “Los textos” 94), suggesting that the state of the world reflects the monarch’s actions.

²³ In fact, the dramatically latent King only takes one action during the play, which is to send the Prince away from the kingdom and Anarda, as a response to Julia’s intrigues (vv. 2272-7).

The *comedia* begins with the future king, named Alonso in the text, out at night to meet his lover, when a trio of famished soldiers hold him at sword-point to take his cape. The soldiers explain that they have attempted to remedy their desperate situation at court, but the King, old and infirm, has stopped giving public audiences; and while prince Alonso could take the reins of the government, he neglects his official duties to pursue his love interests. Basco, the *comedia*'s protagonist, is nearby and fights the soldiers away. In conversation with the Prince, Basco reveals that, much like the assailants, he is also a soldier in financial distress—he is owed a captaincy for his military services, but despite being a nobleman he has not been heard by the court. In gratitude, but without revealing his identity, prince Alonso promises to circumvent the sluggish Consejo de Estado and intervene in Basco's favor directly with the monarch (vv. 1-348).²⁴ But it is several days before Basco is received at the court. The soldiers who tried to rob the Prince await their turn, too. Overhearing Basco complain of the court's slowness, they say: "Cuando dos años esté / sufriendo como un hereje / un consejo y secretario, / enemigo necesario, / será razón que se queje" (vv. 576-80) ("After you have suffered for two years the council and the secretary, like a heretic, then you will have reason to complain"). For the second time in half an act, these soldiers express a deep dissatisfaction with a monarchy that refuses to pay its soldiers what it's owed. Recognizing them as the Prince's assailants, Basco finds in these poor soldiers a reflection of himself: "Con lo que pudiere quiero, / y esto en honrada amistad, / suplir la necesidad / que pasáis [...] / os serviréis de mi tabla, / que es lo que más puedo hacer / en la corte" (vv. 633-45) ("With whatever I have I want, in friendship, to satisfy the need you are going through [...] you will eat at my table, which is the most I can do at the court). Through this act of friendship and self-recognition Basco becomes the official provider of the soldiers,

²⁴ All references from the edition by William R. Mason and C. George Peale.

surrogating a monarch apathetic about his responsibilities and indifferent to the needs of those in charge of defending him.

The marriage of Juan II of Castile and Isabel of Portugal has already been agreed upon between Álvaro de Luna and the old Portuguese king when the Castilian *privado* finds Isabel and María as he walks through the palace. As it was customary for the negotiations of political matrimonies, de Luna brought with him a portrait of Juan II, whom the *damas* now recognize as the man standing next to the *privado*. Pretending ignorance, they enquire about the man's identity. De Luna says: "Un deudo mío cercano / que os traigo a besar la mano" (vv. 462-3) ("A close relative of mine whom I brought along to kiss your hand"). De Luna's response reveals a relationship with the King based on kinship, as king Juan is his *deudo*, a relative to whom de Luna is indebted (Covarrubias "Deuda"). Indeed, their relationship is close, couched in the language of lovers, as the King call his *privado* "Luna hermosa, estrella mía" (v. 424) ("beautiful moon, star of mine").²⁵ Furthermore, spoken by de Luna, the verb *traigo*—to bring—indicates a hierarchical relationship where de Luna is in control of the monarch's body, perhaps even his will.²⁶ Isabel responds that it is too early for anyone to be kissing her hand, since she is not yet queen of Castile. To this, Juan II responds: "De su rey sois reina, y silla / os da el Sol que os besa el pie, / y por sola esa belleza / tenéis por vuestro el imperio / del uno y otro hemisferio" (vv. 467-71) ("You are the queen of the king of Castile. The sun kissing your foot assures you the

²⁵ In Lope de Vega's *La hermosa Ester*, the representation of the favorite "usurps royal imagery, cloaking the minister in common-places of kingly stature—the star who humbles all other stars and the prime mover of a courtly universe" (Wright 113).

²⁶ The *privado* was, in fact, generally disliked. Historian Juan de Mariana, for instance, in a rather brief segment makes sure to note, first, de Luna's meteoric rise from the bottom of society to the level of the great princes; then, he underlines that de Luna's mother, María de Cañete, was "tan suelta y entregada a sus apetitos que tuvo cuatro hijos bastardos, cada cual de su padre" ("so loose and given to her appetites that she birthed four bastard sons, each from a different father"); finally, Mariana states that once put in the chambers of king Juan, de Luna slowly gained the monarch's will, then made away with it (205).

throne, and for that beauty alone the empire, from one hemisphere to the other, is yours”).²⁷ The dialogue is revealing since, according to Covarrubias, *silla* is mostly a masculine noun, hence, for instance, the symbol of the saddled horse, “porque la nobleza se continúa por la línea paternal” (“because nobility is continued through paternal line”); *sillón*, on the other hand, is its feminine counterpart (“Silla”). While the King’s intervention may speak simply of the throne or royal chair (Covarrubias “Trono”), the fact that he offers Isabel the masculine *silla* is an opportunity to question who, in this Spaniard heteronormative society, would occupy the feminine *sillón*. The text, then, could also indicate the playwright’s intention to represent Juan and Álvaro as lovers, a recurrent topic in Iberian political literature.²⁸ And yet, this relationship, traditionally cast in a negative light to criticize the figure of the royal favorite (Feros 41-2), is represented in our *comedia* in more positive terms, as I will discuss ahead.

Satisfied with Basco’s bravery and honesty, prince Alonso wants to test Basco’s prudence by asking his opinion on the best way to distribute *mercedes* among veterans of war and living relatives of soldiers killed in battle.²⁹ The Prince is pleased by Basco’s responses and, in the following scene, when the grandees inform him of his father’s death, the now king Alonso immediately names his palatial officers, granting the most important to those present, but forgetting Basco (vv. 797-890). To him, the King says: “Sed mi Amigo Mayor, que en tales casos / es el mayor que pueden dar los reyes” (vv. 891-2) (“Be my utmost friend, which is the most a king can give”). In the months, maybe years, that pass between acts one and two, the King has married his sister, Isabel, to Juan of Castile, and Basco, the royal *valido*, is the highest

²⁷ The global empire offered to Isabel by Juan would not come into existence until the reign of his daughter Isabella, who would be born from Juan’s marriage to Isabel. This anachronism appears at least once more in the *comedia*.

²⁸ For an overview of the topic, see Gregory S. Hutcheson’s “Desperately Seeking Sodom.”

²⁹ The term *mercedes* is ambiguous: it is what is owed for one’s work, but it is also the graces and alms given by princes and lords to their vassals (Covarrubias “Merced”).

example of good fortune: he has also married and has a son; he is wealthy and powerful and, as a political figure, he is respected by nobles and non-nobles alike; the monarch himself christens his firstborn, raining *mercedes* on Basco and his family until the grandees treat him as *primo* or cousin (vv. 1185-1234).

As Basco's rise seems unstoppable, so does de Luna's: he is made *condestable*, the highest military office, and knighted Maestre of the Order of Santiago by king Juan II. Vélez questions the legitimacy of and need for a figure like de Luna, as he further expands on the topic of royal homoeroticism. Unable to give him more, the King says he would give de Luna half his crown if he could, to which de Luna responds: "Partir conmigo el Imperio / fuera razón a tener / vuestro cesario poder / el uno y otro hemisferio, / porque al uno se le diera / vuestra cristiana fortuna, / y yo, como vuestra luna, / dar luz al otro pudiera" (vv. 1277-1300) ("Splitting the Empire with me would be reasonable if you had power over both hemispheres, so that one would be given your Christian fortune and me, as your moon, would shine light on the other"). As de Luna describes himself as belonging to the King in female terms, Vélez insists on an intimate relationship between *privado* and ruler, thus recalling once again the trope of Juan II as a sovereign more interested in his *valido* than in the needs of his kingdom. Moreover, this exchange takes place in front of the Queen, who is symbolically demoted as she is obligated to tie the spurs on de Luna's shoes, the job of lesser servants like *mozos de espuelas*. Furthermore, the spurs are semantically related to the act of governing itself, perhaps to the act of controlling the ruler himself, as they were used to impel the "bestia de silla"—the saddled beast—"para que ande o corra, como nos pareciere y bien estuviere, por no dejarlo a su voluntad" (Covarrubias "Espuela") ("so that it walks or runs as we see fit, but not leaving it to its own will"). The King orders the new *condestable de Castilla* to kiss the hand of his Queen, to which she responds: "No

la habéis ya / menester, pues os la da / el Rey” (vv. 1374-6) (“You won’t need it [her hand], since the King has already given you his”).

Back in Lisbon, king Alonso wants Basco’s opinion on the problem of the dowry of his sister, now queen of Castile. In his testament, their father gave Isabel a series of villages on the border between Spain and Portugal, which are now being claimed by Juan II. Basco thinks the King should agree and give the territories to Castile because it is the late monarch’s testament, and, as the Castilians will not produce heirs, the territories will return to Portugal. History, of course, would prove Basco wrong.³⁰ In the *comedia* the King is deeply dissatisfied with his *valido*’s advice, but Basco replies that his suggestion is honest and prudent: “Si os he de aconsejar, señor, conforme / a consejo y razón, no siento agora / más justo parecer. Si he de engañaros, / lo contrario, señor, os aconsejo” (vv. 1440-3) (“If I am to counsel you, sir, according to reason, this is for the moment what I believe to be right. If I am to deceive you, sir, then I advise the opposite”). The rift between *valido* and King widens as they are unable to agree on how to resolve other needs, and the scene ends as the King walks away, vowing to remedy this situation (vv. 1404-1549). The second act ends with Basco’s arrest and imprisonment at the fortress of Gelves by order of the King.

In the final act the action moves from Lisbon to Brantes, where the Portuguese forces prepare to meet the Castilians. To honor the generosity of the village, the King offers public audiences. María, Basco’s wife, is granted a hearing. Her son, Alonso, is with her, but

³⁰ It is strange that a prudent *privado* like Basco would advise to gamble Portuguese territories purely based on the suspicion that Juan and Isabel’s marriage would produce no heirs. The wedding took place on July 22, 1447, when Juan was 42 and Isabel 19 years old. Seeing that Juan died, seemingly, of natural causes seven years later, perhaps Basco thought he was too old to conceive. Nevertheless, by the time of their marriage rumors of homosexuality between monarch and *privado* already circulated, as did rumors about the impotence of the prince, Henry IV, also accused of being intimately involved with his favorite, Juan Pacheco. Maybe Basco had in mind this purported effeminacy of the Castilian monarchs when he offered his advice. But it should also be considered that, since Juan and Isabel would indeed conceive a powerful monarch, queen Isabella of Castile, who would go to war against the Portuguese King, Basco’s dialogue may just reveal his lack of sagacity, his inability to stay ahead of his monarch’s enemies and, thus, his little value as a political advisor.

impoverished as they are the King does not recognize them, until María presents herself as Basco's unfortunate wife, arguing for her husband's liberation because it was never proved that he committed any crime. As discussed before, seventeenth-century royal women managed to influence politics in their favor by utilizing a rhetoric of affection that emphasized the familial ties which bound them to powerful men, as they reminded them of the debts—again the concept of *deudos*—acquired among family members. In doing so, their advice came across less like a political actor's and more like one offered by a loving relative concerned about the common good, allowing them to circumvent the division between the public and private spheres while indirectly affecting the course of politics. María, however, constructs her identity in relationship to a man in disgrace, and even though she is *comadre* to the King, her son's godfather, she never reminds the monarch of the sacred tie that binds them. Furthermore, María describes herself as “Una sombra / de cosa que apenas fue / [...] una señal que dejó / nave ligera en la mar” (vv. 1850-9) (“A shadow of a thing that hardly was, a trace left by a light ship on the sea). As beautiful and moving as it is, María's monologue is useless: as she describes herself as a ghostly memory, she disembodies herself and disappears from the world. As she equates herself to nothing, the King has nothing to listen to, and so he turns his back on her (vv. 1768-2013). María will only gain the royal license to leave Brantes. The Duke of Berganza sums up her condition: “una mujer, importunando, alcanza [...] Eso solo / pudo alcanzar, y de esa suerte viene / esperando volver al Rey con ruegos. / No sé si el Rey lo sabe que le sigue” (vv. 2403-08) (“a woman, importuning, achieves. This is all she achieved [the royal license], and thus she comes [behind the military caravan to Gelves] expecting another chance to beg the King. I am not sure that the King knows she is following him”). Without a familiar connection, a woman's persistence may importune a powerful man, but not persuade him.

As the armed conflict takes shape, king Juan II orders De Luna to bribe the warden of Gelves: “De mi parte le diréis / al Alcaide que, pues ya / la ciudad por mía está [...] que en Castilla le daré / más que en Portugal tenía / si sigue la parte mía / [...] si no, que imagine / que lo he de estar conquistando / un siglo entero [...] / sin que le entre la comida / si no es por el Cielo” (vv. 2014-27) (“Tell the warden that, since the city is mine to take, I will give him more in Castile than he has in Portugal if he does as I say. If not, let him imagine I will be conquering him for a hundred years, without allowing them any food, unless brought in by air”). But at the castle, soldiers and warden have already died of hunger and thirst, as told by Basco, the only survivor, to De Luna: “los soldados que estaban / por guardas más de sed / y hambre han muerto, sabed, / que así morir deseaban / antes que salir rendidos, / como vasallos honrados, / y murieron afrentados / más que de mal mantenidos” (vv. 2134-41) (“the soldiers that guarded me have died of hunger and thirst, but know that they preferred to die this way, with honor and not defeated, and that they died of affront, not malnourishment”).³¹ Perched atop the castle tower, Basco looks down on De Luna as he rejects his offer. The topography underscores the ethics differential between Spanish and Portuguese *validos*: Basco, a disgraced man in charge of a doomed first line of defense, would rather die loyal to his ungrateful King than be bought by

³¹ The question of whether the soldiers die of famine or in combat is impossible to resolve, as is figuring out who provoked their deaths. In Manson and Peale’s edition, Juan II says: “han muerto [...] de hambre y sed, con que viniendo / intentadamente, Alonso, / a Portugal, no pudieron / aperebir el castillo / de agua ni bastimentos” (vv. 2479-85). Who failed to supply the castle with water and food? As quoted above, the use of “Alonso” as a noun of direct address slides the responsibility away from the Portuguese monarch. On the contrary, a manuscript and the *princeps* edition of 1612 do the opposite by inserting “Alfonso” as the subject of the clause: “con que viniendo / intentadamente Alfonso / a Portugal” (nf). Of course, the question is why would Alonso, the king of Portugal, be traveling to Portugal. An anonymous manuscript dated 1601—although the orthography suggests a date closer to the nineteenth century—attempts to clarify by altering the text: “porque viniendo / impensadamente, Alfonso, / á Portugal, no pudieron / aperebir el castillo / de agua ni bastimentos” (nf). Perhaps the Castilian invasion of Portugal was so swift and unexpected that neither the soldiers nor the warden had time to properly stock the castle, thus dying not of poor sustenance, but as the result of the Castilian siege, as Basco seems to imply. However, this contradicts the plans of Juan II, as he ordered De Luna to bribe the warden of Gelves to, first, gain access to the castle, which he would *then* use as a stronghold from where to command the siege of Brantes (vv. 2466-74). Whatever it may be, the ambiguity further develops the idea of a monarchy disinterested in the needs of its people.

Castile; De Luna, made the mightiest Castilian by his generous King, lacks the means to assert his monarch's will, and must confront that true loyalty cannot be bought (vv. 2158-2261).

Juan II is presented as a decisive and strategic army general, as he plans his attack on the castle. Nevertheless, upon learning of Basco's ferrous loyalty and strength from his *privado*, the Castilian King is willing to forgo the disputed territories in exchange for Basco, since, from his perspective, with him and De Luna by his side he could conquer Fortune herself (vv. 2450-2508). Despite hints of homosexuality early in the play, towards the end Juan II is presented as the more prudent monarch. On the other hand, for king Alonso the invasion of the Castilian forces is a nuisance that forces him to leave his life of pleasure to demonstrate that he can also be a warrior. He offers public hearings in gratitude for the money and soldiers that Brantes has offered him, though he admits that the villagers are armed with faith, not swords (vv. 1771-1819), evincing, once more, his disregard for the state of the realm. As Juan II transmits De Luna's exchange with Basco, Alonso accepts that he misjudged his *privado*'s honest advice for a treacherous scheme financed by his enemies, though he blames fortune and divinity for Basco's fall. To resolve the conflict peacefully, Alonso surrenders the disputed territories but not his former *valido*, as he plans to return him to his previous state and make him even richer (vv. 2514-45). When Basco rejects his King's offer, this loyal *privado*, the most noble any king has ever had, in words of Juan II, is lost to both monarchies (vv. 2606-27).

As in *Los favores del mundo*, the title of *El espejo del mundo* speaks of the different ways in which the protagonist's life is affected by the monarch's whims. Of course, neither *privado* states that the adversities suffered are caused by caprices of their kings, instead blaming the quirks of Fortune. Still, in the end both protagonists, having learned a lesson, decide to lead quiet and simple lives in the country rather than be wealthy and miserable at court, and the sovereign's

obduracy is solely responsible for pushing away those who could be of great service to the commonwealth. This is particularly true in Vélez's play, since unlike Alarcón's Garci, Basco's loyalty is as absolute as the harm done to him by the King. More importantly, Basco's generosity to the lower classes emphasizes the King's inefficacy in and disregard for public matters. And yet, the *comedia* also underscores the nonessential role of the *privado*: as de Luna proves to be an expensive messenger, Basco demonstrates that loyalty has no price and needs no *mercedes*.

The way each playwright treats historical accusations of homosexuality and impotence in royal men is also telling. Though mostly absent in the *comedia*, in the end of *Los favores del mundo* the impotence of prince Henry IV, the Impotent, takes center stage, as he is incapable of enjoying the *dama* he desires. *El espejo del mundo* takes the opposite route. Historically, accusations of homosexuality and effeminacy were employed to delegitimize political rivals; accordingly, in political literature the reign of Juan II was described as one strife and pandemonium (Feros 41-2), and his *privado*, Álvaro de Luna, as the site of contamination of the Spanish body politic (Hutcheson 229). While Vélez's *comedia* does insist on the purported homosexuality of the Castilian king, in the end he is represented as the prudent leader of an effective monarchy, suggesting that gender is of little relevance to good governance. In fact, Vélez hints that prudence and sagacity are the most important traits for a successful monarchy, as it is precisely honesty which leads to Basco's downfall and makes María's plea to the King completely fruitless. The persuasive faculty of Anarda and the aggressiveness of Garci emphasize that wisdom without might is, simply, not enough.

Kingslayers: Two Tales of Steel, Desire, and Law

In Alarcón's *La amistad castigada* and Lope de Vega's *La reina Juana de Nápoles*, royal women participate in political decisions, including the legitimization of the king and the enforcement of the law. But the *comedias* also suggest that, along with any royal privilege, these women have the responsibility of standing up to the monarchs should they endanger the kingdom. In this chapter I will focus on the role of royal women in the administration of monarchical power.

La amistad castigada, published in Alarcón's second volume of 1634, is set in fourth-century BCE Sicily, during the reign of the tyrant Dionysus II. Once again, the plot presents a love triangle between the monarch, his favorite, and a woman, in this case Aurora, the King's niece. Scheming to enjoy Aurora, the monarch will abuse his powers, threatening to crush society from the foundation of the family itself. But even such extreme cases can be resolved through legal means, as the *comedia* suggests, since no criminal, tyrant or otherwise, is above the law and no subject stands below it.

Aurora, niece of king Dionisio and daughter of Dion, the powerful *privado*, breaks the news to her servant: her father has asked for royal license to marry her, but has been denied by the King. Aurora is pleased, as she had agreed to the union to indulge her father. Young, attractive, and wealthy, Aurora is no hurry to take a husband. Mid-conversation, Aurora notices the presence of a strange, good looking man who has somehow gained access into her house. The man presents himself as Filippo, the King's *valido*,³² and asks to speak with Aurora in private (vv.

³² Filippo makes an interesting distinction between *validos* and *privados*: “Yo soy / Filippo, del Rey criado, / si valido, no privado; / porque a vuestro padre doy / solamente este lugar” (vv. 649-53) (“I am Filippo, servant of the King, if *valido*, not *privado*, which is a place I give to your father alone”). Based on this text, Ysla Campbell defines the *valido* as the secretary in charge of the love affairs of the monarch, and the *privado* as one whose functions are

581-672).³³ In an aside, he admits to his duplicity: “Inútilmente pretendo / resistir; el Rey lo erró / cuando de mí se fió; / que debiera, conociendo / tan soberanos despojos, / para evitar sus agravios, / dar comisión a los labios, / sin concedella a los ojos” (vv. 681-8) (“It is useless to resist. The King was wrong in trusting me. Knowing how beautiful she is, he should have ordered me to speak to her without seeing her”). Filippo delivers the message that the King is madly in love with her. In an aside, the *dama* reveals her disappointment, as she expected a love declaration from Filippo, not the King (vv. 757-71). Aurora responds: “Estoy aguardando / a saber si es el intento / de mi tío ser mi esposo” (vv. 772-4) (“I am waiting to hear if it is my uncle’s intention to be my husband”). It is not—a political marriage awaits him in Carthage. Aurora is furious. Dionisio is king thanks to her father, as she reminds the *valido*: “¿Olvida... / ...que debe / el honor a quien se atreve / a ofender en el honor? [...] ¿Así asegura lealtades? [...] ¿Así el nombre de tirano / quiere borrar? ¿Y así intenta / en el reino que violenta, / acreditarse de humano? [...] ¡Vive el cielo [...] que ha de sentir en mi enojo / de su locura la pena!” (vv. 793-808) (“Does he forget that he owes his honor to him whose honor he attempts to offend? Is this how he procures loyalties? Is this how he wishes to erase the name of tyrant? And is this how he pretends to convince the people that he forced himself upon that he is human? By heaven, through my wrath he will feel the penalty for his insanity!”).

Although Aurora’s dialogue raises thoughtful and well-grounded questions about kingship and legitimacy, her positionality qualifies her objections. Aurora both is and is not a member of the ruling establishment: her family connections to the government are the source of Aurora’s social, legal, and economic privileges. Nevertheless, the King’s purely sexual interest

directly related to the administration of the commonwealth (“Poder” 201, n. 2). However, here and elsewhere, Alarcón uses both terms indiscriminately.

³³ All references from the edition of Alarcón’s complete works by Agustín Millares Carlo, second volume.

in her endows Aurora with a purely corporal value, rendering her social position, her social worth, if not invalid, at least inoperative. The *dama*, now a sexualized vassal, is forced to reconsider the state of the monarchy, as well as her place in it, from outside of the ruling establishment. This external perspective allows her to construct a parallel between her body natural and the body politic of the kingdom onto which her uncle has forced himself, and she thus finds Dionisio's tyranny problematic for the first time. Filippo's presence in Aurora's house, simultaneously unauthorized and welcomed, illustrates her contradictory position as both victim and accomplice of Dionisio's double illegitimacy as lover and king: since the monarch owes the crown to Dion, her father, Aurora's social position depends as much on her blood ties with a tyrant as on her father's conspiracy to crown one. But the forces that sexualize her also underscore her position as a female subject, one unauthorized to participate in governmental matters such as the crowning of a tyrant. In the end, her political marginality will give her the moral advantage.

Spanish theater and treatises on kingship recurrently emphasized "the separation of the private self of the monarch from his public persona" (Quintero 28). In our *comedia*, this break is embodied and dramatized in the characters of Dion and Filippo, the two acting royal favorites. These characters perform contrasting activities and follow diverging trajectories: Filippo, the amoral favorite, sidelines the moral one, Dion, Aurora's father, who is sent away to attend to government-related matters so that the tyrant can have Aurora, his niece, for himself. Since the marriage of the King to a Carthaginian is a political matter, its resolution is assigned to Dion, the effective *privado* and statesman (vv. 2123-32). Conversely, enjoying Aurora at any cost is a personal desire and a decision made voluntarily and with full knowledge of the consequences. For this matter, spineless Filippo will do.

The suspicion of a Sicilian conspiracy to overthrow the King is an opportunity for Filippo to bolster his position as royal favorite: so that the King can have Aurora for himself, Filippo devises a plan to send Dion away on a mission to discover the identities of the traitors by pretending to be a defector; should Dion discover what the King did to his daughter during his absence, he will be told it was all a ruse concocted to strengthen the fiction of Dion's betrayal (vv. 109-31; 159-218). Filippo's duplicity is reinforced by his rather obscure origins. As the King asks if Filippo has ever seen Aurora, the *valido* replies: "Fue tan prolija / la ausencia a que los enojos / me desterraron de Egisto, / que con tu padre privó, / que jamás lo permitió" (vv. 15-19) ("It was so long, the absence to which the anger of Aegisthus, your father's *privado*, banished me, that I have never seen her"). In the *princeps* edition, the man who banished Filippo is named "Egypto"—Aegyptus—(f. 45v); but Hartzzenbusch, in his edition of 1855, transcribed the name as "Egisto"—Aegisthus—(285). Both their histories evince profound moral flaws, as they touch upon issues of sexual and physical violence committed against their own relatives or the families of those they advised.³⁴ In Diodorus Siculus' *The Library of History*, there is an account of a distinguished Lacedaemonian named Aristus who was sent to the court of Dionysus I, the historical father of our *comedia*'s King, with the manifest intention of overthrowing his tyranny while secretly planning to legitimize it, as it was convenient for the government of Sparta

³⁴ In his *Fables*, Hyginus relates the role of Aegisthus in the vengeance of his father, Thyestes, against his brother (sv. "Aegisthus"; "Atreus"), as well as Aegisthus' role in Clytemnestra's murder of her husband, Agamemnon (sv. "Clytemnestra"), and her son, Orestes (sv. "Orestes"). As for Aegyptus, he had fifty sons that he wanted to marry his brother's fifty daughters, with the intention of murdering the women so that Aegyptus could have sole control of the kingdom (sv. "Danaus"). In the beginning of *The Odyssey*, Zeus speaks of Aegisthus' violent end as one foretold by the gods themselves: "he knew what pit of destruction was before him, because we ourselves warned him of it [of taking a wedded woman, Clytemnestra, and murdering her husband, Agamemnon] but Aegisthus' heart would not hear reason, and now he has paid all his debts at once" (2). The idea that whoever knowingly indulges in a life of passions with no restraints foretells its own demise, was surely an attractive one for our playwright.

(XIV.10.2).³⁵ Whatever historical character Alarcón may have had in mind when composing the play, by having a character of questionable morality banished from the realm by the *privado* of a tyrant, he situates his characters in a longstanding literary and historical tradition of duplicity and violence.

In the *comedia*, Filippo's work is never tied to the administration of the realm, or any political issue for that matter, as his role is to act as the King's facilitator and provide him with an effective plan to possess his niece. But when Filippo meets Aurora, he falls in love with her, and from then on, he modulates his advice depending on the identity of his rival: if it is the King, then Filippo advocates for tempering his passions and reminds him that Aurora is not the only woman in the realm (vv. 950-8); if it is someone else, Filippo advises the King not to falter in his ambitions to possess his niece, because "nadie merezca lo que tú no alcanzas" (v. 968) ("no one should deserve what you cannot have". From facilitator to blatant manipulator, Filippo descends into treason. Finding that Aurora would take him as a husband if both the King and her father agreed to their matrimony (vv. 1777-1804), Filippo divulges the King's intentions and plans to Dion, with the condition that he give him Aurora's hand in recompense for betraying the monarch (vv. 2321-66). Dion is represented as a loyal official, working constantly and effectively to address the complicated needs of his King (vv. 157-280; 2030-2128). For the King, Dion is a father figure to be wary of, as he owes his crown to Dion's bravery and prudence, the very same traits that can take the crown away should Dion discover his plans for Aurora (vv. 41-53). In fact, in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* the relationship between the young Dionysus II and the mature Dion evinces a strong fear of paternal figures of authority. The historical advisor of

³⁵ Variations of the name "Aristus" in Spanish may lead to other interpretations, both anchored in the Classical traditions. In Liddell and Scott's *A Greek-English Lexicon*, the Greek word for "areth" refers to excellence and goodness ([www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=LSJ%20a\)reth/&lang=original](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=LSJ%20a)reth/&lang=original)); in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, Arete is Dion's niece, who Dion marries (VI.6).

Dionysus' father was no Aegisthus but Dion himself. Furthermore, through a series of consanguineous marriages, Dion simultaneously occupied the places of uncle and husband of the old king's younger progeny, giving him a legitimate claim to the throne as the death of the old king seemed inevitable (VI). The licentious life of Dionysus II made Dion bring the philosopher Plato to the court with the hopes of turning the arrogant young tyrant into a fit and lawful ruler; otherwise, according to Plutarch, Dion would have had to depose him and return Syracuse to civil power (XII).

Indeed, upon learning of the King's plans for his daughter, Dion rallies the support of the Sicilian aristocracy and moves in silence against the monarch (vv. 2513-62). Warned by Filippo, they hide in Dion's house and wait for the monarch to attack Aurora. She bellows from backstage: "No os canséis, porque primero / me dejaré hacer pedazos / que ofensa a mi honor" (vv. 2617-9) ("Don't wear yourself out—I'd rather be torn to shreds than see my honor offended"). The *dama* walks on stage wielding a sword against the King: "La vida, / ¡vive el cielo!, he de quitaros" (vv. 2633-4) ("By heaven, I will take your life!"). But her father intervenes: "Para vengar mis afrentas / no son menester tus manos" (vv. 2635-6) ("To avenge the affronts committed against me, I don't need your hands"). Aurora points her sword at her father and rises in defense of her king and uncle—her father's hands are not needed either. As Filippo awaits the resolution of the conflict before picking sides, father and daughter stand against each other, the former willing to slay the tyrant and the latter to protect him. She reminds Dion that Dionysus is their monarch and relative by blood, and when her father accuses the King of tyranny and ingratitude she agrees, but makes it clear that her father is no position to do so—as the one who crowned the tyrant, he is equally guilty of it. This disqualifies Dion from acting as

judge against the King. Both father figure and royal *privado* lose their moral ground and with it the right to impart justice.

Aurora then affirms that it is not reasonable, equitable, or just to murder the King for an unconsummated mistake. Aurora's prudence, unlike her father's, is dictated by legal and moral imperatives. As such, she offers the only resolution that is lawful, reasonable, and just: "si ingrato os ha ofendido, / el castigo que al ingrato / dé la ley, ejecutad" (vv. 2665-7) ("If his ingratitude offended you, use the law of ingratitude to punish him"). The King explains his own sentence: "Nobles de Sicilia, puesto / que la ley al que es ingrato / condena a que restituya / el beneficio a las manos / que liberales lo hicieron [...] a Dión restituyo / la corona que él me ha dado, / y el cetro renuncio en él" (vv. 2743-53) ("Nobles of Sicily, since the law orders that the ingrate should restore the benefit to those who generously gave it, I return the crown to Dion and surrender the scepter to him"). And as the crown reverts to Dion, Aurora dethrones one king and makes another. This *comedia* contests the monopoly of monarchical power by the male nobility by endowing a noblewoman with a powerful and subversive discourse of legality and reason.

The conflict of this play is the same as the conflict of *Los pechos privilegiados* and *El dueño de las estrellas*. In this triad of political *comedias*, the monarch desires a woman who does not want him. With the aid of his favorite, these kings bribe and threaten servants to gain access into the women's houses to abuse them. Although it is difficult to date the composition of these plays, critics agree that they were composed between 1619-1621, or perhaps from 1620-1625. In other words, they were written after the fall from power of the Duke of Lerma, a period that some describe as one of optimism. In these plays, the main male characters are based on historical lawmakers: Lycurgus of Sparta, Dion of Syracuse, and Alfonso V of Leon. The texts follow a chronological and geographical trajectory—the notion of *translatio imperii*—from East

to West: *EDE* is set in 9th century BC Crete; *LAC* in 4th century BC Sicily; and *LPP* in 11th century Leon. As these *comedias* underline the flawed character of quasi-legendary lawmakers, the dramatist suggests that a state of legality is not always-already part of society, but rather a process that must be continually questioned and revised. Characters like Aurora embody the idea that what is missing in this continuous process of refining and updating the law is the female voice.

Lope de Vega's *La reina Juana de Nápoles, y marido bien ahorcado*, thought to have been composed between 1597-1603, is set *ca.* 1344, after the death of Neapolitan king Robert the Wise, at some point around the crowning of his granddaughter, Giovanna I. Staging a violent, foreign king against a prudent and legitimate queen, the play examines the role of gender in the transmission of monarchical power, suggesting that if queens can make monarchs, they are also responsible for unmaking them should they endanger the kingdom.

In the historical background, Robert's male firstborn, Charles, Duke of Calabria, died in 1328 leaving no legitimate male heir. King Robert wished to arrange things for Giovanna, his only heiress, and in 1333 she was betrothed to Andrew, son of the King of Hungary (*Cronica di Partenope*, qtd. in Musto 259). However, in his last will Robert made Giovanna his universal heiress, indicating that, should she die, "her heir was not to be Andrew, who would then become prince of Salerno, but her younger sister Maria" (Musto 236). Robert's motivation for pushing Andrew—the grandson of his older brother, Charles Martel—out of the Neapolitan monarchy in his last will and testament remains unclear (Musto 234-54). But Giovanna's own account of Andrew's murder in the town of Aversa in 1345, a few days before his coronation, depicts him as a careless and irresponsible child, saying that in the night of his assassination he left his room

“imprudently and without any precautions. [...] Without listening to anyone’s advice, he followed only the impetuous impulses of his youth” (*Storia de Napoli*, qtd. in Musto 275).

Although the historical Andrew was described as an uncouth simpleton (Steele 90), the character in Lope’s *comedia* is the complete opposite, which underlines the politics of the text. Unlike his historical counterpart, the dramatized Andrés is decisive, violent, and cunning. The play begins with Andrés’ siege of Naples with the backing of his brother, the king of Hungary. His intention is to force the Queen, named Juana in the play, to marry him. Juana acknowledges that her father’s last will orders her to marry him, but she also understands that he never intended her to marry him by force. Thus, in the first scenes, Juana rides a horse outside of Naples to ask Andrés to return to Hungary; otherwise, he is warned that “Las damas de mi palacio / espadas ciñen sangrientas, / que transformándose en hombres / varonil esfuerzo muestran. / De mujeriles vestidos / nos despojamos, y advierta / que tal vez furor se vuelve / nuestra natural flaqueza. / Y puede ser que algún día, / si no se vuelve a su tierra, / a manos de mis mujeres / afrentosamente muera” (I, 1-3) (“The women in my palace wield bloody swords, and as they transform into men they demonstrate masculine strength. We shed our female dresses and our natural weakness becomes fury. It may well be that one day, should you not return to your land, you may shamefully die at the hands of my women”). Unmoved by her threats, Andrés intensifies the siege. The destruction leads Juana’s vassals into pressing her to give in to the demands of the Hungarians. From their perspective, this is a just decision; if Juana disagrees, they will take it upon themselves to deliver Naples to Andrés. As Juana sentences these men to death for sedition, someone opens the gates to the city and Naples falls into the hands of Andrés, who storms the castle to the cry of “Quitad / la vida a todos” (II, 12-4) (“Take everyone’s lives”).

For Malveena McKendrick, Lope departs from history to develop a more personal version of the life of the Queen: “As a play about female rule it presents the dilemma of a reigning queen faced with tyranny in a consort to whom, as monarch, she is constitutionally superior, but to whom, as wife, by social and religious tradition she is subject” (197). Indeed, this *comedia* is less about the story of the real Juana than it is about a female ruler obligated to negotiate her public and private roles to protect her kingdom. Andrés’ reluctance to remove his army from the gates of Naples until Juana agrees to marry him, illustrates the intersectional problem where the Queen must “choose between her duty as sovereign (to protect her people) and her pleasure, which is choosing her own destiny” (Salvi 46-7). In fact, the Queen is in love with Ludovico, her army general. For days, Ludovico has been visiting the Queen at night, in her garden, without knowing her identity. At last, Juana brings a crown to the meeting, “Para ponerla en la frente / del hombre que solamente / es digno de mi persona” (I, 8) (“To place it on the head of the only man who is worthy of my person”). No *mujer esquiva*, Juana simply reserves for herself the right to choose a husband, as do so many female characters from the Golden Age. Hers is not a complete rejection of traditional gender roles, however, since she will marry twice before the play’s end. Instead, her character is infused with a mix of stereotypically male and female behavior that underscores the gender fluidity of royal women, making them “more legitimate to a masculine audience” (Sánchez 64).³⁶ For instance, the reason why Ludovico ignores the Queen’s identity, as Juana says, is “Que las veces que he querido / decirle claro quién soy, / tal con la vergüenza estoy / que toda me he enmudecido. / La corona le dirá, / pues la lengua no se atreve, / quién es la dama a quien debe / el corazón que le da” (I, 9) (“Whenever I

³⁶ According to Sánchez, “when female piety had direct implications for the political, military, and intellectual world, or when an author wished to characterize female piety as a positive attribute, it was usually described in masculine terms”. This dynamic illustrates “the inability of seventeenth-century men to accept that women (even those of imperial lineage) could, by nature, be strong, constant, and wise” (64).

have wanted to reveal my identity to him, embarrassment has turned me into a mute. The crown will tell him, as the tongue does not dare, who is the woman that gives him her heart”). From the Amazonian *mujer varonil* who confronts the Hungarian invader in the beginning of the play, to a nubile girl in love, Juana moves from one extreme of gender constructedness to the opposite, stipulating, first, that monarch and person are two distinct entities and that the desires of the one are incompatible with the duties of the other; second, that gender is never set, but performed depending on the circumstances, not the sex, of the subject.

As the central concern of this *comedia* is the monarch’s duty, I disagree with the idea that Juana “does not want to sacrifice her pleasure (body natural) for the right thing to do (body politic)”, and that her aggressive demeanor—her “masculine traits”—are due to Juana not having “a father or brother to defend her ‘honor’” (Salvi 47-8). In fact, Juana sacrifices her pleasure. After the invasion, Andrés finds his way to the Queen and says, “Casarte conmigo es justo, / siquiera por tu provecho, / y diré que no lo has hecho / por fuerza, sino por gusto” (II, 15) (“To marry me is fair, if only to procure what is best for you. I will say you did it not by force, but by your own decision”). Juana sacrifices her love for Ludovico to her duty as queen: “Matarme fuera mejor. / Mas no quiera Dios que diga / mi reino, perdido ahora, / que en lugar de defensora / tuvo en mí reina enemiga” (II, 15) (“It would be better to kill me. But God forbid that my kingdom, as of now lost, should say that I was its enemy, rather than its defender”). Also, *honra*, “the worth of the individual [...] in terms of regard and respect” (Jodi Campbell 66), is a political concern. Juana commands an army and an army general who could deliver her messages, but instead rides her horse to personally meet with her enemy on her enemy’s turf. Quintero notes that *comedias* dealing with the topic of female rule make women’s power visible, challenging the prevailing ideology and rhetoric of male dominance (Quintero 25). As Lope subverts feminine

mores by foregrounding gender fluidity, the play suggests that ruling is a matter of duty, not gender.

The idea is further explored through Andrés's obsession with Isabel, daughter of the Duke of Ferrara and chambermaid to the Queen. Upon learning that she is in love with Ludovico, Andrés sends instructions to Matías to have him killed. "Donde no hay razón / no me obliga la obediencia" (II, 17) ("I am not obligated to obey what is unreasonable"), replies Matías, tearing the letter to pieces as the Queen walks in. For destroying a royal order, the Queen has him arrested: "Mientras no fui su mujer / mi mortal contrario ha sido, / mas ya el Rey es mi marido / y le habéis de obedecer" (II, 17) ("While I was not his woman, he was my mortal enemy. But now the King is my husband and you will obey him"). If at first this powerful Queen must perform her wifely role of subjection to her husband, as Matías informs her that the discarded orders were to kill her beloved Ludovico the Queen reverses her decision. Andrés degenerates into a tyrant with the aid of his favorite, going about Naples raping women and killing those who defend them. Juana confronts him as the situation escalates: Andrés: "¿Tendré miedo / a mujeres?" Juana: "Ser podría / que las temáis algún día" (III, 27-8) (Andrés: "Should I be afraid of women?" Juana: "It could be that one day you will fear them"). The tensions between Juana's personal desires and monarchical duties underline the constructedness of gender, by presenting a character with the capacity to modify her conduct as her queenly role demands.

If gender is reversible, so is the right to rule: Andrés: "¿Soy rey de Nápoles?" Reina: "Sí, / rey sois, mas soyslo por mí." Andrés: "¿Quién podrá más de los dos?" Reina: "Yo, que en posesión quieta / soy reina, y siempre lo he sido." Andrés: "Después que tenéis marido, / aunque reina, estáis sujeta." Reina: "No lo estaré para hacer / que os enmendéis" (III, 28) (Andrés: "Am I King of Naples?" Reina: "Yes, you are, but only because of me." Andrés: "Who among us two

has more power?” Reina: “Me, as I am the legitimate queen and always have been.” Andrés: “You are married so, queen as you are, you are subject to your husband.” Reina: “I won’t be to make you amend yourself”). Reminding her husband that any privileges he may enjoy he owes exclusively to her legitimate right to rule over Naples, the Queen not only categorically rejects any position of subservience to her husband, but also hints that it is within her authority to subvert traditional gender and family roles as she threatens to discipline her husband for his irrational behavior. By describing women in unexpected political roles, playwrights appear able to conceive of alternative political orders. Gender trouble is about gender, yes, but also signals a broader questioning of political arrangements.

In *Laberinto de Fortuna* (1444), Juan de Mena forewarns husbands that poison is the weapon of choice of malicious wives (pars. 131-2; Tausiet, 182 n. 3). But in our *comedia*, as Andrés plans to poison Juana, Mena’s gender roles are reversed: Andrés: “un cordon habéis tejido. / ¿No sabremos para qué?” Juana: “Para ahorcaros.” Andrés: “No es bueno, / que os pienso yo dar veneno.” Juana: “¿Veneno a mí? Ya lo sé”. (III, 34-5) (Andrés: “You have woven a string. Are we to know what is it for?” Juana: “To hang you with.” Andrés: “It is of no use, since I plan on poisoning you.” Juana: “Poisoning me? I already know”). Pretending to be thirsty, the Queen asks for water. As Andrés’ favorite leaves to fetch the poisoned drink, the Queen asks Andrés to follow her to an adjacent room where he is strangled with her string (III, 34-5). The slaying of Andrés is a political act, for the recovery of the state. It is a practical but also legal move: “en matarte no hago mal, / pues que tú matarme quieres, / esta es ley natural” (“since you want to kill me, I do no ill in killing you; it is natural law”) (III, 35). Furthermore, while the Queen takes her gender role to heart—she is never seen or heard in public after her marriage, she respects Andrés’s political decisions—in this *comedia*, as in many more, when the

men fail to live up to their role, the women must take over (Soufas 20). As the Queen gave him his power, so she takes it away.

Lope recognizes the fundamental role played by royal women in monarchical power, but he also reminds us that the public sphere is a masculine world. Female rulers are not impeded from wielding monarchical power; while their aptness to govern is never questioned, female political participation depends on complicated gender performances: women must behave as expected by men. Only when her husband proves unable to dominate himself and to act in accordance to reason and law, is the Queen obligated to reverse her gender role from obedient wife to effective monarch. Moreover, immediately after she murders the King she arranges her second marriage to the man she has loved throughout the play, subverting her gender role once again so that the *comedia*'s social order can be restored.

In *La amistad castigada* the harassment of Aurora by her king and uncle, a tyrant crowned by her very father, obligates her to reconsider the state of the monarchy and her role as a member of it. Lacking ethical men, Aurora arms herself with the sword, but also with a powerful discourse of legality and reason. She dethrones one king and crowns another in accordance with the law, without switching legible gender marks, suggesting that legality supersedes any essentialist notion of gender. In *La reina Juana de Nápoles* gender is a binary construct, albeit an unstable one. Depending on the situation, be it personal or political, queen Juana can fluidly move from one end of the gender spectrum to the other. She rightly warns Andrés that gender is a performance: when her women shed their female dresses, the Queen says, their natural weakness becomes fury. But Andrés does not, or perhaps cannot, believe her, and this is his fatal mistake. For these female characters, ruling is a matter of duty, not of gender—and duty comes first.

Kingmakers: Unstable Paternity, Maternal Resolve

Alarcón's *La crueldad por el honor* and Lope's *La inocente sangre* explore the issue of whether the right to rule endows the king with the capacity to govern wisely. In both *comedias*, kingship theories are rejected as fictions, suggesting instead that monarchical legitimacy is merely transactional. To this end, the plays foreground the vital function played by royal women in the line of royal succession, a role that depends not on their reproductive capacity as females, but on their political dexterity as queens. In this chapter I analyze the faculty of the queen as a kingmaker and its relationship to the performance of traditional gender roles.

La crueldad por el honor, published in 1634 and composed by Alarcón perhaps fifteen years before, is set in twelfth-century Aragon, during the brief and complicated reign of queen Petronila. The *comedia* is based on the historical challenges raised against the Queen's legitimate right to rule by usurpers and aristocrats alike. It, thus, raises the question of whether the real enemies of a legitimate monarchy are the usurpers who attempt to take the crown, or the aristocrats who will stop at nothing to control the government.

As a young widow and mother of a child prince, queen Petronila is perceived as doubly vulnerable by the noble characters, whose greed has created dissent and discord to the point of civil war (vv. 240-5). To alleviate their voracity, the Queen decides to step aside and leave majesty and kingdom to her son, even though he is not yet of age. For this, she needs the support of Ramón, the powerful Count of Provenza. He, in return, wants the Queen's hand. She responds: "a mí sola la razón / me basta para vencer" (vv. 533-4) ("reason is enough for me to

win”).³⁷ Ramón’s reply defines the overall tone of the *comedia*: “Tal vez suele no valer / sin las armas la justicia” (vv. 535-6) (“Justice is often worthless if not backed up by arms”). The Queen’s answer foreshadows the resolution of the conflict: “Advierta vuestra codicia / que, pues la razón me ayuda, / podrá más ella desnuda, / que armada vuestra malicia” (vv. 537-40) (“A warning to your greed: my naked reason will fare better than your malice in arms”).

As Ramón will conspire and indeed raise his army against the Queen, his threat is representative of the motivations and behaviors of the play’s nobility, a group of ambitious, powerful men with a strong anxiety towards women in power. But for the Queen’s body natural, the point of access to her power or body politic (Axton 12), these nobles will break engagements and wage war against the Queen or each other (vv. 635-43). At this intersection of gender and political power, the *comedia* suggests that loyalty, as understood by the nobility, is merely transactional. But the Queen refuses to trade her body for her subjects’ support. She does not admit to having any personal desires or needs for pleasure. In fact, she speaks exclusively of reason and law, social issues, and political necessities, as if her body was solely politic, and she a queen dedicated to ruling and nothing more. The abusive, passionate character of Alarconian kings is here reserved for the masculine nobility, which sees the Queen as a weak ruler whose political power can be forcibly taken. Lacking men of honor, this *comedia* explores female rule as a viable model of government.

Indeed, a striking characteristic of this *comedia* is that the main conflict between grandees and monarchs is represented not as a struggle for the crown, but for the government, as the role of the king is relativized to emphasize that the real monetary and political capital of the kingdom lies in the hands of the person in charge of governing, be it a minister or favorite. This is illustrated as the Queen gathers the grandees to announce her decision to crown her son:

³⁷ All references from the edition by José Montero Reguera and María Jesús Fontanela Fernández.

Caballeros de Aragón,
gloria y honor de la Europa,
cuya fama atemoriza
las regiones más remotas,
hoy la majestad renuncio,
porque a la quietud importa
del reino, en mi hijo Alfonso
sucesor desta corona.
Pues que la sangre os obliga
y la lealtad os exhorta,
mostraldo en ser de mi parte
en una acción tan heroica.
Por ser Alfonso tan niño
nadie a mi intento se oponga,
que al fin es varón y rige
mejor el cetro la sombra
de un varón, que una mujer,
cuanto más que el reino goza
de consejeros prudentes
que asistan a su persona. (vv. 795-814)

(Knights³⁸ of Aragon, honor and glory of Europe, whose fame terrifies the most remote regions, for the peace of the kingdom today I renounce to majesty in favor of my son, Alfonso, successor of this crown. As your blood obligates you and your loyalty compels you, show that you stand on my side in such a heroic deed. Being Alfonso so young, no one oppose my intent, since he is a man, and the shadow of a man rules the scepter better than a woman, especially since the kingdom enjoys the presence of prudent counsellors who will assist him.)

Addressing the *grandees* as feared at the ends of the earth, the Queen speaks of her contradictory position: as ruler, she is located at the center of Aragon; as a woman, she lies at that frightened and beleaguered margin. With a woman on the throne, the center formerly controlled by males is lost. The noblemen have been pushed to the fringes, but have found a way to drag the Queen along. To restore balance, the center must be recreated, and so she renounces in favor of her son. There is, however, a liberal dose of irony in her words. As the Queen reminds them that their noble blood entails obligations to the crown, the lack of peace in the realm underscores their disrespect for their civil duty, thus contesting their very nobility. Her satirical and anatomical

³⁸ *Caballero* can also mean “gentleman”, but the Queen underscores their violence more than their nobility.

commentary that men are better than women at ruling the scepter, ambiguously pays lip service to the idea that male bodies are superior than female for government (Maclean 60-2), while intimating that such fiction is merely sustained by appearances. As for her mention of prudent counselors, the Queen cannot be more ironic. The first to speak after her is Urgel: “La corona, sí, y el reino / podéis renunciar, señora, / mas no el gobierno, que a mí / por tantas causas me toca” (vv. 815-8) (“The crown and kingdom you may renounce, my lady, but not the government. For many reasons, it belongs to me”). Ramón counters that the government should be his, as he is of royal blood. Claiming that as a former *privado* he has the most experience with the government, Bermudo demands the same. The Queen, being the rightful tutor of the Prince, states that the kingdom will be governed by her. The tempers flare and the child Prince orders the aristocrats to obey under penalty of death. As his threat is received with ridicule, the *comedia* rejects the fiction of kingship, suggesting that the right to rule belongs to the strongest.

In his political *comedias*, Alarcón uses history to take a prudent distance from his present, a chronological separation that allows him to freely, and perhaps more safely, examine the royal favorite as a relic. From the characters’ neo-feudalist point of view, the crown is not more valuable than the government. The legitimacy of the monarchy is not denied, but real power lies with the person who *de facto* controls the institutions. In seventeenth-century literature, this person was the royal favorite. Therefore, the point is to monopolize *privanza* by making it accessible exclusively to the slightly more sophisticated version of the feudal lord, the male aristocrat. The Queen’s refusal to share her body with the noblemen threatens to impose a new order in which male aristocracy is excluded from power. Rather than being tone-deaf for history (King 146), Alarcón understood history for the political tool it is. In resisting the Queen’s right to rule, these noblemen claim old lineage and past deeds, attempting to roll time back to

pregynocracy by connecting their history with that of the late Alfonso I, Petronila's uncle.³⁹ Their anxiety will, in fact, make them bring Alfonso back from the dead.

Almost thirty years before the beginning of the play, the character of Nuño fought against the Moors in Fraga with his king, Alfonso I, the Battler, whose body was never found. Rumors abound about his fate, but the truth is that he died in Nuño's arms, who then took the King's ring and clothes and escaped never to be seen again (vv. 1465-90). It is by mere chance that he stumbles into Pedro, another grandee, in the mountains of Aragon. As they speak, the idea that Nuño could, and perhaps should, pass for the missing King occurs to him. After all, there is a historical monarchical vacuum, and he has the ring and a certain resemblance to claim it. Pedro, who has seen portraits of late Alfonso, does not find a similarity, and yet he decides to believe his story and swears loyalty to him—in exchange, he wants the hand of queen Petronila (vv. 271-418). As Nuño accepts Pedro's deal, a dead king is reborn. Royal resuscitation illuminates the idea that control over the past was vital to maintain the male aristocracy in power. Their demands for command of the government due to past deeds alludes to the historical role played by nobility in the institution of absolute monarchical rule, hinting that the very existence of both social structures depends on perpetuating their debts to one another. In our *comedia*, this permanent negotiation of debt is the basis of loyalty. Therefore, if loyalty is permanently transactional, controlling history is permanently necessary. Consequently, when Pedro irrupts into the palace announcing that the "true" king is alive, one by one the nobles turn their backs on their Queen and Prince to support the ghost, the shadow, of a dead king. It is the logical move, as they have more to gain by supporting Nuño than by remaining loyal to a Queen that resists them.

³⁹ An important element in the *comedia*'s historical background is a dilemma created around the philosophical and legal implications of the male-female transfers of power which led Petronila to the throne, a series of medieval loopholes that *ca.* 1162 allowed nobility to challenge the Queen's authority. Recently, the details of this power transfer have been approached from different angles: father-daughter (Cuellar 630), husband-wife (Lapeña 184), and contractual obligations (Fatás Cabezas 172).

The Queen, of course, also has the means to buy loyalty. To counter the nobles' rebellion, she selects as general a qualified yet low-ranking nobleman, an *hidalgo escudero*—the same rank as Pedro's servant—whose ambitions are reasonable and manageable enough as to ensure his allegiance. Famous for his strength, loyalty, and bravery (vv. 106-14), Sancho's humble birth forbids him to ascend socially and to marry Teresa, the noblewoman and chambermaid to the Queen whom he loves (vv. 656-60). The aristocratic uprising further insists on the transactional perspective of social relations at both the personal and political level. Once he is made a general, Teresa promises to marry Sancho, whatever the cost, should he return victorious from war (vv. 969-72). However, before clashing in battle, Sancho and Nuño meet in private, where the latter reveals a series of shocking truths: he is Sancho's father, believed to have been killed along with King Alfonso in the battle of Fraga; Teodora, Sancho's mother, had an affair with Bermudo, the royal favorite back then, an affair that Nuño never got the chance to avenge, which is why he never returned to Aragon after the war and why now he intends to murder Bermudo. Nuño, of course, is not the real king, but in exchange for Sancho's complicity, he promises to catapult him to the summit of nobility (vv. 1389-1536).⁴⁰ Should he refuse, Nuño will make public his mother's affair to crush his honor (vv. 1646-56). Though Sancho remains loyal to the Queen, eventually, thanks to the intervention of the *grandees*, the royal army pledges allegiance to Nuño. Sancho is put under arrest and the Queen dethroned. As a legitimate female ruler is deposed for an illegitimate yet convenient male one, loyalty, and hence nobility, is stripped of all mystique.

Sancho believes that there is something special in the blood of the nobles, some virtue that the rest of the population is physically incapable of possessing, thus he finds it confusing that, being of fine lineage himself, his military actions cannot raise him to a higher rank at court (vv. 769-86). As he speaks with Nuño, his confusion is further complicated. Sancho believes that

⁴⁰ In *Ganar amigos*, Fadrique and Diego make a similar deal, a silent complicity paid with royal favors.

his own virtues are proof that Nuño is lying: Teodora, Sancho's mother, could never have had an affair with Bermudo, and Nuño could never have gone for so long without taking revenge because an unfaithful woman and a cowardly man could never engender a virtuous man like himself (vv. 1624-44; 2795-2808). However, if virtues like loyalty are hereditary, from whom did Sancho inherit his? Not from the usurper Nuño, and as the *comedia's* strange anagnorisis reveals that he is, in fact, the son of Bermudo, the former *privado* and traitorous grandee, Sancho did not inherit his loyalty from his biological father either.⁴¹

As a realist, Alarcón distrusts loyalty, but he is not a cynic; he accepts that some form of loyalty may, indeed, be passed down by blood. Though a minor character, Teodora, Sancho's mother, sits at the center of the main action. Nuño's intention in returning to Aragon is to take revenge on Teodora for her infidelity with Bermudo, which is a mistake: while engaged to Bermudo, they had an extramarital relationship from which Sancho was conceived, but it all happened before she even met Nuño. Moreover, Bermudo broke their engagement to become the royal favorite of king Alfonso, then used his power to silence Teodora and forced her to marry Nuño (vv. 2836-46). As for her actions, Teodora sends her son a letter as he prepares for battle, writing that his mission is so important that it cannot be left to human power alone, and she promises to keep him in her and the whole convent's prayers.⁴² The letter establishes that she believes the Queen is the rightful ruler and that Sancho's job is to protect her. If loyalty were indeed transmitted by blood, then perhaps Sancho could claim that he got it from his mother.

From this perspective, the figure of the opportunist Nuño is fascinating: in passing for a dead king to avenge the abuses of the *privado*, Nuño embodies the obsession with the past. But a dead man who takes the identity of another dead man is doubly immaterial, rendering his attempt

⁴¹ For a critique of the anagnorisis, see Castro Leal (173-4).

⁴² Unnumbered, the letter appears between vv. 1661-2.

at revenge doubly impossible. Once acknowledged as the rightful monarch, Nuño secretly restitutes Bermudo to favoritism. The new *privado* gives the new king the key to his house, and they agree to meet secretly at night in Bermudo's garden (vv. 1897-1950). Nuño's intention is to murder Bermudo, but there is a parallel deception that will interfere with his. Teresa is the love interest of Berenguel and Sancho, and though she is in love with the latter, her father, Bermudo, will not allow the relationship. Teresa claims that the right to choose a husband is solely hers, and sends her maid, Inés, to tell Sancho that, against her father's wishes, she will meet him at night in her garden. Nevertheless, since female loyalty is as much for sale as male, Inés has been bribed by Berenguel: she will pass her master's message on to him instead of Sancho, so that under cover of night Berenguel can pass as Teresa's lover and satisfy his desire (vv. 2247-74). In the garden at night Teresa, who believes she is with Sancho, and Berenguel, who is pretending to be Sancho, listen as Nuño confesses his false identity to Bermudo, and blow their cover to save the former *privado* from the false king (vv. 2393-2421). As this attempted rape takes place in the dark background, it acts as a symbolic trauma for Nuño's obsession with revenge. His wife, however, was not sexually attacked, so his retaliation is illegitimate and, thus, unsuccessful.

For his crimes, Nuño is condemned to the gallows. Sancho knows that the image of him hanging publicly from a rope would permanently damage whatever honor his name retains. He asks his father to kill himself and hands him a dagger, but Nuño cannot do it. Instead, he begs his son, Sancho, to do it himself (vv. 2601-2706). In the end, Nuño is as doubly impotent as he was doubly deceived: tricked by Bermudo into marrying a dishonored and pregnant Teodora (vv. 1417-20), Nuño allows Bermudo's son to take his life for the honor of a family which does not even exist. Based on the strange revelation that Sancho is not Nuño's son but Bermudo's, critics have, perhaps rightly, seen this *comedia* as a failed tragedy (Millares Carlo, *II* 828-9).

Nonetheless, we should consider that everything which Nuño believed to be true was a lie spun by Bermudo's abuse of his powers as *privado*. Furthermore, Nuño's character flaw, his thirst for revenge, led him to impersonate a dead king, and in so doing he resuscitated a *privado* both insuperable and untouchable. With Nuño dead, Bermudo's final confession serves to claim both Nuño's son and wife as his (vv. 2830-70), re-writing history so that Nuño, the anti-*privado* force of the *comedia*, is completely erased from it.

The impostor Nuño is sentenced to death, but no nobleman is physically punished for their rebellion; for the Queen, her son's delicate political situation would not allow for more disturbances. Nevertheless, the aristocrats will be corrected, although in an elegant and subtle manner. As she warned Ramón in the beginning, the Queen resolves the conflict reasonably: as the rightful ruler, she transfers the crown to her son and retires to a convent.⁴³ And while she previously underscored the Prince's young age and lack of experience, she names no one as royal favorite, denying the aristocrats the access to government they fought for. In more ways than one, the text affirms that loyalty is not something that certain people are born with: the servant Inés is just as capable of treachery as is Ramón, the Count of Provenza. Kingship theories, nobility myths, social fictions—these are all constructions; what Alarcón challenged was their role in government. After all, a lie spun in the right way and moment can get access to the crown for the simplest of mortals.

Lope de Vega's *La inocente sangre*, composed between 1604-1609, is set *ca.* 1305, during the last throes of the decade-long civil war between the king of Castile, Fernando IV, and his cousin,

⁴³ In the Visigoth tradition, a widowed queen would often go into a convent to prevent a palatine coup, much like the one presented in our play, in which a courtier could strengthen his position over the rest by marrying the queen (Isla Frez, qtd. in Zúñiga Lacruz 598-9). In our *comedia* the Queen cloisters her body natural to check discord and greed for the body politic, which now belongs to her son.

Alfonso de la Cerda, due to ambiguities in the rules of royal succession. The plot is structured around the indeterminacy of Fernando's birthright, a specter of doubt and fear that the monarch projects onto the men around him, causing him to find corruption where there is honesty and loyalty where there is none. As the *comedia* examines the role of justice in a tyranny, the action leads to the unjustified execution of the loyal Carvajal brothers by order of the King, suggesting that the power to take a kingdom rarely translates into the ability to rule it wisely.

The historical dispute on which the *comedia* is based began in 1275, when the untimely death of king Alfonso X's rightful heir, Fernando de la Cerda, father of Alfonso de la Cerda, revealed the legal ambiguities created by concomitant and conflicting juridical structures about royal succession. From the perspective of Castilian consuetudinary law, because of his proximity of blood, the rightful heir to the throne was prince Fernando's younger brother, Sancho, later known as the Brave (Benavides v-vi), the father of future king Fernando IV. This law, however, contradicted the rules of succession contained in *Las siete partidas*, whereby the kingdom was passed down directly and exclusively via firstborn progeny, with the specific condition that should the firstborn die before inheriting the throne, the crown must pass to no other but the son or daughter procreated with his legitimate wife (II, 133). From the *Partidas* point of view, then, the rightful heir to the throne was Alfonso de la Cerda.

The laws contained in the *Partidas* were compiled by orders of king Alfonso X between 1256-1265, "so that the natural disagreements among men could be agreed upon through the law" (I, 3). Until then, Iberian kingdoms were ruled by laws derived from Visigoth or Roman traditions, legal codes which tended to favor the nobility. The *Partidas* attempted to expand royal faculties by reducing legislation into a uniform system, but due to the nobility's opposition they would not come into effect until a century later, during the rule of Alfonso XI (Fernández 178-

81). That the *Partidas* favored Alfonso de la Cerda in the royal succession, plus the fact that they went unenforced through the reigns of Sancho IV and his son Fernando IV, leads historian Gaspar de Jovellanos to suspect that it was in the best interest of both monarchs to disavow the legal collection (472-7). With respect to Sancho, Jovellanos' suspicion makes sense. According to Juan de Mariana, after his brother's death Sancho became a captain in the war against the Moors; proving himself an effective warrior and diplomat, his newfound reputation secured the royal succession in the Cortes de Segovia of 1276 (422-3). In 1282, reforming laws in their favor and giving them "everything they dared to ask for" (Mariana 427), he garnered the support of the Castilian nobility and stripped the King of his powers, unleashing an internecine war against his father that lasted until the monarch's death. In 1284, even though Alfonso X had invalidated his son's claim to the throne, Sancho IV was crowned King of Castile and Leon (431-2).

Cursed by his father for his rebellion and usurpation, and feared by his people for his violence, Sancho died in 1295 leaving in his stead a quasi-legitimate new king, Fernando IV, nine years old at the time of his accession, and a legal system where "the right of the strongest was the formula for justice" (Benavides iv). As expected, Alfonso de la Cerda and various segments of the nobility took arms against Fernando and his mother, queen regent María de Molina. Legally, Fernando had the weakest hand. Not only did the *Partidas* legitimize Alfonso's claim to the throne, but, from the standpoint of canonical law, Fernando was a bastard. His parents' marriage was verified "without the previous dispensation of the Supreme Pontiff, which they needed for being close relatives, [this was the cause of] the nullity of their marriage and the consequent illegitimacy of their children" (Benavides viii-ix). Throughout this lengthy and costly civil war the Queen warded off opportunistic suitors and violent usurpers under the claim that "possession is the right to rule" (Mariana 453). She bought favors, alliances, and wills, perhaps

even the papal dispensation that legitimized her marriage to Sancho and, hence, her son Fernando's right to rule (Mariana 453-62).⁴⁴

In the *comedia*, as Alfonso and Fernando personally face each other in the battlefield, queen María walks onstage, determined to bring order to a realm in disarray: “Fernando, si algún respeto / debes a ser yo tu madre; / Alfonso, si a ser mujer / debes siquiera escucharme; / soldados y caballeros, / belicosos capitanes, / si merece vuestra Reina / que en este tumulto os hable, / suspended los golpes fieros / del riguroso combate / y oídme” (I, 351c) (“Fernando, for any respect you may owe me as your mother; Alfonso, if I even deserve to be listened by you, being myself a woman; soldiers and gentlemen, warring captains, if your Queen deserves to speak to you in the middle of this turmoil, suspend the wild combat and listen to me”). By making herself visible and audible, the Queen defies traditional gender roles. But since convincing Fernando and Alfonso to seek a peaceful alternative to war is a delicate matter, she mitigates her defiance by accepting her lower rank among the men. Acknowledging male superiority allows the Queen to perform her gender role in terms acceptable to men, thus ensuring her voice will not be rejected. As she states that “En las leyes de estos reinos / no es bien, señores, que trate, / siendo mujer” (I, 351c) (“Being a woman, it is inappropriate for me to speak about the laws of the kingdom”), the Queen merely reproduces or mimics the traditional gender discourse of female inferiority, then offers a solution to the legal predicament. Yet her purported inferiority and lack of authority are merely a mask for her sagacity—nestled between her utterances of humility is the recognition that her late husband Sancho forcefully took a throne that did not belong to him: “Si el nieto en la herencia excluye / al tío, para que pase / la línea derechamente, / pues representa a su padre, / no sé qué fuerza ha tenido, / si no es que en

⁴⁴ Mariana does not hint at any acts of evident corruption, but admits the possibility of influence peddling. César González Mínguez expands on the possible collusion between María de Molina and the Papacy (1076).

fortunas tales / lo que más puede es más justo, / aunque la razón se engañe” (I, 351c) (“If the grandson [Alfonso de la Cerda] excludes the uncle [the late Sancho] from the blood line, so that the line of succession goes by straight, since it represents his father [Sancho’s late brother Fernando, Alfonso’s father], I ignore what validity it had, other than the fact that in such situations, justice belongs to the stronger, as much as reason says otherwise”). For the Queen, when it comes to royal succession, the only law is power.

Using gender performance as a political tool was not unusual in the times of Lope, as Sánchez has proved (84). To persuade the warring factions, the Queen couches her argument in the language of religion and motherhood: “La mísera y pobre gente / llorando viene a quejarse, / al cielo y a mí, que sufre / guerra, incendio, muerte y hambre” (I, 352a) (“The poor people come to me in tears to complain to the heavens and myself that they suffer war, fire, death, and hunger”). The Queen observes the people from an elevated position, underscoring her royal rank as well as her role as queen mother. Furthermore, as the people complain to her and to the heavens equally, she elevates herself to a transcendental plane, assuming the fiction of the sacred monarchy but also the early modern representation of the Virgin Mary as an immaculate, sorrowing mother (Velasco 54). The symbolism that the Queen appeals to demonstrates her political identity and bolsters her royal and moral authority. In her monologue, she alludes to the forebears of Fernando and Alfonso, sacred kings who will curse them both from their graves if, as they make war among themselves, they allow the Moors to gain strength (I, 352a). The war they wage is thus a threat not only to the realm, but also to their Castilian identities. Finally, the Queen offers a solution to the war by presenting a proposal to resolve the legal dilemma:

Mirad esto como es justo
y dad un medio que baste
para que viváis en paz
y vuestros reinos descansen.

Era yo de parecer
que jüeces se nombrasen
don Dionís de Portugal
y el Rey de Aragón don Jaime;
y que, por lo que los dos
justamente sentenciasen,
pase Castilla y vosotros
confirméis eternas paces.
¿Qué respondéis? ¿Qué os parece? (I, 352a)

(Approach this problem fairly, and resolve it so that you and your kingdoms can rest and live in peace. I was thinking that kings Dionis of Portugal and Jaime of Aragon could act as judges; whatever they resolve, Castile will respect and you will confirm eternal peace. What do you say? Do you find it agreeable?)

As the Queen steps into the political world to be seen, heard, and obeyed in the middle of a raging war, acceptable models of femininity constructed around ideals of domesticity, invisibility, and silence are subverted. Yet her subversion is prudently toned down by the submissive questions that she poses in the end, corresponding to the expected gender performance of servility to males, despite her superior wisdom and prudence (Quintero 33).

The genealogical relationships of the House of Ivrea differ from the way that they are represented in the play. Alfonso X's firstborn son was Fernando and Sancho the second. In turn, Fernando's firstborn was Alfonso de la Cerda (1270-1333) and Sancho's was Fernando (1285-1312). The men at war in *La inocente sangre*, then, Fernando and Alfonso, are cousins; their fathers were brothers. Nevertheless, they are represented in the *comedia* as nephew and uncle. After the death of Fernando de la Cerda in 1275 and before Sancho's right to rule was verified in 1276, the conflict was, indeed, between uncle and nephew, between Sancho and Alfonso de la Cerda, though the latter was too young to stand up to the former. However, the conflict became one among cousins once Sancho passed away in 1295. In the play, Fernando speaks of Alfonso as his uncle, while Alfonso considers Fernando his nephew, a relationship confirmed by other characters (350-2b). In the play, Fernando's murky legitimacy is a heavy load to carry, for which

he blames his father's violent, irrational greed. When his favorite congratulates him for what seems like certain victory, Fernando responds that, since the enemy is his own uncle, there can be no glory. The favorite replies that Fernando's father would say otherwise. Fernando says: "Ni yo alabo / llamarle don Sancho *el Bravo*; / mejor el *Piadoso* fuera. / Si hubiera puesto las manos / en guerra de moros, piensa / que yo vengara su ofensa; / pero no contra cristianos" (I, 350b; emphasis in original) ("My father, *the Brave Don Sancho*, should have been *the Pious*. Had he used his hands against the Moors, then I would be avenging his offenses, but not against Christians"). Indeed, if only his father had been a good Christian and fought Moors instead of his own family, Fernando would not have to defend what should rightfully be his.⁴⁵ Instead of one among cousins, in representing the conflict as one between nephew and uncle, the play suggests that Fernando is fighting the war that his father left unfinished. The specter of his illegitimacy forces him to step into his father's shoes, fearing he may not fill them. Perpetually a king in the making, his anxieties are also those of his father; Fernando's fears and doubts are redoubled.

In the second act, Fernando's claim to the throne is verified by the kings of Portugal and Aragon (II, 358c), but another central event has already taken place. After the Queen brokers the truce with Alfonso, Fernando and his people return to Palencia to wait for the verdict of the kings. A multitude of people gathers to see Fernando. Feeling crowded, Fernando asks Gómez, his favorite, to make room, to which the favorite responds by hitting a man *con el cuento de la alabarda* (I, 354c). The offended man and an acquaintance then ambush Gómez and his servant, Morata, wounding both but killing only Gómez (I, 356a). Before passing away, Gómez gives Morata a gold chain in gratitude for his services (I, 356b-c). King Fernando and Ramiro, who fought for Alfonso, arrive at the scene. Ramiro says: "Este tiene / una herida y, como viste, / la

⁴⁵ From Mariana's perspective, the Queen believed that Sancho, her son, was a threat to little Alfonso de la Cerda. The historian writes that her decision to move the boy to Aragon to place him under the protection of her brother, the king, unleashed a violent response from Sancho that claimed the lives of at least two noblemen (424).

cadena y la venera / que la cruz roja divide. / Por quitársela le ha muerto, / que don Gómez pudo herirle / por defenderse” (I, 356c) (“This one here [Morata] has a wound and the gold chain, as you can see. He killed him to take the chain; Don Gómez could have wounded him in self-defense”). Fernando replies that he has no doubts. While in Alarcón’s *Ganar amigos* the gold chains represent the network of corruption established by the royal favorite, in this case the jewels are a symbol of the gratitude. But Fernando cannot see the good in this gesture. Incapable of perceiving virtue, all Fernando can see, and hence believe in, are lies.⁴⁶

The brothers Ramiro and García have longstanding personal problems with the Carvajales, brothers loyal to king Fernando, and will try to pin the murder of Gómez on them. They know that the Carvajales are innocent, but they also understand that with enough wit and money, truth can be constructed (II, 357b). Ramiro and García manage to deliver this information to the King, who believes them. Benavente, the new royal favorite, begs the King to consider that those men could be traitors, because the Carvajales were never enemies of Gómez. “Was my love for Gómez not enough?”, the King replies: “Envidia los obligó. / ¿Qué más ocasión le pides?” (“It was envy. What else could it have been?”). Though Benavente begs him to be cautious and just, in his emotional speech the King conflates the concepts of punishment, vengeance, and justice (II, 359c-360a), evincing his inability to understand the difference.

Fernando’s regency is proof that the Queen’s proposal for an impromptu court to resolve the problem of succession could have worked perfectly well. Nevertheless, the Queen’s proposal was, at the same time, a recommendation for the separation of executive and judicial powers, and Fernando, once on the throne, monopolizes the powers of the commonwealth. Fernando is

⁴⁶ Morata is a *morisco* at a time when the battles for Gibraltar and Granada were in the plans for the immediate future. Evidently, there is an element of racism at play in the false accusation against him. But the problem of racism becomes one of trust when Fernando falsely accuses the Carvajal brothers of the same crime, even though they are Castilian men with an undying loyalty for Fernando.

explicit in that what he wants is not justice: “Cuantas veces [...] / los Caravajales veo, / más la venganza deseo / [...] Basta el odio por testigo / [...] Aquí los haré matar, / que no quiero información / mayor que mi corazón” (III, 367a) (“The more I see the Carvajal brothers, the more I desire vengeance. Hate is enough of a witness. I will have them killed. I need no more evidence than my heart”). His illegitimacy combines with the fact that he owes his crown to his mother’s bravery and cunning, and so as the play reaches its end the King must validate his authority and masculinity: “Ni sé yo que diga ley / que lo que examina un rey / no es información bastante” (III, 367a) (“No law dictates that what a king examines is not evidence enough”). Benavente attempts to convince the monarch to act in accordance with the law and the institutions: “Comete la información / a tus alcaldes, que es justo; / o si esto no es de tu gusto, / a tu Consejo es razón. / Nombra un jüez de opinión, / o sea tu presidente; / hagan jurídicamente / lo que toca a tu justicia” (III, 367b) (“Submit the evidence to your officers, as is the law. If you do not care for this, then it is only reasonable that you consult the Council. Name a judge of your liking, or call your president; they will enforce your justice following the due juridical process”). But giving the Carvajales back their lives would be for Fernando a sign of weakness, and so he has them thrown off the mountain of Martos (III, 371a). Ironically, in executing the men who fought to defend his right to rule, Fernando identifies himself with the traitors, accepting the illegitimacy of his regency.

As both give political advice consistently based on reason and law, the roles of the Queen and the royal favorite are developed in parallel, though only the Queen is effective in presenting her authority in such a way that her voice will be heard and obeyed. Before the intervention of the Queen, the concept of justice, though imprecise, is alluded to several times. This early dramatic situation establishes a sharp contrast with that presented at the end of the play, where

the ruler's stubbornness and arrogance, perhaps even madness (Austin 42-3), is equated with a lack of justice, a problem that his mother is no longer present to correct. While the Queen's gender performance and effective advice adumbrates masculinity as a condition for advising the king, the *comedia* posits that a queen may be able to sit her son on the throne and teach him to impersonate a king, but she cannot make him rule as one.

In these *comedias*, the background of war serves to underscore the ability of these queens to adapt to their circumstances: in *La inocente sangre*, as queen María wants to convince opposing factions to bring a long-standing conflict to an end, she must perform her gender role in terms acceptable to men to ensure that her peace proposal will not be rejected; on the contrary, in *La crueldad por el honor* queen Petronila must be aggressive and strategic, as she is forced to raise her armies and go into combat against the nobility to defend her crown and her son's right to rule. Both Alarcón and Lope analyze the intersection of gender and political agency from a perspective that seeks not only demystify the purported connection between royal blood and the ability to rule a kingdom prudently, but also to question the pervasive assumption that, when it comes to governing, men are biologically superior to women. In the stead of these social fictions, both playwrights underscore the fundamental role played by the queen in securing the crown for her son in kingdoms upended by the greed and violence of competing political interests.

It's Not You, it's Him:
Is the Problem the Favorite or is it the King?

Seventeenth-century monarchs increasingly delegated the responsibility and authority to govern the empire onto the royal favorite, allowing him to create vast networks of political clients whose power and influence seemed, at times, to rival the king's. Alarcón's *Ganar amigos* and Tirso de Molina's *Privar contra su gusto* examine the causes and effects of the *privado*'s parallel and subjugant government. As generous as he is corrupt, Alarcón's powerful *valido* is a fascinating example of literary ambiguity. Critics have praised the character's apparent magnanimity and virtues, but overlooked the violent consequences that his acts of bribery and usurpation of functions have on the female characters. In Tirso's play, as a hunter is forced by the king to be his favorite and rule the kingdom in his stead, the idea that to rise to power the *privado* had to control the will of the monarch is turned on its head. While the sovereign dedicates his times to leisure activities, the *privado* must find a way to trick the ruler into acting like one, revealing along the way the fictions behind the sacredness of the office of the king.

Ganar amigos appeared in Alarcón's second volume of collected works in 1634.⁴⁷ The *comedia* is set in fourteenth century Seville, during the reign of Pedro I, the Just, known also as the Cruel. Beneath a mundane double plot of love triangles, murder, and forgiveness, the *comedia* stages the internal dynamics of courtly political factions and networks, underscoring the role of corruption in the distribution of power and authority among male courtiers, and questioning the monarch's capacity to guarantee the realm's order and justice.

⁴⁷ The play was published as Lope de Vega's in 1632 and 1633, under the alternative title *Amor, pleito y desafío* (Millares Carlo, II 268).

Early in the third act, an exchange between the King and his *valido*, the marquis Fadrique, is suddenly cut short as a royal guard attempts to stop a woman from entering the gates. Ana, distraught and veiled, irrupts into the palace: “Los oídos y las puertas / ha de tener siempre abiertas / un Rey que justicia guarda” (v. 1986-8) (“A king who guards justice shall always keep his ears and doors open”).⁴⁸ Ana reminds the monarch that her father was a nobleman who died for his king in battle against the Ottomans, leaving her orphaned when she was a child.⁴⁹ The *dama* challenges the King’s capacity to keep the peace and, more importantly, questions his authority over those closer to him: “¿Cómo es posible, cómo / cuando ostentáis la rigurosa espada / desde la punta al pomo / de incesable suplicio ensangrentada, / que incurra en más culpable atrevimiento / quien más de cerca mira el escarmiento?” (vv. 2031-6) (“How is it possible that when your incessant torments have bloodied your rigorous sword from point to pommel, those who can envision punishment still dare to indulge in culpable deeds?”). She has been misled to believe that her attacker was Fadrique, and so she speaks of him as “that Atlas of the monarchy”, “that Tarquinius”, “that tyrant”, who the night before bribed her servants and made his way into her bed. Ana cried and begged for him to stop. She reminded her attacker of the King’s severe justice, to no avail. “It is the Marquis, madam”, the man whispered. When her strength failed, the man covered her mouth and forced himself inside her (vv. 2037-2108).

Ana’s incisive and moving monologue is as much a plea for justice as it is a straightforward challenge to the King to demonstrate with deeds which of his epithets applies:

⁴⁸ All references from the edition of Agustín Millares Carlo, second volume.

⁴⁹ Unlike Shakespeare, Willard King posits, Alarcón was tone-deaf for history. Flagrant anachronisms proliferate, like the existence of a military conflict between Ottomans and Castilians and the fall of Granada by the hands of king Pedro (146). Indeed, the anachronisms are so flagrant in this play that we should approach them not as evidence of ignorance or lesser talent, but as indications of textual operations that complicate Castilian-Morisco relationships by situating the protean figure of the demonized Muslim in the contradictory, and perhaps paradoxical, position of a threat that between 1617 and 1622 (possible dates for composition and representation of the play) was as distant in time and place as it was close to the heart of Castilian anxieties about the impurities of the other. Castile’s true enemy, Alarcón seems to suggest, lives at the court.

righteous or cruel. For the *dama*, a monarchy that presumes of being just should deliver justice for all. But as a secondary and vulnerable character, Ana's marginality is a counterpoint to the preferential treatment given by the King to Fadrique, the royal favorite and the man she is equivocally accusing of rape. Ana's belated monologue shows the King that his delegation of power and responsibilities onto his favorite has created a parallel and unofficial power structure with no respect for the laws of the realm. It is a call, in other words, for the King to take governmental matters into his own hands.

In more ways than one, Fadrique is a true favorite. For most of the characters he is the *non plus ultra* of loyalty and the epitome of friendship, as he is for critics and scholars: for Agustín Millares Carlo, he is generous and extraordinary (*II* 268-9); for Ysla Campbell, merciful and just ("Poder" 215); and for Halpern, a model of virtue (104). Castro Leal goes much farther: "in the end all the male characters ascend to that plane of human perfection where generosity and nobility reign. The atmosphere created by the impeccable behavior of the Marquis [Fadrique] transforms everyone momentarily, unifying their responses, as nature does with the beautiful spectacle of dusk or a night radiant with moonlight. The Marquis outshines everyone" (147). But while Fadrique does possess a flair for mercy, friendship, and generosity, all of them characteristics which earn him the palatial titles that a seventeenth-century Spanish nobleman could only dream of, one should be cautious in describing him solely as merciful, friendly, or generous. In fact, he saves the lives and honor of three central characters, which grants him their utter respect and unconditional support. The problem, as I argue below, is that his motivations are ethically questionable, when not illegal.

According to Castro Leal, the character of the courtier Pedro is always mindful of the turns of political ambition (147). He is also a royal *privado* who has been involved in an affair

with a lady of the court, showing his disregard for the rules of the palace. Aware of this, the King wants him punished. His sentence is death and Fadrique is charged with the execution. However, the case is delicate and must be dealt with quietly. As the King says, Pedro is a nobleman and the crown, at war with Granada, cannot afford to lose the support of Pedro's friends and family. Pedro's death, then, should be swift and quiet (vv. 1011-38). Fadrique, nonetheless, silently disagrees with the monarch's ruling and decides that the best course of action is to show "ni piedad inobediente, / ni ejecutiva crueldad" (vv.1057-67) ("neither disobedient mercy, nor executive cruelty"), delaying the order until time humanizes the sovereign or sets in place "otro impedimento / a la ejecución crüel" ("another impediment to the cruel execution"). The King, dominated by his desire to punish, fails to see that Pedro is worth more alive than dead. Fadrique's questioning of the monarch's cruelty but not thoughtlessness showcases the potential of literary ambiguity: as he appeals to kindness, Fadrique appears exemplary, his virtue rendered visible, while his disobedience of a royal order, akin to treason, is obfuscated.

But combining obedience and mercy will prove impossible for Fadrique. For Halpern, Fadrique "postpones executing the King's sentence and decides to take it upon himself, for the betterment of his country, to try to convince Pedro de Luna [a valiant and indispensable general of the army] to leave the Court by offering him command of the troops in Granada. Fadrique uses his discretion and makes the decision that he feels will benefit the country most" (106). It might be going too far to say that Fadrique's plan is more like the hope that Pedro's death should occur in the battlefield, so it can never be traced back to the government—Fadrique has nothing but good intentions. Nonetheless, in negotiating the King's orders he is usurping the ruler's royal functions, the foremost critique against the figure of the royal favorite (Tomás y Valiente 143). As a *privado* himself, Pedro suspects that Fadrique wants to send him away so he can take his

position of power at court, not unlike what happened to Cristobal de Moura, Marquis of Castelrodrigo and Philip II's most powerful *privado*, when Lerma took his palatial title of Groom of the Stole—*Sumiller de corps*—and sent him away to Portugal as Viceroy in 1600 (Feros 60). In our play, Pedro rejects the offer and, in revenge for this purported attempt to bring him down, spreads the rumor that Fadrique and his brother were love-rivals for Flor, and that Fadrique's jealousy led him to have his own brother murdered by Fernando, which will eventually take a toll on the Marquis (vv. 2298-2309). The King is not happy that Fadrique has not executed his sentence, but his *valido* convinces him that Pedro is more useful alive, since the monarchy lacks suitable candidates to command the troops. For this advice, the King names Fadrique Lord High Steward—*Mayordomo mayor*—and sends Pedro off to fight in Granada after all (vv. 947-86).

The other character saved by Fadrique is Fernando, an amorous, jealous, and violent nobleman obsessed with Flor (Castro Leal 147). His incessant harassment of this *dama* was one of the reasons why she and her brother, Diego, had to move from Córdoba to Seville two years before. Now his presence in Seville endangers a future with Fadrique that is already unsteady: “Cuando el Marqués prometía, / abrasado de amoroso, / pasar mi estado dichoso / de merced a señoría, / ¡viene a ser impedimento / de tanto bien don Fernando!” (vv. 9-14) (“And just when the Marquis, aflame in love, promised to formalize our relationship, Don Fernando becomes an impediment!”). Because of Fernando's violent temper, Flor cannot speak of Fadrique, but she manages to make Fernando promise that he will be discreet in his romantic approach to her; meanwhile, she will attempt to drive him away quietly (vv. 101-58). Yet Fernando does exactly the opposite. When Fadrique's brother finds him at night outside of Flor's house, they fight and Fernando delivers a fatal blow. As he flees from justice he runs into Fadrique and begs for help. Unaware of what he has done, Fadrique vows to protect Fernando from justice, keeping his word

even after discovering that he is his brother's murderer (vv. 363-87). Furthermore, Fadrique asks the King to forgive Fernando because his bravery and skills can be useful in the war the crown is waging. It is unclear whether it is his mercy or the sacrifice in forgoing his brother's vengeance that satisfies the King, but this time his advice earns Fadrique the title of Master of the Horse—*Caballerizo mayor* (vv. 975-86).

With Pedro and Fernando, both named after famous Castilian kings, crimes go unpunished because, in a kingdom at war, the need for men of arms supersedes everything else, justice included. There is little room for morality when sovereignty is contested. Moreover, these characters' questionable actions are directed against Fadrique alone. The situation underscores the ruthless competition among powerful and eager court factions, more than flagrant criminal behavior. With Diego, however, the case is different. He is Flor's brother, a man of courtly ambition, and Ana's rapist. For a price, Fadrique will help him, too, not to save his life or freedom but, ironically, his honor.

Diego's sister, Flor, was at the center of the murder of Fadrique's brother, albeit coincidentally, but because of the victim's high political profile Flor is afraid that "unjust vengeance" are coming the way of her family. When Diego questions her, she lies, saying that she had agreed to give herself to Fadrique that night thanks to the *valido*'s constant promises and threats (vv. 551-86). For Halpern, Fadrique's flaw lies in that he does plan on enjoying "Flor without offering her marriage" (106), but I counter that his real fault is corruption. To protect her honor and his reputation, Fadrique ordered the constables not to investigate Flor's ostensible role in the murder and to conceal any reports where her name might be mentioned, once more interfering with the habitual workings of justice (vv. 1159-74). To remedy her honor, but also to gain an ally in Diego, Fadrique promises to make the King raise Diego's noble status to that of a

shining sun (vv. 1208-13).⁵⁰ Satisfied with the *valido*'s proposal, Diego hands over the love letters exchanged between Fadrique and Flor: "estos testigos tenía / del daño que me habéis hecho... / Tomaldos" (vv. 1225-7) ("I had these witnesses of the damages you have done unto me. Take them"). The men part on good terms, but Diego makes a mistake. He listens in on a conversation between his beloved Ana and Fadrique. Ignoring the context, Diego believes that Ana is in love with Fadrique and decides to take revenge on the powerful *valido* (vv. 1652-1705). With the help of Encinas and the gold chains that Fadrique initially gave to Fernando, he breaks into Ana's house and rapes her (vv. 1879-91).

As they stem from one form of corruption or another, the actions of Fadrique produce negative and positive outcomes simultaneously. To protect Pedro, Fadrique dismisses a cruel royal mandate, thus usurping the ruler's functions and circumventing royal authority. While Pedro gets to live and win Granada for the King, the lies he spreads almost cost Fadrique his life (vv. 2349-76). The case of Fernando is similar, though it has deeper consequences. Fernando committed a grave crime in killing Sancho, Fadrique's brother, a grandee, brave soldier, and respected nobleman. Fadrique gives his word to protect the fugitive Fernando and for this purpose lies to the constable, once more corrupting the usual course of justice. In forgiving Fernando, Fadrique gains an invaluable friend, but he also detonates a series of violent episodes against women. To help him escape justice, Fadrique gives Fernando two gold chains (vv. 695-710), one of which finds its way into Encinas's hands (vv. 1381-90), who then allows Fernando to enter Flor's house in an episode that ends in insults, recriminations, and threats against the *dama* (vv. 1429-1562). Eventually, the gold chains find their way into the hands of Ana's

⁵⁰ During the Duke of Lerma's administration, the habit of freely granting *mercedes* as payment for personal loyalty and services rendered to the *valido* was widely condemned, since it had taken a heavy toll on the public coffers (Feros 189-92). By the time *Ganar amigos* was, ostensibly, represented in front of Queen Elisabeth in 1622 (King 232), the financial situation in Spain was untenable—since the time of his accession in 1621, the Council of Finances informed Philip IV that the treasury was completely depleted until 1625 (Dominguez Ortiz 373).

servant. As seen in these symbolic gold chains, the *comedia*'s topic is not friendship but cronyism. This is Alarcón's counterargument to those who defended the *privado* in terms of his friendship with the monarch.

Sustaining that Fadrique is a Stoic, virtuous character (Ysla Campbell, "Poder" 15) requires trivializing his negative side and undoing his complexity. As a whistleblower of sorts, Ana brings to the fore how rampant corruption at the heights of the monarchy becomes a serious threat to the wellbeing of the commonwealth. It is no coincidence that this is the first of Alarcón's *comedias de privanza* where there is no conflict between the *valido* and the monarch, where neither the ruler nor his favorite are the direct source of violence against the female characters. The conflicts at play in *Ganar amigos* are rooted in the questionable behavior of a court scrambling for power and privilege, echoing Lerma's own time.⁵¹ When Ana accuses Fadrique of rape, she calls him "the Atlas of this monarchy". For Queen Margaret's entry into Madrid in 1599, Italian sculptor Pompeo Leoni had created two statues more than twenty feet high, one representing king Philip III and the other Atlas carrying a half-globe on his shoulders, "with the following inscription engraved on its base: *Divisum Imperium cum Jove* (I shared the *imperium* with Jupiter)" (Feros 78-9). Contemporary Spaniards and foreigners alike interpreted the figures as images of Philip III and the Duke of Lerma: "they found in strange characters and an unknown hand at the foot of Jupiter's image, these words: 'This is the Duke of Lerma'" (Feros 109, n. 69). History aside, the text reveals a negative image of nobility. Fadrique's actions, and the damning representation of noblemen in general, seem more like a condemnation

⁵¹ In 1613, for instance, the year that Alarcón arrived at Madrid, there occurred "an incident that everyone regarded as representative of the state of affairs at court": a group of palace guards commanded by Lerma's favorite, Rodrigo Calderón, had an altercation with the *alcaldes de casa y corte*—officials charged with keeping the peace and order at court—in which Calderón's guards killed an officer of the court; while some of them were imprisoned, a few hours later their comrades attacked the court jail and set them free (Feros 230). Yet King finds in this play Alarcón's nod of approval towards the political program of the Count-Duke of Olivares, *privado* to Philip IV from 1622-1643 (146); Cynthia Halpern generally agrees (105); and Lola Josa sees an intellectual compromise with Olivares throughout Alarcón's dramatic work (14-9).

of Lerma's corrupt administration than a commendation of the political program of Olivares, ostensibly an acquaintance from Alarcón's years at the University of Salamanca (King 109).⁵²

As much as the King's war justifies the need for men of violence, the preferential application of justice to a nobility configured by liars, bribers, rapists, and murderers begs the question of what happens to sovereignty when royal orders are negotiated by the favorite—what is a kingdom without a king? Anecdotes of social privilege and the resentment it provoked abound in Spanish history (Taylor 139-40). In the text, Diego confirms the idea that the nobles could get away with anything: as he breaks into Ana's house, the servant he bought with Fadrique's gold has second thoughts, but Diego says that his power will save the servant from any problem (v. 1884); when Encinas, the jester and Diego's servant, says that the blame for Ana's rape will fall on Fadrique's shoulders, Diego responds: "Poderoso, Encinas, es, / y saldrá al fin a la orilla" ("He is powerful, Encinas, and will make it to the shore") (vv. 2188-9). More than honorable and respectable characters (King 151), this play deals with the Lermas of Madrid, as Alarcón addresses the problem of noble privilege. Rodrigo de Calderón, for instance, the son of a modest soldier, became Count of Oliva and then Marquis of Sieteiglesias thanks to Lerma's unchecked freedom to dispense *mercedes* (Feros 134, 186). When Lerma's alter egos like Calderón began to fall, they were charged with corruption for using public offices for private profit, emphasizing that they had no right to occupy the positions they held or to exercise the functions they claimed for themselves, which were simple reproductions of what Lerma had done with respect to the power of the king (Feros 174-6). This is what Ana alerts the King to: the

⁵² The Count-Duke of Olivares was also depicted as Atlas, though it happened in 1632 (Elliott, *Count-Duke* 46-7), twelve years after *Ganar amigos* was represented at the court. Yet, given that the play was twice attributed to Lope under an alternative title, it is unclear which text was performed in the palace by "Alonso de Olmedo, October 1622, before the Queen" (Shergold and Varey 226). There is a similar problem with *Los pechos privilegiados*. Following Shergold and Varey (232), King affirms that it was represented in the palace in 1625 and 1627, both times under the alternative title *Nunca mucho costó poco* (173). However, Millares Carlo indicates that Alarcón's *comedia* has been confused with one attributed to Lope, published as *Nunca mucho costó poco* in 1630 (*II*, 654).

rapacious encroachment of his powers and the widespread and destabilizing web of corruption that results. She is what happens when the king is surrogated by a *valido*.

Twice Alarcón reminds us that Fadrique sees himself as the King's *hechura* or alter ego (vv. 998-7, 1961). Still, the King orders Fadrique's arrest immediately after Ana's intervention, claiming that, "En mi justicia / no hay excepción de persona" (vv. 2117-26) ("No person is exempt of my justice"). Through a liberal distribution of bribes and *mercedes* however, Fadrique has made the kind of friends who show little qualms about lying, bribing, raping, or murdering, and yet will not suffer the sight of a just man sitting in jail for a crime he did not commit. One by one the Marquis' clientele visit him in jail and confess to their crimes to save his life.⁵³ Following a strange law, the monarch forgives everyone: "Al que es único en un arte / útil a las gentes, dio / la ley de cualquier delito / por una vez remisión; / que el derecho prevenido / más conveniente juzgó / conservad el bien de muchos / que castigar un error" (vv. 2821-32) ("To those whose unique expertise is useful to the people, the law will forgive any crime once. The foreknowable law judged that it is more convenient to conserve the wellbeing of many than to punish an error"). Strikingly, the King got this law from Fadrique, who used it to convince him to forgive Fernando on grounds of his fighting skills: "[él] pondrá a esos pies, no lo dudo, / todo el imperio otomano: / y así os pido que los dos / le perdonemos aquí" (vv. 977-80) ("he will put the whole Ottoman empire at your feet, and so I ask you that we both forgive him"). Fadrique then uses the concept of reason of state to circumvent the law and pardon Pedro: "¿donde podrá la razón / derogar la ejecución, / de la ley mejor que aquí? [...] / porque no es más conveniente / castigar un delincuente, / que ganar un reino entero" (vv. 1934-40) ("what better moment to derogate a law, based on reason, than now? [...] it is not more convenient to punish an offender

⁵³ Just like his *hechuras* owed Lerma everything they owned, to Fadrique Fernando owes his freedom and life, Pedro his post as army General, and Diego his honor and social rank.

than to gain a whole kingdom”). When pardoning the noblemen, the King, suspending his reputation as *justiciero*, basically quotes Fadrique: “el derecho prevenido / más conveniente juzgó, / conservad el bien de muchos / que castigar un error” (vv. 2829-32). For Halpern, the use of this imaginary law to resolve the conflict is much like what happens in *La amistad castigada*, where the tyrant is deposed through a fictitious law (109-10). The differences between both *comedias*, nonetheless, are significant: in *La amistad*, the invented law serves to condemn a tyrant; in *Ganar amigos*, to absolve him. That Ana calls Fadrique a tyrant does not mean much, since she was led to believe that he was the one who sexually abused her. However, during the reign of Philip III, “concerns about tyrants were being displaced by concerns about [...] ‘a weak, overly generous king who runs his realm by allowing governance to pass into the hands of unworthy favorites, [setting up], in fact, a thousand tyrannies instead of one’” (Feros 267). Any hints to the Senecan virtue of friendship found in this play (Ysla Campbell, “Poder” 215) may, in fact, underscore how courtiers used it as a subterfuge for cronyism—as the concept became monetized and politicized, it was eventually emptied of ethical meaning.

As the King restores the social order in the last moments of the play, he pardons the noblemen, calling them the four pillars of his monarchy (vv. 2839-41), and in one fell swoop the government is populated by liars, schemers, rapists, and murderers. As the dramatist stages the corruption and cronyism of early modern Spain, it becomes evident that all citizens are *not* equal under the law. Near the end, Flor begs Ana to forgive her brother, Diego: “Perdona, amiga, a mi hermano; / queda con honra y casada, / y no sin ella y vengada” (vv. 2809-11) (“Forgive my brother, friend. It is better to marry him and recover your honor, than to live dishonored but avenged”). If Flor is the character through which “Alarcón again stresses the freedom of choice for women” to elect their own husbands (Halpern 110), then what of Ana? Ana will take not the

future she wants, but whatever is accessible to her: “dándome la mano / don Diego, le doy perdón” (vv. 2812-3) (“If he gives me his hand, I grant him my forgiveness”). Much like Leocadia in Cervantes’ “La fuerza de la sangre”, Ana “submits to the ideological system that declares her an unchaste woman unless she marries her rapist, and ironically ends up complying with the system that violated her dignity as a human being” (Hernández 54). For Rosilie Hernández Pecoraro, the society of “La fuerza” is one where the destructivity of a nobleman’s sexual desire is normalized, while his female victim must pay the consequences (53-4). In Cervantes’ *novela* as in Alarcón’s *comedia*, the rapists are not condemned or punished, not even questioned; with no other option but to marry their attackers, Leocadia and Ana are made invisible and silenced as they are forced to integrate into the very system that creates and supports the conditions for their marginality and vulnerability. What Ana and Flor speak of is probably what a handful of viewers are thinking as the *comedia* reaches its final moments: gather whatever reputation we have left and move on, before we lose it all.

Tirso de Molina’s *Privar contra su gusto* was published in the dramatist’s fourth volume of 1635, and was probably composed or retouched between 1620-1621 (Kennedy 248, n.5). The action is set *ca.* 1500, during the Italian Wars that led Louis XII to take Naples from the Trastámara king, Federico I, in 1501. The unusual plot, as the title indicates, is centered around a man who must become the royal favorite against his will. This fascinating play takes a peculiar approach to the problem of *privanza*, as it turns on its head the patina of success that in other *comedias* surrounds the figure of the *privado*, and the notion that to rise to power the *valido* had to capture the monarch’s will is ridiculed to its last consequences.

The play begins with a revealing didascalia: “El Rey, de caza, y Leonora, retirándose de él” (“The King, in hunting clothes, and Leonora, backing away from from him”). Ignoring the man’s identity and revealing little fear, the *dama* keeps her distance because a courtier-hunter is doubly deceitful. As the monarch has fallen sick with love for her, he asks for the *dama*’s kind remedy. Leonora argues that the ills of love grow stronger in the presence of the loved one, and so turns to leave. The King says: “No publique / mi muerte vuestro desdén. / Mirad que soy el rey” (1076b) (“My death should not publish your disdain. Note that I am the King”). “Who?”, Leonora asks. In a grave voice, the King responds: “I am the king Don Fadrique”. Out of sheer curiosity, the *dama* stays. What is he doing in the woods without the royal guard? He felt like hunting, he says, but fell prey to her charms. While this opening dramatic situation would seem to indicate the continuation of the seventeenth-century discourse of condemnation against the monarch’s preference for leisure activities over governing, the irreverent treatment of the King, as unwise in leaving the palace unguarded as he is an incompetent hunter, reveals the more complicated intention of exploring and questioning the foundations of royal authority.

Tirso locates his *comedia* a few years after 1492, that momentous time when the hand of God appeared to guide that of the Catholic Monarchs in the construction of the Catholic empire. King Fadrique possesses neither pastoral nor cynegetic power: not much of a hunter, he cannot bring subjects under his dominion; as for his shepherding, Leonora openly refuses to be rounded up by him, even after he reveals that he is the monarch. In fact, the only hunter in the scene is Leonora, as she says: “Mi ventura / me destinó a habitadora / destas selvas, donde gano / cazadora” (1077a) (“My fortune made an inhabitant of these woods, where I make a living hunting”). The King’s lack of power and authority in this scene goes beyond invisible marks of identity—like his missing crown or royal guards—or the literary *topos* of female resistance to

male domination—*mujeres esquivas*. In fact, that initial didascalia is as misleading as the King's garments. Instead of exploring the lives and falls of powerful men, this *comedia* challenges traditional models of sovereignty by presenting king-subject relations through an anecdote that forcefully rejects the gravity and sanctity of majesty. As seen in the image of the unguarded King as a hunter hunted by Leonora, Tirso demystifies the office of the sovereign by questioning Fadrique's fitness in relation to ideals of prudence and strength.

The first appearance of the future favorite offers a good example. Leonora's brother, Juan, recounts a chance encounter with Isabela, the ruler's sister. The passage is based on Ovid's myth of Diana and Actaeon: while strolling through the woods, Juan stumbles upon the royal woman bathing in the river and watches her through the leaves of a tamarisk, but unlike in the *Metamorphoses* the woman never notices the voyeur, enabling Juan not only to escape alive, but to do so with a garter stolen from her (1077b-1078ab). If the *comedia* first relativizes monarchic authority by negating the King the power of the hunter, here it denudes a royal subject of official bodily markings, thus allowing both siblings, Leonora and Juan, to interact with them on a personal, informal level.

The question of whether majesty is not simply a consuetudinary fiction, upheld by lofty performances, is reinforced as the jester irrupts into the scene, announcing that the King is being killed. Juan saves the monarch from the French conspirators, but he is disarmed in the process and must take the King's sword to chase the assassins away (1079ab). As he wields the sword of the sovereign, who lost the symbolic weapon in a dash to save his life, the responsibilities of order and justice fall to Juan. As if the dramatization of this careless and facetious transfer of power was not enough, the following scene bears no other purpose but to bolster the image of the monarch's frail humanity: three jester-like shepherds walk on stage, calling for the people to

come to the aid of the King under attack. A shepherd asks: “¿Al rey, quién lo creye? / Pues el rey, ¿puede morir?” (“The king, who will believe it? Can the king ever die?”). Another responds: “¿No es también presona el rey? / Muérese un jumento, un buey, / y el reye que es de alfeñique, / ¿se había de quedar acá?” (1080a) (“Is the King not a person, too? Donkeys and oxen die, why should the king stick around, if he is made of sugar?”).⁵⁴ From the shepherd’s practical point of view, if productive animals die, there is no reason for this brittle and useless King to stay alive.

Through Leonora, the King learns that her and Juan’s father was the favorite of king Alfonso, the monarch’s late father. In gratitude for saving his life, the King names Juan much more than his *privado*: “Rey seréis en ejercicio, / y yo sólo en nombre rey. / Despachad vos mis consultas, / presidid en mis consejos, / premiad capitanes viejos, / dad cargos, proveed resultas, / gobernad, subid, creced; / que en todo sois el mayor / de Nápoles” (1081b) (“You will be king in practice; me, only in name. Resolve my consultations, preside over my councils, reward old captains, give offices and resolutions, govern, ascend, grow, because in every sense you are the greatest among all in Naples”). Except for his title, the King delegates the kingdom to Juan, freeing himself of any responsibility and creating an alter ego. However, based on his father’s bad experience as a royal favorite, Juan tries to resist the monarch’s favor, but the King will not have it: in one fell swoop he endows Juan with the titles of marquis, baron, count, duke, prince, steward, chancellor, and governor (1082ab). Abundant *mercedes* notwithstanding, in lengthy exchange between *privado* and ruler, Juan explains that he has learned not only from his father, but from “todas cuantas historias he margenado” (“all the histories I have glossed in the margins”), that no favorite ever enjoyed a happy ending. The King, finally, shows some authority: “a un rey habéis resistido, / habéis de privar por fuerza [...] vos y yo dos prodigios: /

⁵⁴ According to Covarrubias, *alfeñique* was a sugar paste used to clear the children’s chest and throat. It was rolled thinly and put in the children’s mouth to suck, like hard candy (“Alfeñique”).

vos mi privado por fuerza, / yo vuestro incansable arrimo” (1085-7) (“you have resisted a king, you will be the favorite by force. We are two prodigies: you my favorite by force, me your restless patron”). Following Covarrubias, the verb *arrimar*—to bring an object closer to another—can indicate a relationship of dependence between patron and subject (“Arrimar”). In this *comedia*, however, this power structure is subverted, as it is the monarch who needs Juan to govern “by the side, and even in the stead, of the king” (Patiño 2). The myth is, thus, reversed: the king that shapes and keeps his kingdom by force, by the same force willingly renounces it.

In medieval times, the figure of the hunter-king was set in opposition to a saintly hermit who saved the animals from falling prey to the huntsman (Alexander 117-8). As Leonora informs the King when they first meet, she and her brother make their living hunting in the woods, which allows them to live in freedom. In Gregory of Tour’s account of Saint Aemilianus, the hermit lived from a small field he cultivated in the forest, where “there were no other inhabitants except the beasts and birds, who gathered around him every day as around a servant of God” (qtd. in Alexander 118). One day a young hunter at the service of a powerful man came near the saint’s hut chasing after a boar, but the dogs were unable to go beyond the hermit’s cell, and the boar escaped into the woods. The young hunter returned many times to speak with the saint and eventually became an abbot, signaling a “conversion effected by a holy man, who thus creates another saintly father in his wake”, a variation of a story that normally leads “to the moral regeneration of a king or great nobleman, and often his donation of land to the Church” (Alexander 118). But there are other versions of the story, including that of Saint Giles, where the hermit is converted by the king. In this story, for two days the king has been unsuccessful in hunting a doe, since the animal keeps running into the safety of the hermit’s cave. On the third day, however, a hunter shoots at the doe, hitting Giles instead. The saint survives and rejects all

offers of medical help, and yet the monarch convinces him to join society as the abbot of a monastery. For Dominic Alexander, the “Giles story is thus not a clear case of Christian virtue overcoming secular sin, since it is the fallible king who, in a sense, redeems the holy man by bringing him back within the realm of society” (119). But even as Juan is wounded while protecting the King, the prey, from the French conspirators or hunters (1079b, 1080b), as in Giles’ story, Tirso distrusts the figure of the shepherd-leader. Juan is not a saintly hermit, but a hunter, a wolf in sheep’s clothes. He knows how to bring nature under the law of the stronger, which makes him valuable to a monarch who refuses to act his part. As Tirso subverts yet another myth, he brings to the fore the silent pact between monarchs and aristocrats in the re-feudalization of the empire, their complicity against the professionalization of the State. As the King entraps Juan, the man who can dutifully perform his kingly role, the monarch orders him to govern in his stead, locating Juan under the supervision of the King: “Id delante, que imagino que os me queréis esconder” (1087b) (“Walk in front of me, because I imagine you want to hide from me”). As the monarch stands behind the *privado* to scrutinize his performance, Juan seemingly becomes the de facto shepherd of the Spanish flock. And while Juan gains visibility, the King, unmistakably, remains in charge.

The second act opens with Juan, favorite by force, dispensing a considerable amount of *mercedes*, giving away public offices that range from General of the Galleys to Ambassador of Rome (1088ab). These *mercedes* are granted to individuals who have rendered services of value to the crown, a transaction that integrates individuals into the system much like the hunter-king accumulates subjects. In other words, as he rules Naples, Juan reproduces the behavior of the King, underscoring the performative nature of the ruler’s office, as well as Juan’s talent for mimicry. But his skills will become a problem. The King is still in love with Leonora, and with

the *privado* safely in charge of the government the monarch has ample time to court the *dama*. Swiftly, Leonora's position becomes untenable, as she explains to her brother, who still fears the fall from favoritism: "De un rey mozo persuadida, / de su amor solicitada, / de su poder combatida [...] él príncipe, y yo mujer, / yo vasalla, él majestad, / y entrambos en su poder, / por consecuencia sacad, / quién tendrá más que temer" (1090a) ("The young king is trying to persuade me. He solicits my love and combats me with his power. He is a prince and I am a woman. I am a vassal and he is majesty. Now think who of us, you or I, has more to fear"). Juan requests royal permission to send his sister to Aragon to marry the Duke of Segorbe, but the King replies that he will name her Duchess of Amalfi so that she does not have to leave. Juan insists; he gave his word. The King, then, poses an interesting question: "Pues vuestra palabra, ¿importa / más que la mía?" (1095b) ("Is your word more important than mine?"). The answer, of course, is no. The King orders Juan to write, sign, and dispatch a series of official letters, because "Yo tengo un poco que hacer / por hora y media, o por dos: / quedaos a escribirlas vos [...] porque se despachen hoy, / con llave quiero encerraros" (1098b-1099a) ("I have a few things to do for half an hour or two. You stay here and write them. So that they are dealt with today, I will lock you in"). The event illustrates how Juan is, in more ways than one, trapped by the word of the King, the law of the realm. To free himself, then, and to save his sister's honor, he will need someone who supersedes the authority of the monarch, or is just as powerful.

Concerned that the King is pursuing his sister, Juan climbs down the window, stumbling upon a French conspiracy to detonate a bomb in the royal palace. After defusing the threat, Juan finds the King and informs him of the presence of spies at court. As he is supposed to be working, he veils his face and disguises his voice, but the monarch is uninterested until the *privado* warns him that his life and government are at stake. "Who are you?", the King asks.

Juan replies: “Soy quien penetro vuestra alma, / y sé vuestros pensamientos” (1101b) (“I am he who penetrates your soul and knows your thoughts”). “My thoughts?”, answers the King, “¿Pues cómo puedes / saber tú, sino es que bajas / del cielo, imaginaciones / a Dios sólo reservadas?” (“Unless you came down from heaven, how can you know that which is reserved for God alone?”). Juan did not expect the King to confuse him for a heavenly being, but, nonetheless, he makes it a point to prove his superior position, perhaps his transcendental nature, first, by confirming that the King is alone that night because he is meeting with the sister of a man that he simultaneously favors and insults; and second, by revealing the contents of the political and quite delicate letters that Juan is supposed to be writing at that very moment (1101b-1102a). Seeing how Juan has access to both present and future, the King demands proof: is he an enchanter or a spiritual substance? Juan hands the key to the room where the spies and bomb are being held. Clearly holding the upper hand, Juan makes a deal with the King: in exchange for more information, the monarch will not attempt to discover his identity. The King responds: “prometo / sobre la cruz desta espada / de cumplir cuanto me pides” (1103a) (“I promise, on the cross of this sword, to comply with whatever you desire”). The *privado* takes his word and runs with it: “tres cosas por mí has de hacer: / la primera, que a la hermana / de don Juan, si no es que intentas / como a esposa sublimarla, / olvides [...] La segunda es que reprimas / el curso a mercedes tantas [...] No tiene tanto talento / don Juan [...] para gobernarlo todo: / alívale de la carga / con que sus fuerzas oprimes” (“you will do three things for me: the first, that unless you plan to marry don Juan’s sister, you will forget about her. The second, that you will repress your liberality; don Juan does not possess the talent to govern everything. Soften the load with which you oppress his strength”). The monarch affirms that he will do as Juan wishes. As Juan orders the King to apprehend the traitors and return the following day to the same spot, but only once he

has thoroughly carried out his instructions, for all intents and purposes the *valido* has effectively replaced the monarch (1103b).

Some early modern thinkers held that the favorite could penetrate the monarch's interiority and perceive the problems of the kingdom from the point of view of the sovereign, which made the *privado* more precise in their rule, thus lightening the king's load and making his life more bearable; other intellectuals, however, were rightfully skeptical (Patiño 3-5). As far as the King is concerned, such interior penetration is impossible for Juan the man, but not for the disguised and omniscient *privado*, whom the King accepts as a supernatural entity who supersedes his powers and wisdom (1104b). From the satirical perspective of the text, the *valido* is, of course, a creature of royal creation, a common man hired, albeit forcefully, by the King to fulfill his divinely ordained work. For Tirso, the myth of divine majesty was a political tool with the sole aim of reaffirming and securing the monarchy's right to reshape the distribution of power as much as the kingdom's social and cultural composition. The King can, in fact, reproduce himself in the *privado* and delegate all the responsibilities of governing while keeping his titles and privileges intact.

Juan insists on resisting the pressures of the King to join the civilized court, but the harder he fights back, the more Juan comes across as dishonest. Not accepting that he is becoming a king himself, Juan claims instead that he is merely studying the hard science of performing the king: “no estudio otra ciencia / si no es el desempeñar / al rey, que juzgo yo que es / un poco dificultosa” (1111a) (“I study nothing but the science of playing the king, which is a little difficult”).⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the nominative King affirms that the evasive and unidentified

⁵⁵ It is difficult to not associate the dramatic situation with the history of the Count-Duke of Olivares, famous for his unconvincing performance as a political agent disinterested in accumulating power and wealth. For instance, soon after his rise to Philip IV's *privanza* in 1622, Olivares organized a triumvirate of three experienced ministers, hoping “to disarm criticism of his alleged lust for power” (Elliott, *Count-Duke* 132). However, by 1626 it was evident that

saint, Juan in disguise, is as important as he is necessary, since he is a divine being that keeps him from indulging in juvenile vice: “quien tanto / guarda mi vida y reino, y (en efeto) / quien juveniles vicios me reprime, / con más veneración es bien se estime” (1110b) (“he who guards my life and kingdom, he who effectively represses my juvenile vices, should be venerated”). As false as Juan’s modesty may ring, his insistence on him not being king is a prudent performance of subservience to the real monarch. Through this dual fiction of Juan the man as in control of the administration of the kingdom, and of Juan the saint as the master of the King’s will, Tirso defies the myth of the *privado* as the king’s perfect and necessary friend: as the hermit’s church thrived because the hunter allowed it, the *privado* exists because the king made him. From this double perspective as earthly minister and divine advisor, the King can legitimately, albeit cryptically, allow the *valido* to reign supreme, in turn allowing the *valido* to pretend that his interest is merely the wellbeing of the commonwealth and not his.

For Tirso, the lie was too evident. Juan the hermit was always a hunter.⁵⁶ The playwright reads in the stories of hermits and lords not the latter’s donation of land for the former to build his church, but something akin to the hostile takeover of the territories of the Church by the State: with ecclesiastical support, be it by coercion or complicity, the Spanish monarchy was free to undo myths at will and recast them according to their political needs, as when legitimizing the

Olivares “had been systematically concentrating authority in his own hands, even if he attempted to hide that movement behind the all too transparent screen of the triumvirate” (146). In another occasion Olivares, amid simultaneous tensions between Spain and the Papacy, England, and France, sent the King a “long relation of family and personal services to the crown [which] read less like a letter of resignation than a standard petition for some favour” (237). As Olivares expected, his resignation, in fact a request to leave, was denied by king Philip IV, which reinforced his political position by making him look indispensable.

⁵⁶ Grégoire Chamayou argues that in “the long history of thematization of power that began in Hebrew tradition, there are in fact two opposing terms: Abraham and Nimrod, pastoral power and cynegetic power” (15). Exegesis on the book of Genesis contends that Moses’ concern for the figure of Nimrod as a mighty hunter lies on the idea that, while Abraham shepherds men by divine ordination, “hunting animals serves as a transition to hunting men” (Chamayou 11-3). I must wonder if Tirso’s legendary quarrels with Olivares did not move him to represent Juan as an Abrahamic shepherd to hint at Olivares’ Jewish ancestry (Elliott, *Count-Duke* 10-11, 163).

valido without compromising the majestic image of the ruler.⁵⁷ As the *comedia* ends, Juan disappears with the wealth given to him by the King, making the entire cast believe that he defected to the French. As it turns out, Juan has left instructions to dedicate his whole *hacienda* to pay for the King's financial troubles. At this moment, Juan reveals his identity. But while this act of honesty and sacrifice relieves the favorite of the ethical problem of profiting from the crown, immediately thereafter the King marries him to his sister, Isabela, so that his bothersome *privanza* will forever rest assured (1115ab-1116ab).

In *Ganar amigos*, there is as much evidence of Fadrique's generosity and effectivity as a statesman as there is of his corruption. True, the favorite curtails the king's cruelty as he challenges the harsh justice the monarch is famous for. But negotiating the will of the sovereign undermines the sovereignty of the State. As seen in the symbolic gold chains, Fadrique's interventionism serves to protect his circle of male clients, sexual attackers included, leaving the most vulnerable characters, the female ones, without access to justice. In *Privar contra su gusto*, the man in charge of the kingdom is not the legitimate ruler, but a hunter and nobleman without experience in governmental matters. Monarchic authority is trivialized, as are kingly ideals of prudence and strength, as the favorite proves to be a better ruler than the king. This satirical *comedia* demystifies the notion of the sacredness of the office of the Christian prince, evincing instead that political power is the result of pacts and negotiations among monarchs and nobles. Although in both *comedias* the female characters make themselves audible to demand justice, in both cases their voices fall on deaf ears.

⁵⁷ After the conquest of Granada, seeking to ensure the primacy of the crown, the Catholic Monarchs fought the Papacy for the right of royal patronage over all the churches to be established in the newly conquered regions, a privilege they acquired in 1508 (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 99-102). In 1624, the Count-Duke of Olivares, Philip IV's *privado*, began to push for a widespread reform that meant to bring the last stronghold of the Papacy, Castilian ecclesiastical structures established before the fateful year of 1492, under royal control (Elliott, *Count-Duke* 182-5).

Conclusion

Though chronology is difficult, we at least know *Los favores del mundo* was not Alarcón's first play, and yet he chose it to preface his collected works. He wanted us to enter his dramatic universe through the first scene in the *comedia*, where an estranged Spaniard named Garci Ruiz de Alarcón at long last returns home and encounters a Madrid so bustling with life, so new, that he is there, indeed, for the very first time. Ruiz de Alarcón revels at the beauty of the court of the king of Spain. The jester is amazed at the houses, for Alarcón, "no tan fuertes como bellas" (v. 10) ("Less strong than beautiful"). Finding a parallel between houses and women, the jester says: "Aquí las mujeres y ellas / son en eso parecidas" (vv. 11-2). Alarcón comments on the peculiar way in which the houses are built, in reverse order, since they first construct the roof and then the walls: "Que edifiquen al revés / mayor novedad me ha hecho, / que primero hacen el techo / y las paredes después" (vv. 13-6). The jester insists in comparing women to houses, because, according to him, in Madrid they dress the head before anything else: "Lo mismo, señor, verás / en la mujer, que adereza, / al vestirse, la cabeza / primero que lo demás" (vv. 17-20).

The opening dialogues of *Los favores del mundo* have long intrigued me. How are houses and women alike? Why is this comparison relevant? What is the meaning of that roof which comes before everything else?⁵⁸ Perhaps the houses are noble houses, or, more precisely, the house of one nobleman. To legitimize his position in the monarchy, Lerma embellished the past deeds of his ancestors, rewriting his family history to include such figures as Adam and Eve, Hercules, and Aeneas (Feros 101-2), a house, indeed, "less strong than beautiful". Alarcón's

⁵⁸ As Margarita Salazar has studied, in at least *El semejante a sí mismo* Alarcón showed some interest in the topic of construction. However, I find it hard to believe that in this play, and in this moment, the dramatist wanted to state a fringe opinion on Spanish methods of construction based on ancient Roman engineering (Campbell, *Los favores del mundo* 78, n. 16).

comedias de privanza consistently question the rationality of placing noblemen in charge of the government for no other reason but nobility itself. His characterization of noblemen shows them as greedy and violent, and insists that in an institutional society such as imperial Spain a man, noble or otherwise, with no knowledge of and no respect for laws and mores is not qualified to hold public office. From this perspective, perhaps the dramatist alluded to the extreme social disparity of Castile, where wealth and privilege accumulated at the exclusive top while the rest were forced to survive as second-class citizens (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 311). The inverted method of construction may also indicate that, much like his homonymous character, as a newcomer to the imperial capital the real Alarcón was surprised and awed at the unique and perplexing ways of Madrid. Through this *comedia*, the first text of his first volume, we enter Alarcón's work as he entered Madrid, trying to make sense of things with the eyes of a foreigner. Considering Alarcón's penchant for exposing the flaws of Spanish society, it is quite possible to read in the protagonist's questioning of Madrid's methods of construction the analogy of a theater conceived as a site of ideological contestation.

Centered around the problems of favoritism, and dedicated to offering reasonable, more effective alternatives to it, Alarconian political theater reveals a break with the traditional gender discourse that circumscribes women to the domestic sphere. The comparison of women and houses offers multiple semantic possibilities, but denying women a role in the political sphere is simply not one of them. The house is the place where reason enters into dispute with the corruption and irrationality of powerful men, and the role of Alarconian noblewomen is to lead by reason and law. It is outside the house of Anarda, in *Los favores del mundo*, that the Prince is outmaneuvered to stop his harassment; it is in Aurora's bedroom, in *La amistad castigada*,⁵⁹ that

⁵⁹ In *Los pechos privilegiados*, the King attempts to rape Elvira in her own bedroom, a scene repeated between Diana and the King in *El dueño de las estrellas*.

the King is dethroned and banished from the realm for attempting to abuse his niece; the opposite happens in *Ganar amigos*, where Ana is taught, in her own bedroom, that greed and violence are more valuable than the law; just as in *La crueldad por el honor*, where Teresa is the victim of attempted raped, in her own garden, by a man who helped dethrone the legitimate Queen for a false monarch. In expressing reason through the voice of his female characters, the dramatist is undeviating, just as he is in dramatizing the fact that reason does not always win. This is not the hallmark of a moralist pamphleteer; rather, it is the worldview of a realist.

Castro Leal judges the character Jimena—for him, conventional and grotesque—for her speech, the rustic idiom of *fabla*, claiming that her rusticity prevented Alarcón from reaching her true being (161). Yet her true being is there, first, as she explains to Elvira why resisting the King's irrational violence is not an act of treason; and, secondly, when she grabs the King in her arms and drags him off stage for unsheathing his sword against her son. Jimena's true being is human dignity, the central tenet of natural law; her characterization as a strong and rustic wet-nurse serves to emphasize this unconventional trait. As she neutralizes the realm's most powerful man, that "little chicken" of a king, Jimena is Alarcón's quintessential representation of female strength.⁶⁰ Why would this make her grotesque? Henríquez Ureña takes the word of *one* servant, Hernando from *Los favores del mundo*, as the overarching gender theory in Alarconian thought. Sure, Hernando says all these things about women from Madrid, but what the servant says stands in stark contradiction with what women in this play do.⁶¹ As for Hartzbusch and his alter egos, what if Alarcón's female characters are indeed egotistical, vulgar, petty? What if they indeed do

⁶⁰ Josa's contention that Jimena is the incarnation of Mother Nature needs revision (111, n. 1). If anything, Jimena is the dual symbol of female action—as opposed to the Aristotelian duality where the female gender is associated with potency and the male with act (Maclean 2.2.1)—and, evidently, political participation.

⁶¹ Though focused on plays foreign to this study (*El examen de maridos*, *Las paredes oyen*, and *El anticristo*) Josa states the same idea (256).

ill in cold blood and say they love when they do not? Is then Fadrique, from *Ganar amigos*, a model of virtue and nobility (Hartzenbusch xxv), when he also does ill in cold blood and says he loves when he means something else? Is corruption not a vulgarity in a man? Is it not a sign of pettiness and egoism? “Perhaps Hartzenbusch found Alarcón’s women mean, common, and graceless because he expected women to be angelic, sweet, shy, charming, graceful, and decorative,” writes Pasto. “No wonder he dislikes Alarcón’s independent, self-assured, active, decisive female characters” (227-8).⁶²

Teresa Ferrer Valls’ study of Golden Age female writers and dramatic space has unearthed some thematic relationships with our dramatist, although they are indirect.⁶³ As she studies the works of Mariana de Carvajal, Leonor de la Cueva, and Ángela de Acevedo,⁶⁴ a series of recurrent topics also present in Alarcón’s *comedias de privanza* come to the surface: “The denunciation of violence against women in cases of honor, the vindication of women’s say when choosing a husband, solidarity among women, the denunciation of social and familial customs that turn women into a mercantile object via dowries, or the defense against the topical accusations of weakness and mutability, are some of the topics frequented by these writers” (10). In *Ganar amigos*, Ana denounces before the King the sexual attack to which she was subjected. That women should have a say when choosing their lifetime partners is expressed by Teresa in *La crueldad por el honor*, as well as by Anarda and Julia in *Los favores del mundo*, where the latter also speaks against turning women into financial tokens. Beginning with Anarda and

⁶² In this article, Pasto challenges the negative views of Hartzenbusch, Quirarte, and Walter Poesse about Alarcón’s female characters in *La verdad sospechosa*, *Las paredes oyen*, and *La prueba de las promesas*.

⁶³ Ysla Campbell has noted the parallels between Alarcón and Luisa de Padilla, sister in law to the Count of Uceda, King Philip III’s favorite from 1618 to 1621, who, among other things, wrote about the military obligations of the nobility (“Reformismo” 12).

⁶⁴ As Teresa in *La crueldad por el honor*, Ángela de Acevedo was Chambermaid to the Queen, in this case, of Elisabeth of France, wife of Philip IV.

ending with Elvira, from *Los pechos privilegiados*, they all challenge the notion of female weakness and mutability. Also, interior space is not always safe when the man is willing to trample a woman's will (Ferrer Valls 11), as is represented in *La amistad castigada*, *Ganar amigos*, *La crueldad por el honor*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, *Los pechos privilegiados*, and *El acomodado don Domingo de Don Blas*. This is not to say that our dramatist was the only male poet who shared ideas about gender with his female counterparts, although in my corpus it is clear that his female characters have a presence and political influence more pronounced than in the texts by Lope, and absent in those by Vélez and Tirso. Rather, this is to say that the defiance of Acevedo, Cuevas, and Carvajal aligns with Alarcón's because, perhaps, of their shared experiences as talented writers, as intelligent and articulate intellectuals who, nonetheless, fell victims to systemic discrimination and marginalization.

In Alarcón's plays, as in Spanish history, men rise to power through their friendship with the monarch, oftentimes understood as services rendered to the powerful. Is it not ironic that the Prince, in *Los favores del mundo*, names Ruiz de Alarcón Gentleman of the Mouth, offers him a habit in a military order of his choosing, then makes him Master of the Horse, only for Ruiz de Alarcón to use the Prince's friendship against the Prince's wishes? And is it not ironic that the King, in *Ganar amigos*, names his favorite, Fadrique, Master of the Horse and then Lord High Stewart, while Fadrique bribes Diego with nobiliary titles in exchange for his silence? In both cases, the monarchs refer to these favorites as their best friends and alter egos.⁶⁵ Simply put, the dramatist speaks about friendship to denounce cronyism. According to Feros, unlike "a flatterer

⁶⁵ In *La amistad castigada*, the favorite Filipo abuses his position in power for personal gain, even against the well-being of the King, who calls Filipo his "dearest friend"; in *El dueño de las estrellas*, the favorite Palante bribes Crineo, Diana's servant, so he will open her doors for the King at night; in *Los pechos privilegiados*, the favorite Ramiro supports the King's undignified plans towards Elvira, even advising to murder Rodrigo to protect his own *privanza*; in *El acomodado don Domingo de Don Blas*, the favorite Beltrán bribes Inés, Leonor's maid, so that she will give access to the King into Leonor's bedroom. The idea that Alarcón subscribed to a rather rosy Senecan view of friendship is unsustainable, particularly when it comes to the figure of the royal favorite.

(false friend), whose sole reason ‘to court’ the other is to obtain an immediate benefit, a true friend offers trust, advice, and support in times of trouble.⁶⁶ In sum, a real friend had to share his feelings and ideas as well as his wealth, honor, titles, and offices, thus creating a communion of wills, a fusion of the souls that transformed friends into ‘one soul in two bodies’” (122). However, there were negative views about the possibility of friendship between a monarch and his vassals, since the “relationship between the monarch and his counselors was not voluntary but a duty, which distinguished it from perfect friendship” (122). It was this theory of friendship that, with the help of writers like Juan Fernández de Medrano and friar Pedro de Maldonado, among others, “Lerma’s supporters attempted to redefine in order to legitimize his governmental responsibilities” (122-3). While Maldonado’s influence in the constitution of the *comedia de privanza* needs further attention, I agree with Feros when he says that

the concept of the favorite as the king’s friend gave Lerma and his supporters an almost perfect theory with which to challenge all those who believed that a favorite with powers like Lerma’s challenged the exclusive right of the king as the unique holder of sovereignty. If the favorite was the king’s friend, then the king was in no danger of diffusing royal power and prerogatives because the *valido* was his other self, the clone of the king himself. (123)

From this perspective, what was the function of the royal favorite according to Alarcón? Part of the answer lies in those favorites of high moral stature, like Melendo and Rodrigo, from *Los pechos privilegiados*, and, with certain reservations, Dion, from *La amistad castigada*. Except for Rodrigo—perhaps Alarcón’s most extreme representation of virtue—these characters are old men dedicated to the correct functioning of the government. They play rather small roles in the conflicts and, except for Dion, their input in the resolution is minimal. Instead, Alarcón focuses on those favorites who have no other purpose but to do the king’s dirty work—their motivation is to accumulate wealth, power, and titles, rather than the correct administration of

⁶⁶ Feros takes this idea from the translation of Leone Ebreo’s work by Garcilaso de la Vega, *el Inca*, in 1590, and from Pedro Simón Abril’s 1580 translation of Aristotle’s *Ethics*.

the commonwealth's resources. In words of Francisco Ruiz Ramón, "theater, subject to strong censorship, tends to create a system of communication where ambiguity is a necessary instrument to represent what is institutionally impossible to represent" (*Paradigmas* 23). The corruption of the royal favorites is a constant in Alarcón's work, though prudently represented. For our dramatist, corruption had no place in government, and neither did favorites.

As the Alarconian concept of reason refers either to the law or to the individual's ability to distinguish and act upon what is just and moral, I agree with Ysla Campbell in that Alarcón's proposal to remedy the problem of the royal favorite was legality ("Poder" 11). The favorite should not have the authority to circumvent the power of the social institutions designed to balance the power of the crown. Furthermore, being a non-institutional figure himself, the favorite should simply not wield any power. It is for this reason that I must disagree with Campbell on other aspects. The notion that due to the monarch's divinity Alarcón never attacked rulers, only favorites, is highly debatable. In plays such as *La amistad castigada*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, and *Los pechos privilegiados*, the king is represented as an irrational being. The figure of the prince is not admirable in *Los favores del mundo* and *No hay mal que por bien no venga*. And what should we make of King Pedro in *Ganar amigos*, who populates his court with corrupt and violent men? In Alarcón's political *comedias*, the representation of the favorite is simply and consistently negative. Finally, there is no evidence, either in the playwright's work or in the history of Spain, to support the idea that the nobility belonged in power because their blood assured virtues and temperance. If anything, the evidence points to the opposite.

The characters of Anarda, Aurora, Ana, Flor, Petronila, Teodora, and Teresa,⁶⁷ give reasonable and knowledgeable advice to favorites, monarchs, and other women alike,

⁶⁷ Not to mention Diana, Elvira, Jimena, and Leonor from *El dueño de las estrellas*, *Los pechos privilegiados*, and *El acomodado don Domingo de Don Blas*.

demonstrating the corruption and inefficacy of the counsel of their male counterparts. These women function, first, as a systematic resistance against the tyranny of powerful men, as they reveal the highjacking of the institutions and monarchical power for personal gain by those nobles closest to the crown. Secondly, the type and quality of female counsel serves to underscore the fact that what makes for a good advisor is well beyond gender, and that lineage guarantees nothing. Juan Ruiz de Alarcón did not propose the creation of a feminist democracy, of course, and his theater is not the work of the victim of a destiny which denied him everything. His political dramas convey a serious and mature critique of a parallel government which began with the friendship of Philip III and was eventually turned by the Duke of Lerma into a personal tyranny policed and operated by the Franquezas and Calderóns of early modern Spain. If anything, Alarcón's theater belongs to the discourse of the anti-Lerma faction led by Margaret of Austria, a group where female solidarity led even Catalina de la Cerda and Catalina de Sandoval, respectively the Duke's wife and sister, to have more loyalty for the queen than for Lerma himself.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ It is probable that queen Margaret of Austria actively commissioned politically charged plays as a means to undermine Lerma's image. According to Wright, Lope's *El premio de la hermosura*, dedicated to the Count-Duke of Olivares, was commissioned by the Queen, and it is probable that so was *La hermosa Ester*, which represents a jealous *privado* who craves privileges (116-7).

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