Calderón's *El médico de su honra*: A Cubist Reading

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ABSTRACT
Calderón de la Barca's *El médico de su honra* is a fractured play that, in Stanley Fish's famous locution, has always remained "recalcitrant to interpretation." While Gutierre may be the tortured protagonist of a wife-murder play that pits his love for his wife against the demands of his honor, *El médico* is not Gutierre's play. *El médico* is the king's play. This monarch, however, is himself a fractured character, a dramatic and an historical figure known both as "Peter the Cruel" and as "Peter the Just." But the king we see strutting through the palace, a king who tilts with street ruffians, imprisons miscreants, and brings the Andalusian nobility to heel, is a far cry from the king we see in *the world of the play*, an impotent king who is aware that he is projecting power he may not have. Given that *the play as text* and the *world of the play* offer two different perspectives of monarchy that can neither be reconciled nor rationalized into a coherent whole, perhaps it is time to subject *El médico* to a Cubist reading, one that will bring these two distinct and often contradictory frames of reference to the foreground and allow them to exist independently of each other on the same interpretive plane. Perhaps it is time to think of *El médico* neither as poetry nor as drama but as what the Cubist critic Guillaume Apollinaire has called an "art of conception" that appeals not to the eye but to the intellect, an "art of conception" that renders an understanding of royal authority as fractured as the play itself.

KEYWORDS
Calderón de la Barca, *El médico de su honra*, Cubism, New Historicism, world of the play, play as text

RESUMEN
El médico de su honra de Calderón de la Barca es una obra fracturada que, en la famosa locución de Stanley Fish, siempre ha permanecido "recalcitrant to interpretation." Mientras que Gutierre puede ser el protagonista torturado de un drama de honor que enfrenta su amor por su esposa contra las demandas de su honor, *El médico* no es la obra de Gutierre. *El médico* es la obra del rey. Este

monarca, sin embargo, es en si un personaje fracturado, una figura dramática e histórica conocida como "Pedro el Cruel" y como "Pedro el Justiciero." Pero el rey que vemos paseándose por el palacio, un rey que entabla combate con los rufianes de la calle, encarcela a los malhechores y logra controlar a la nobleza andaluza, está muy lejos del rey que vemos en *el mundo de la obra dramática*, un rey impotente que es consciente de estar proyectando el poder que puede que no tenga. Dado que *la obra dramática como texto* y *el mundo de la obra dramática* ofrecen dos perspectivas diferentes de la monarquía que no pueden reconciliarse ni racionalizarse en un todo coherente, quizá sea hora de someter a *El médico* a una lectura cubista, una que llevará estos dos marcos de referencia distintos y a menudo contradictorios al primer plano y les permitirá existir independientemente uno del otro en el mismo plano interpretativo. Tal vez sea hora de pensar en *El médico* ni como poesía ni como drama sino como lo que el crítico cubista Guillaume Apollinaire ha llamado un "art of conception" que apela no al ojo sino al intelecto, an "art of conception" que hace que una comprensión de la autoridad real sea tan fracturada como la propia obra.

PALABRAS CLAVES
Calderón de la Barca, *El médico de su honra*, el cubismo, el nuevo historicismo, el mundo de la obra dramática, la obra dramática como texto

Calderón de la Barca's *El médico de su honra* is a play that has always overflowed its bounds, primarily and paradoxically because it has proven to be fundamentally incomplete. Succeeding generations of scholars armed with the newest methodological approaches, including the nineteenth-century moralists, the twentieth-century New Critics, and the turn of the century New Historicists, have all looked beyond the world of the play to resolve the inconsistencies and incongruities they have found within the *comedia* only to find other frictions, fissures, or fractures.

For all the critical attention the play has garnered, Calderón's great wife-murder play remains stubbornly recalcitrant to interpretation, if "recalcitrant to interpretation" (Fish 1980, 325) refers to the ways in which the *comedia* resists critical attempts to resolve dramatic tension into a seamless whole. Instead of trying to elide incongruities, however, it may be time to bring them to the surface in what I will call a Cubist reading, one that tries not to efface the fractures in the play but allows them to interact with each other on the same interpretive plane. Perhaps it is time to understand fracture as a constitutive feature of a play in which performance, text, and spectator have distinct points of view that cannot be reconciled because they exist as distinct planes of a fractured whole.

Critical History

The New Critics of the British School of Hispanic criticism sought to reclaim the integrity of Calderón's honor dramas from nineteenth-century scholars, whose moral approach to the study of the *comedia* exposed the tension that exists between the "moral cristiana" that takes seriously the biblical demand that "Thou shalt not kill" and the "moral social" (Menéndez y Pelayo 1884, 279) of an honor code that demands that a husband avenge his lost honor with a blood sacrifice. Bruce W. Wardropper (1958), for example, finds the resolution to the seemingly irreducible gap between the "moral cristiana" and the "moral social" in the person of the king, who serves if not as God's representative then certainly God's echo on Earth: "Inasmuch as the King supervises affairs of honor in his realm," says Wardropper, we see "reminders of divine surveillance over the action through the King's mediation" (9). Wardropper's attempt to encode the moral universe within the dramatic poetry—that is, his attempt to bridge the ontological gap between the "moral cristiana" and the "moral social" of the honor code, thereby reducing the reach of the *comedia* to the world of the play itself—introduces a political question: If the king has the responsibility of mediating between the human and the divine, who is this king and is he worthy of the role?

A monarch who carries out his ontological responsibility to mediate between heaven and earth should at the very least be a moral prince. Such was the foundational principle of a theocratic understanding of kingship that demanded that a monarch rule in accordance with divine and natural law. While in theory the ideal Christian prince need not be a virtuous man in order to be an effective ruler, a distinction that served as the foundation of Machiavelli's modern, more pragmatically ruthless approach to political philosophy, Margaret Greer (1991) has argued that in practice "the moral conduct of the monarch was not viewed as a trivial question but as a matter of importance to the state" (90).[1] The question of whether King Pedro of *El médico* is a just prince capable of functioning as the mediator between heaven and earth is complicated by an historical record that exists outside what the New Critics thought of as the closed world of the text: the legacy inherited from King Pedro's historical forebear, the 14th-century King Peter I of Castile, known alternately as Peter the Cruel or Peter the Just.[2] Scholars have had to contend with the conflicting nature of a king equally capable of great cruelty and great generosity. If a critic like A. I. Watson (1963) construes Pedro

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[1] Dian Fox agrees, arguing that "Spanish political commentators of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries vociferously demanded of their *príncipe politico-cristiano* an absolute morality" (Fox, 1982, 28). See Hamilton (1963) for a more detailed discussion of this theocratic understanding of monarchy.

[2] For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the characters within the play in the original Spanish and their historical analogues in English.

as a just but sober monarch whose "stern manner belies his true character" (345), those who see Pedro as an essentially cruel king have had the more difficult task of reconciling the sovereign's ontological function as God's representative on Earth with a monarch who is not worthy of the role. The solution to this conundrum is to argue that the spectator must view the events of the play through the lens of the king's cruelty; while the world of the play may present a unitary vision, the spectator must read against the text in order to understand the play's significance. Alexander A. Parker (1959) for example, argues that Pedro's cruelty in threatening to pull out all of the *gracioso* Coquín's teeth if the jester fails to make Pedro laugh in the course of a month is the lens through which the audience or the reader should interpret the play. To the charge that Calderón condoned wife-murder because King Pedro does, Parker argues to the contrary, saying, "[S]ince Calderón has presented the king as inhuman and cruel, he wishes us thereby to see that the justice which honor claims to extract is an inhuman and cruel one" (42). For Parker, the world of the play is consistent: a cruel king upholds a cruel honor code that demands the death of an innocent wife. Meaning, however, no longer resides in the world of the play but in the spectator's ability to interpret that world view properly.

More recent approaches to the play have only extended this tendency to see beyond the text to resolve the ambiguities and inconsistencies critics have identified in the *comedia*. Dian Fox (1982) for example, finds a proper model for royal authority not in the play itself but in the historical record. Pedro is a flawed human being who presides over a flawed government. For Fox "There is no such thing as equal justice in Pedro's domain" (30). It is his half-brother Enrique who will eventually establish justice in the realm thanks to the advice offered him by his *privado* Arias, who, Fox argues, functions as a "synecdoche for the citizenry" (36). The ontological function of the king no longer obtains. Enrique will succeed where Pedro fails not because he is God's representative on Earth but because history suggests that he "will learn to listen to the voice of the people" (Fox 1982, 32). But the historical moment to which the *El médico* refers is also an historical record. The regicide of King Peter at the hands of his illegitimate half-brother Henry comes down to us as a set of conflicting narratives used to support different factions in the civil war between the brothers. It is not surprising, then, that in a later version of the same essay, Fox (1996) comes to espouse the New Historicist view that history is never objectively true; because history is itself a text subject to interpretation, we must take into account "the reader's position in the critical / political act of interpretation" (Blue 1999, 415). The irreducible gap between the divine and the human—between "la moral cristiana" and "la moral social"—that Menéndez y Pelayo describes in the nineteenth century finds its secular counterpart in the equally irreducible gap between history as event—what Fredric Jameson (1981) calls history as an "absent cause" (35)—and history as text,

which introduces history into a cultural sphere, revealing it to be a cultural product imbued with its own conventions and embedded within a system comprised of other cultural practices with which it must contend.

Stephen Greenblatt (2005b), however, claims that the New Historicist project is not just about the textualization of the past; it is also about the recovery of the real:

> We wanted to recover in our literary criticism a confident conviction of reality, without giving up the power of literature to sidestep or evade the quotidian and without giving up a minimally sophisticated understanding that any text depends upon the absence of the bodies and voices that it represents. We wanted the touch of the real in the way that in an earlier period people wanted the touch of the transcendent. (37)

On the one hand, Greenblatt acknowledges the absence at the heart of any textual representation of the real; the text always remains at some ontological remove from the bodies and voices it seeks to reclaim. On the other hand, he still thinks it possible to achieve a "touch of the real" if not the real itself through a rigorous cultural analysis that acknowledges that "texts are not merely cultural by virtue of reference to the world beyond themselves; they are cultural by virtue of social values and contexts that they have themselves successfully absorbed" (Greenblatt, 2005a, 12). History, then, does not serve merely as a backdrop for the literary work, nor does the literary work ever achieve independence from the cultural world that produces it because "[t]he written word is self-consciously embedded in specific communities, life situations, structures of power" (Greenblatt 1980, 7). Although Greenblatt focuses most of his critical attention on sixteenth-century England, his synthetic approach is less like that of the Renaissance masters of linear perspective, whose figures related to each other in size, color and clarity within the illusion of a three-dimensional space designed to be viewed from a single vantage point, and more like the early twentieth-century Cubists, whose renderings "assume a 'distorted,' non-perspectival form as a result of multiple perceptions from discrete points of view, accumulated and then expressed in a single composite shape" (Fry 1966, 37).[3] Cubism sought to reveal what linear perspective could conceal. Whereas the space created by linear perspective teemed with blind spots, the "stubborn invisibility" Michel Foucault (1973) finds on the reverse side of the canvas that dominates the left side of Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (5), the fractured planes of Cubist compositions "established the artist's right to look at things from several view-points simultaneously" (Cooper 1971,

[3] The scholarship on Cubism is vast, and there are those who take issue with the "multiple viewpoint theory" of Cubism. See, for example, John Adkins Richardson (1995), who argues that this understanding of Cubist practices "is itself an invention of critics rather than artists" (133a).

264). In Greenblatt's reading, history and literature no longer enter into a functional relationship designed to project the illusion of depth. There is no foreground. There is no background. There is no privileged point of view. Because history and literature exist simultaneously as products of a single cultural context, they relate to each other not like the figures in Da Vinci's *Last Supper* or Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, but like the shapes and spaces in Pablo Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* or Georges Braques' *Pitcher and Violin*—shapes and spaces that "lack spatial integrity and merge with those around them" (Cooper 1995, 8). Like the Cubists, who called attention to the two-dimensional nature of their paintings by juxtaposing multiple perspectives on a single plane, not as an act of mimesis but what Guillaume Apollinaire (1970) has called "an art of conception" (17), Greenblatt's New Historicism renders a "touch of the real" that is similarly conceptual and not mimetic through the simultaneous presentation of the multiple facets of history and literature that lays bare the system of relations that gives rise to both.

If the "touch of the real" that Greenblatt proposes requires the critic to perform an act of conception in order to gain indirect access to a shared culture that gives rise to a structure of power, then instead of concerning ourselves with the morality of *El médico de su honra*—that is, instead of concerning ourselves with the character of King Pedro either as a dramatic persona or an historical figure—we should turn our attention to the power dynamics operant both inside and outside the play. Rather than asking ourselves whether the king is cruel or just, we should ask ourselves to what extent the king is powerful. To read the play in the light of history or to read history in the light of the play—that is, to foreground one at the expense of the other—risks incorporating the kind of "stubborn invisibility" (Foucault 1973, 5) characteristic of linear perspective into our understanding of both play and history. *El médico* demands a fragmented reading—a Cubist reading—that allows for the simultaneous presentation of multiple understandings of kingship that melt into each other on the same interpretive plane

A Cubist approach is particularly appropriate to the study of theatre, an embodied artform in which the relationship between the literary text and the dramatic performance has always been fraught. The tension between the literary critic for whom the play is the text and the theatre artist for whom the play is the performance speaks to the radical gap between the two (Orgel 1988, 219).[4] "A play is not a flat work of literature, not a description in poetry of another world," explains renowned dramaturg and dramatic critic Elinor Fuchs (2004), "but is in itself another world passing before you in time and space" (6). The "other world" Fuchs describes is what theatre artists call the world of the play, a world with its

[4] For a discussion of the tension between the text and performance of the comedia see Stroud (1989), Benabu (1993), García Lorenzo (1986), and Mascarell (2021).

own independent existence that the director James Thomas (1992) defines as "the closed system, the distinctive universe created by the collective given circumstances" (72). Language plays a part in this world, but only a part, for although the playwright creates the world of the play through dialogue, Fuchs argues that "[t]hose who think too exclusively in terms of language find it hard to read plays," adding, "When you 'see' this other world, when you experience its space-time dynamics, its architectonics, then you can figure out the role of language in it" (6).

The problem with *El médico de su honra*, however, is that the world of the play and the language that informs the dialogue within that world are often at odds with each other. The powerful King who struts about the stage brawling with ruffians, threatening servants, and imprisoning nobles is not at all the vanquished monarch who will lose his life in the absent fourth act on an historical stage the street musicians call the "teatros de mil tragedias / las montañas de Montiel" (3.2636–37).[5] A Cubist reading of the play, however, does not seek to reconcile or rationalize these two kings; they exist as two distinct and often contradictory points of view that are coextensive with each other, thereby offering the spectator a more complicated but also a more realistic understanding of the dynamics of royal power.

But who might this spectator be? *El médico* was performed in the Salón de Palacio on 10 June 10 1635 (Shergold and Varey 1961, 281). Although we do not know if the Habsburg King Philip IV was present at the performance, the fact that it was performed in the palace means that a royal audience was possible if not likely, especially given Philip's penchant for the theatre (Brown and Elliott 1980, 31–54). If the juxtaposition of the poetic language and the world of the play allows the audience—in this case King Philip—to view the simultaneous presentation of successful, multiple facets of Calderón's King Pedro, then modern critics of the play must engage in a Cubist act of "constructive discipline" (Apollinaire 1970, 17) by taking the circumstances of the play's initial reception into account in order to arrive at an understanding of it not through the eye—that is, not through what we see either on the page or on the stage—but through the intellect. A Cubist approach to *El médico* allows Calderón's enigmatic play to reveal itself neither as poetry nor as performance but as a critical act of creation that understands the world of the play, the poetic language of the play, and the reception of the play as three distinct frames of reference on the same interpretive plane, which brings to the surface the danger the self-conscious theatrical assertion of royal prerogatives poses for the exercise of royal authority.

[5] All references to *El médico de su honra*, unless otherwise indicated, are to the edition by D. W. Cruickshank (1987).

The World of the Play

An appreciation for the world of the play must begin with the given circumstances that appear on the stage before the audience, which "spring from the time and place of the play along with the conventions, attitudes, and manners behind and around it" (Thomas 1992, 43). For Fuchs (2004), seeing the world of the play in the mind's eye requires that theater artists begin by considering the space and time, tone and mood. The first scene of *El médico*, for example, takes place on the open road as the king and his entourage make their way to Sevilla; but space becomes increasingly more cramped as the action moves from the countryside into the city and from outdoors into the interior spaces of noble houses and royal palaces. The central action of the play—the death of Mencía—takes place in the most intimate of places, the boudoir of a private home, whose grilled windows and bolted doors call to mind a prison, an invisible yet portentous space that inhabits both the physical and the metaphorical world of the *comedia*. Mood follows the trajectory of space, becoming correspondingly more menacing and claustrophobic as the action moves inside out of public view only to open up again, spilling out into the public city streets, where the king finally exerts his royal prerogatives and restores order. He compels Gutierre to offer his hand in marriage to Leonor, a gesture that confirms the sovereign's authority by condemning Gutierre to the prison house of marriage.

The world of the play is also a social world with implicit rules that govern the characters' behavior. Although it is a commonplace to say that the hierarchical and aristocratic world of Calderón's wife-murder plays operates according to an unwritten code of honor that regulates all social relationships, Fuchs (2004) reminds us that "[t]he stage world never obeys the same rules as ours, because in its world, nothing else is possible but what is there" (6). What is important, then, is not that honor influences all social relationships, but how honor binds the characters together into certain configurations within the specific and unique world of this play. "In what kinds of patterns do the figures on this planet arrange themselves?" Fuchs (6–7) asks, adding: "Are you seeing (and feeling) the tension of interlocking triangles?" "Who has the power on this planet?" and "How is it achieved? Over whom is it exercised? To what end is it exercised?" These are questions Fuchs would ask of any play. What is of special importance for our understanding of the unique world of *El médico*, however, is how pattern and power relate to each other. Power has its own pattern in this play, one that, in mirroring the interlocking love-*cum*-honor triangles of the principal characters, imprisons Gutierre in a structure of relationships from which there is no escape.

When in the first act an injured Enrique arrives unexpectedly at the home of Mencía after having fallen from his horse, he draws her into a love triangle that pits her husband Gutierre, a man who loves his wife but jealously guards his

honor, against her erstwhile lover the prince, whose unrestrained desire threatens to subject Mencía to honor's grisly demands. But this is not the only love triangle in the play. Gutierre has a past as well, having jilted the forlorn Leonor before marrying Mencía, who suspects that Leonor is never far from Gutierre's thoughts. Because each of these love triangles implicates King Pedro, however, each puts to the test the efficacy of royal power. Leonor will ask the king to redress the wrong done to her by Gutierre, and Gutierre will present the king with evidence that his brother the prince has defiled Gutierre's marriage bed and dishonored his good name. To the two love-*cum*-honor triangles of Mencía-Gutierre-Enrique and Mencía-Gutierre-Leonor, then, we must add two power triangles of Leonor-King Pedro-Gutierre and Enrique-King Pedro-Gutierre, for within the world of the play aggrieved parties look to the king's judicious exercise of royal authority to ensure the integrity of all social relationships. To answer Fuch's question, it is the conflict between the honor triangles and the power triangles that structure the world of this *comedia*. Gutierre may be the central figure of this *drama de honor*, play, but the king has all the power.[6]

As the only character with a role to play in each of these triangles, Gutierre always finds himself in the middle of the action, even when not on stage. Although he does not appear until well into the first act, Gutierre's presence as an "hombre honrado" is palpable from the moment Diego and Arias carry the injured Enrique into Mencía's house. Hushing Arias with a curt, "Silencio, / que importa mucho, Arias" (1. vv. 106–107), Mencía goes on to explain to the startled *privado*, "Va mi honor en ello" (1. v. 108), a sentiment she reiterates to Enrique later that day, admonishing the prince for having stolen into her house while her husband is away "sin temer / que así a una mujer destruye / y que así ofende un vasallo / tan generoso y ilustre" (1. vv. 1087–90). Gutierre's presence as an "hombre honrado" looms more menacing still in Act 3 when Mencía awakens from a swoon to find a note written in Gutierre's hand advising her to save her soul, for her life is already lost: "'El amor te adora, el honor te aborrece; y así el uno te mata, y el otro te avisa: dos horas tienes de vida; cristiana eres, salva el alma, que la vida es imposible'" (ff. 3. v. 2495).

Honor is equally important to Gutierre when he is on stage. His fawning treatment of the prince when he first sees Enrique in his home in Act 1 quickly turns to foreboding in Act 2, when he finds the dagger Enrique has inadvertently left behind in Mencia's bedroom. This apprehension turns to certainty at the end of Act 2, when, having transformed himself into the vengeful "médico de su honra," the overwrought husband confirms his suspicion that his wife has betrayed him. "Mi venganza a mi agravio corresponda!" (2. v. 1948), he mutters, in an anguished aside as Mencía reveals that she has known all along that it was

[6] Feminist scholars have argued that Mencía is the real protagonist of the play; see, for example, Heil (2016). Benabu (1994) makes the fervent case for Gutierre.

Enrique who had been in the house the night before. As the moment comes to commit the murder, Gutierre is present by his absence, hovering nearby as the surgeon Ludovico administers the fatal bloodletting. Lurking when he is not on stage, and in turns obsequious, suspicious, and vicious when he is, Gutierre affects the thoughts and actions of every other character, from the humblest servant to the king himself.

While Gutierre may be the central figure, he is rarely in control. The two times he decides to exercise power he believes is rightfully his, he does so in defense of his honor and to disastrous effect. He first abandons Leonor before their wedding day in the mistaken belief that she has entertained another man in her home, and then repeats the error, murdering Mencía in the mistaken belief that she has entertained the prince in hers. Gutierre never learns. Caught between the love he feels and the honor he reveres, Gutierre will always choose honor, however painful that choice may be. He does not want to kill Mencía and searches desperately for a way to exonerate her after finding Enrique's dagger in her bedroom. "Pero vengamos al caso," he says to himself, as he tries to make sense of the preceding events; "quizá hallaremos respuesta" (2. vv. 1611–12). When that effort fails, however, Gutierre sheds a tear but ultimately submits himself to the demands of honor: "Quién vio en tantos enojos / matar las manos y llorar los ojos" (3. vv. 2456–57).

Sacrificing love for honor does not free Gutierre to do as he pleases; on the contrary, it further subjects him to the will of the king. The prerogatives Gutierre enjoys as "el médico de su honra" do not threaten the prince, who, as a member of the royal family, remains beyond the reach of a lesser nobleman. Gutierre acknowledges that he cannot recover his honor on his own and that he is dependent on the king to restore his lost integrity, telling Pedro, "La vida de vos espero / de mi honra" (3. vv. 2089–90). Gutierre's act of subservience is not just an acknowledgement of Pedro's authority; it is also an implicit threat: In accepting that he has no right to take vengeance on the prince, Gutierre intimates that his dishonor has become a stain on the royal house. Pedro's very legitimacy rests on his ability to curb his brother's aggression.

That Gutierre's warning is not unfounded manifests itself within the world of the play in the form of the dagger that circulates among the characters, making its way from Enrique to Gutierre to Pedro and back to Enrique in a series of transactions that transforms an article of royal finery into an instrument of lèse majesté. The dagger, which initially appears as an ordinary part of Enrique's princely garb, acquires importance only when it becomes separated from its rightful owner; that is, it acquires importance only when the dagger as piece of stage property becomes a visible metaphor, a trope that, as Jacques Derrida (1974, 8–9) reminds us, is a turning away from proper meaning. In losing possession of the blade, Enrique also loses the ability to determine its significance. For Gutierre,

the dagger left behind in Mencía's bedchamber represents the unseen danger lurking in his house that will lead to his death: "que esta daga que hallé, ¡cielos! / con sospechas y recelos / previene mi muerte en sí (1. vv. 1362–64). Gutierre does not fear bodily harm in this moment; the dagger properly understood as a weapon poses no threat to his physical safety because it is now in his possession. Once put in circulation, however, this stage prop loses its proper meaning, becoming a metaphor for the sexual aggression that threatens Gutierre's honor. When Gutierre then presents the same dagger to the king as evidence of the dishonor Enrique has brought to his house, Gutierre invests the blade with greater significance. Asking the king to exact justice on his brother the prince, Gutierre admits that were he to lose all hope for the life of his honor, "con la sangre le lavara, / con la tierra le cubriera" (3. vv. 2097–98). But he quickly cautions:

> Nos turbéis; con sangre digo
> solamente de mi pecho.
> Enrique, está satisfecho
> que está seguro conmigo. (3. vv. 2099–2102)

Gutierre performs an act of sanguinary legerdemain here: Enrique's dagger, a sexual metaphor reified within the world of the play as a blade capable of exacting the blood sacrifice honor requires, now rests in the hands of the king.

Although Pedro understands the meaning Gutierre has invested in the dagger and takes seriously his responsibilities to safeguard the honor of his vassals, his concern for blood extends far beyond Gutierre's demand for justice. Confronting Enrique with Gutierre's accusations, Pedro reminds his brother that even royal blood remains subject to the king's justice:

> donde el alma de un vasallo
> con la ley soberana vive,
> podrá ser de mi justicia
> aun mi sangre no se libre. (3. vv. 2203–6)

Pedro attempts to exert control over Enrique by linking blood to kinship, telling the prince that he is king first and brother second. Unaware that Pedro knows about his pursuit of Mencía, Enrique is at first surprised by the accusation Pedro hurls at him; but when he tries to justify his behavior, Pedro puts an end to the matter by entering into evidence Enrique's own dagger. "Tomad su acero," demands Pedro, adding "y en él / os mirad: veréis, Enrique, vuestros defetos" (3. 2261–63). The dagger Enrique has left behind in Mencía's boudoir returns to him as shiny steel, a mirror of sins that have multiplied as the blade has passed from hand to hand. Enrique's sexual aggression and assault on Gutierre's honor now

threaten the very integrity of the royal house.

What for Enrique is merely a mislaid piece of property ("sin ella [la daga] a palacio vine / una noche" (3. vv. 2246–47) is for Pedro "Geroglífico. . . que dice / vuestro delito" (3. vv. 2258–59). Enrique does not control the dagger's meaning. Pedro does. When Enrique draws the king's blood as the blade makes its way back to its proper owner, what for Enrique is a terrible accident ("de mí no imagines / que puedo verter tu sangre" [3. vv. 2280–81]) is for the king an act of treason. Calling Enrique a "traidor" (3. v. 2266), the king accuses his brother of attempted murder:

> ¿Desta manera
> tu acero en mi sangre tiñes?
> Tú la daga que te di
> hoy contra mi pecho esgrimes?
> ¿Tú me quieres dar la muerte? (3. vv. 2268–71)

Enrique rightly fears the wrath of a brother who jealously guards his prerogatives as king. Known as a fierce warrior who "corta los cuellos de uno y otro moro" (1. v. 616), Pedro does not hesitate to deal equally harshly with foes at court. When Gutierre and Arias take up arms against each other in the presence of the king, for example, Pedro consigns them both to prison for their grievous offense:

> Presos los llevad al punto;
> en dos torres los tened;
> y agradeced que no os pongo
> las cabezas a los pies. (1. vv. 989–92)

A king who professes to show temperance by telling Gutierre and Arias to be thankful to be alive—that is, to be thankful that a king who "corta los cuellos" has chosen not to sever theirs—might very well carry out the threat in the case of a miscreant who has put the king's life in danger. Enrique therefore makes the prudent decision to abandon the court rather than test the patience of the King. He will never appear on stage again.

The king is the most powerful person within the world of the play. His subjects think of him as a "Júpiter español" (1. v. 612) who, like his mythological forebear, serves as the guardian of the state. A king must be more than a Jupiter, however; he must also be an Argus, the panoptic giant of Greek mythology whose myriad eyes kept watch even when asleep. As Diego explains to an exhausted Pedro just back from a night roaming the streets of Sevilla in an effort to "informar[s]e / de todo, para saber / lo que convenga" (2. vv. 1412–14), "el Rey debe ser un Argos / en su reino, vigilante" (2. vv. 1415–16). The King prides

himself on his ability to stay abreast of what is happening in the realm, even as he understands that what he hears in open court may only be a partial truth. Although Pedro feels the weight of Leonor's complaint against Gutierre and pledges to right whatever wrongs have been done to her, for example, he nevertheless insists on listening to the other side of the story:

> Oigamos a la otra parte
> disculpas suyas; que es bien
> guardar el segundo oído
> para quien llega después. (1. vv. 685–88)

Pedro understands that he must seek to discern the truth in order to govern well. But knowing and ruling are not the same thing. Ruling is the public performance of authority that happens in the light of day, while the truth often reveals itself only in the shadows. Nowhere is this more evident than in the final scenes of the play, when the King discovers the truth about Mencía's death from the bloodletter Ludovico while making his pre-dawn rounds through the city. The darkness of the hour matches the darkness of the tale the frightened surgeon tells. Having just attended the death of an unknown woman who pleads her innocence as she dies, Ludovico tells the king that he has stained the houses with the woman's blood in the hope that what has been done in the dark of night will be revealed by the light of day. As the dawn breaks ("el día / entre dorados celajes / asoma" (3. vv. 2716–16), Pedro has a chance encounter with Coquín, who tells the king that Gutierre has dismissed the other servants and locked Mencía in her bedroom after having found the letter she was writing asking Enrique not to abandon the court. Responding to Coquín's plea for help, the King decides to take advantage of the early-morning light to slip into Gutierre's house with the excuse that he needs to conceal his identity so that he can see for himself what has transpired. Only then will he be able to discharge his responsibilities as king. When he arrives and sees Ludovico's bloody mark on the door, the King realizes that he has arrived too late. It is not in his power to save Mencía. She is the woman who died moaning "Inocente muero" (3. v. 2688) as Ludovico looked on helplessly; hers is the blood that now marks Gutierre's door. When Pedro finally hears Gutierre describe the death of his beloved wife as a tragic accident, the victim of a bloodletting prescribed by a physician, Pedro can only gaze in amazement at what Gutierre has wrought. Although Gutierre continues to represent to the king that Mencía is as virtuous as she is beautiful ("mi amada esposa, / tan hermosa como casta, / virtuosa como bella" [3. vv. 2826–28]), the King now knows the truth: Gutierre "tomó notable venganza" (3. v. 2875).

Mencía's death may be a tragedy, but it also an opportunity. Now that Gutierre is free to marry, the King can at last fulfill the promise he has made to

Leonor to restore her honor. But when the King exercises his royal prerogative and demands that Gutierre offer his hand in marriage to the woman he has wronged, Gutierre begs for time to mourn his recent loss. Unpersuaded, the King dismisses Gutierre's pleadings with a curt "Esto ha de ser, y basta" (3. v. 2895). When Gutierre protests further, Pedro remains resolute, quickly putting Gutierre in his place by reminding the nobleman that "vuestro Rey lo manda" (3. v. 2899). And when Gutierre continues to demur, protesting that he does not want to remarry only to find his honor impugned once again, the King replies that there is a solution for everything, including a solution of Gutierre's own making: "Sangrarla" (3. v. 2929). Royal authority alone is not enough to force Gutierre to the altar. Only when the King makes it clear that he knows the truth about Mencía's untimely death does Gutierre finally acquiesce and offer his bloody hand in marriage to Leonor.

El médico comes to a close as the king deploys the knowledge he has gained under the cover of night in the service of the power he wields in the light of day. The sun rises with the dawning of an "español Apolo" (3. v. 2053), a sun king very different from the monarch who steps onto the stage in the opening scene of the play. Gone is the tentative and insecure king afraid of what Enrique's fall from his horse portends for the monarchy ("Si las torres de Sevilla / saluda de esa manera, / ¡nunca a Sevilla viniera, / nunca dejara a Castilla!" [1. vv. 5–8]); the Pedro who forces Gutierre's hand in the final scene now wears the crown with a bearing befitting his station. The world of *El médico* revolves around Gutierre. He is the figure at the center of the action, the figure who intersects with every other character in the play. His final submission to royal authority, however, has a larger political dimension. It demonstrates that. in the course of the play, the King has consolidated his power and extended his reach over the Andalusian nobility. Gutierre may be the protagonist, but *El médico de su honra* is the King's play, for in the conflict between honor and power, power wins.

Play as Text

The world of the play organizes itself as a set of interlocking triangles with Gutierre imprisoned in the middle. Caught between Mencía and Leonor on the one hand, and Mencía and Enrique on the other, Gutierre finds himself as a man at the center of the action who lacks the ability to control the events, submitting himself first to the dictates of an honor code that compels him to kill and then to the demands of a king who forces him to marry. But Gutierre is not the only person constrained by circumstances. The specter of prison looms large over the world of *El médico.* If, in the first act the king tries to impose order in the court by sending miscreants to his high dungeon, an invisible space that "appears" on stage only as a bit of dialogue when the king sends Arias and Gutierre away to "dos

torres" (1. v. 990) for having threatened the monarch with their drawn swords, he soon learns that marriage is a more effective form of social control. Whereas Gutierre finds a way to slip out of the king's prison with the help of a friendly jailer, Mencía is not as fortunate. Having married Gutierre at the behest of a father who "atropella / la libertad que hubo en mí: (1. vv. 569–70), Mencía finds herself at the beginning of the play caught between the love she feels for the prince and the duty she owes her husband:

> ¡O quién pudiera dar voces,
> Y romper con el silencio
> cárceles de nieve, donde
> está aprisionado el fuego. (1. vv. 125–28)

Mencía's metaphorical prison becomes all too real as she lies on her deathbed, the locked doors and grilled windows of her bedroom a visible reminder of what her marriage has always been: a jail cell from which there is no escape. After Mencía dies at the hands of an unforgiving warden who turns her bedchamber into a death chamber, the King describes the bloody scene as "símbolo de la desgracia" (3. v. 2879) that, nevertheless, serves as an example for a monarch seeking to consolidate his power. When, in the final scene Pedro seeks to restore order to the monarchy after Mencía's gruesome death, he chooses not to consign Gutierre to the tower from which he would no doubt escape but shackles him with the bonds of marriage, a prison from which the only release is death.

If within the world of the play the prison presents itself as a word, thing, or metaphor used to demonstrate dominance or submission, it takes on a different guise and is used to different effect within the formal structures of the dramatic text. Thomas (1992) reminds us that within the world of the play "the plot is always advancing," adding:

> The feeling of forward motion comes from the dramatist's method of always making the next event more interesting and significant than the last. We are uncomfortable when our interest in the play flags or if there is a feeling of too much repetition. We are not even satisfied to maintain the same level of interest. Forward motion is a fundamental necessity of plot. (133)

The formal, more literary, aspects of a dramatic text, however, need not obey the dictum to move the action forward, even while remaining embedded in a plot that does. Nowhere is this more evident than in *El médico*, where the same scenes that, when played sequentially onstage lead to Gutierre's remarriage and the king's ascendancy, yield different results when related to each other through a pattern of

repetition that leaves the king, not Gutierre, caught within a structural prison that calls into question his ability to govern.

As written, *El médico* is a three-act drama that implicates the king in the domestic life of a vassal. It is not surprising, then, that the action takes place in three different kinds of settings: the formal spaces within the royal palace, the more intimate spaces in and around Mencía and Gutierre's private homes, and the more neutral public spaces of the country road or the city street. The play opens on a public thoroughfare as the royal travelling party makes its way from Castilla to Andalucía and closes on the streets of Sevilla as the king does his pre–dawn rounds through the city. Both the road and the street are communal spaces where events remain subject to public scrutiny and comment. Enrique's fall from his horse in Act 1, for example, is an event witnessed from afar by Mencía, who in turn describes the incident to her maid Jacinta. In Act 3, it is through the traffic of life in the public square, and not through formal inquiries made at court, that the king learns the truth about Mencía's death. It is also in these public spaces where the King forcefully exerts his will, announcing his desire to press on to Sevilla despite his brother's fall, and demanding that Gutierre marry Leonor despite the nobleman's reluctance.

The synergy of knowledge and power the king enjoys in the public square stands in stark contrast to the bearing he has at court in scenes that play out at the end of Act 1 and the beginning of Act 3. Although citizens have the right to come to court to petition the king, the palace's royal spaces are governed by royal protocol. In the space where his authority is most on display, however, he is least able to render decisions. When in Act 1 Leonor asks the king to redress her grievances against Gutierre, for example, Pedro, caught, discreetly balks, saying that he must first listen to Gutierre's side of the story before making a decision. And when Gutierre returns to court on Act 3 with evidence that the prince has pursued his wife, Pedro demurs again, choosing to confront his brother with what he knows rather than condemn him immediately for his actions. Although in both instances blades are drawn in the presence of the King, Pedro responds to these events in very different ways. When in Act 1 Arias and Gutierre draw swords not against the person of the king but against each other, Pedro has them thrown into prison for endangering the life of the monarch. When in Act 3 Enrique cuts his brother's hand with the dagger he had once left in Mencía's bedchamber, the King recognizes the physical threat to his life but does nothing to check Enrique's aggression. Not only does he not imprison Enrique for the more serious offense of drawing the King's blood, but he allows his brother to abandon the court to avoid further confrontation. The Pedro who presides at court is a diminished king, who theatrically projects power when his life is not in immediate danger and fails to act when physically threatened. Tentative and uncertain, the King quickly loses control over the court proceedings, demanding that his brother remain silent, only

to have Enrique assert himself, saying, "Pues, yo, señor, he de hablar" (3. v. 2235). The confrontation with Enrique leaves the King in a weakened state:

> Bañado me vi en mi sangre;
> muerto estuve. ¿Qué infelice
> imaginación me cerca,
> que con espantos horribles
> y con helados temores
> el pecho y el alma oprime? (3. vv. 2285–90)

The Pedro who feels free and in control on the open road finds himself besieged in court by the "espantos horribles" and the "helados temores" that occupy his thoughts and weigh on his soul. His certainty turns to dread as the dagger that serves as proof of Enrique's guilt becomes a harbinger of Pedro's own death. A prisoner of his doubt and fear, Pedro is powerless to impose his will on Enrique. Pedro may be King of Castile, but he is no longer certain of his ability to govern his own house.

Pedro's inability to rein in Enrique's reckless behavior becomes Gutierre's problem in the matching garden scenes that frame Act 2. Enrique's return to Mencía's house under cover of night to pursue his former beloved is an abuse of Gutierre's prerogatives as a husband. When Gutierre returns home unexpectantly, Enrique hides in Mencía's bedchamber and waits for an opportune moment to leave. Mencía frantically announces that there is a man in her room while, at the same, time extinguishing the light to allow Enrique to slip away in the darkness. When Jacinta asks why she has been so bold as to tell the truth, Mencía explains that she has done so in self-defense:

> si yo no se lo dijera
> y Gutierre lo sintiera
> la presunción era clara,
> pues no se desenganara
> de que yo cómplice era;
> y no fue dificultad
> en ocasión tan cruel,
> hacienda del ladrón fiel,
> engañar con la verdad. (2. vv. 1346–54)

Mencía uses truth in the service of deception. In revealing to Gutierre that there is a man in the house, Mencía attempts to immunize herself against the baseless charge that she is to blame for his transgression. Her dissembling is not a falsehood; it is, rather, a lie of omission, a void that fractures the integrity of truth

itself by driving a wedge between truth and knowledge. Gutierre now knows that someone has been in his house, but he does not know who. He will in time fill the gap left by Mencía's silence, but he will never be able to repair the breach: however much Gutierre may glean in his search for knowledge, he will never arrive at the truth of Mencía's innocence.

Once unmoored from truth, knowledge becomes fragmented, partial, and equivocal, subject to misinterpretation and misuse. When, in the last scene of Act 2, Gutierre returns home under cover of darkness to replay the events of the night before to ascertain Mencía's complicity in Enrique's transgression, Mencía once again awakens from her sleep to find a man in her garden. When she asks who it is, Gutierre responds, saying, "Yo soy, mi bien. ¿No me conoces?" to which Mencía replies, "Sí, señor; que no fuera / otro tan atrevido" (2. vv. 1916–18). The misunderstanding that ensues stems from an equivocation based on the meaning of the word "yo," a pronoun whose meaning depends on the identity of the person speaking. Whereas Gutierre uses "yo" to refer to himself, Mencía mistakes Gutierre's "yo" for Enrique's and then proceeds to confirm Gutierre's worst fears:

> El venir no ha extrañado
> el Infante, ni dél se ha recatado
> sino sólo ha sentido
> que en ocasión se ponga, ¡estoy perdido!,
> De que otra vez se esconda.
> ¡Mi venganza a mi agravio corresponda! (2. vv. 1943–48)

Wittingly or unwittingly, both Mencía and Gutierre deceive with the truth but to opposite effect. Gutierre's equivocal use of the word "yo" reveals what Mencía's lie of omission would seek to hide: Mencía is fully aware that Enrique was the man hiding in her bedchamber. Blinded by his certainty, Gutierre will eventually tailor his vengeance to fit the offense. But certainty is no substitute for truth. Gutierre gathers the pertinent facts only to draw the wrong conclusions. Mencía may be complicit in the deception, but she has not dishonored her husband. And therein lies the tragedy.

If the linear movement within the world of the play leads to the consolidation of power and knowledge in the person of the King, the symmetrical arrangement of the paired scenes calls into question the King's ability to rule. The power Pedro wields in open space diminishes as the action moves inside within the walls of the palace, where the King becomes wary and indecisive, unsure how to satisfy Leonor's demands and unable to curb his brother's sexual aggression. Although Pedro disappears completely in the domestic scenes as the action moves from the public life of the court to the private lives of Gutierre and Mencía, what happens within the garden walls has important implications for a King who thinks of

himself as a god, "un Atlante en que descansa / todo el peso de la ley" (1. vv. 675–76). This is the King to whom Leonor has sought redress against Gutierre; but as she stands before the sovereign, her plea extends to a higher realm:

> de parte de mi honor vengo a pediros
> con voces que se anegan en suspiros,
> con suspiros que en lágrimas se anegan,
> justicia: para vos y Dios apelo. (1. vv. 596–99)

Leonor not only appeals to the King; she also appeals to God, but hers is the Christian God, the God whom Pedro represents on Earth. The Pedro who rules Castile is but a pale reflection of the omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent God above. Absent from the domestic scenes that frame Act 2, Pedro remains ignorant of Enrique's sexual aggression toward Mencía, rendering him powerless to safeguard Gutierre's honor. Neither omnipotent nor omniscient, Pedro is an empty shell of the God he purports to represent.

The symmetrical arrangement of the paired scenes (road-palace-garden-garden-palace-road) functions as a kind of vise that presses in on the middle from both ends, thereby funneling our attention toward the very center of the play, where the King appears in a kind of structural prison as he makes his only appearance of Act 2. Here, in the central verses of the play (Cruz 2001, 224), the *gracioso* Coquín tells Pedro a joke intended to elicit the King's laughter:

> Yo vi ayer
> un capón con bigotera.
> ¿No te ríes de pensarle
> curándose sobre sano
> con tan vagamundo parche?
> A esto un epigrama hice:
> . . . .
> 'Floro, casa muy desierta
> la tuya debe de ser,
> porque esto nos da a entender
> la cédula de la Puerta:
> donde no hay carta, ¿hay cubierta?
> ¿cáscara sin fruta? No,
> no pierdas tiempo; que yo,
> esperando los provechos,
> he visto labrar barbechos,
> mas barbideshechos no.' (2. vv. 1463–68; vv. 1674–84)

Numerous critics have noted that Coquín's story makes salient the question of impotence. Floro's attempt to compensate for his lack of sexual potency by wearing a "bigotera" serves only to call attention to the lack he seeks to hide (Cruz 2001; Arellano 1992). But who is the target of Coquín's gibe? Who is the "capón"? Who is impotent? On this the critics disagree. To those who would understand Coquín's joke as a projection of his master, Gutierre (Lottman 2003; Bryans 1982), Angel M. García Gómez (1983) would respond that in the course of the play Coquín "se desliga físicamente de su amo" (1026), becoming first a "hombre de burlas" as court jester to the King before finally emerging as an "hombre de veras," a messenger who tries to warn Pedro about Gutierre's plan to kill Mencía, only to arrive too late to avert her death (Soufas 1982, 207). From the point of view of the play as text, however, the Coquín who tells the joke is both "hombre de burlas" and "hombre de veras," a *gracioso* who uses the story to elicit a laugh while telling the King a hard truth. As Anne J. Cruz (2001) explains in her Lacanian analysis:

> By voicing the signifier *capón* or eunuch, Coquín's joke functions as the mirror of the mirror stage, reflecting the image of the eunuch onto the king, metaphorically castrating him and supplanting the phallus (here the symbol of royal power) with the *bigotera* as signifier. The joke's truth lies in its ironic revelation of the *king's* loss, which the king refuses to hear. (226)

Cruz is right to identify the King as the target of the *gracioso*'s barb. It is the King, not Gutierre, who is present on stage with Coquín. It is the King, not Gutierre, who listens to the joke of the *gracioso*, a joke that calls into question the very virility the King has just put on display by tilting with street ruffians during his evening rounds. What we see in the center of the play, then, is a King who, like the *capón*, projects power he may not have. Pedro quickly reasserts his control over the cheeky *gracioso* with an implicit threat that reminds Coquín of the dangerous bargain he has struck with the King: Coquín will lose all his teeth and probably his life (Lottmann 2003, 90) if he does not make Pedro laugh in the space of a month. And Pedro is not amused, dismissing Coquín's joke with a gruff "Que frialdad" (2. v. 1485), to which Coquín responds, "Pues adios, dientes" (2. v. 1485). Whereas within the world of the play, the King will again regain his footing and assert his royal prerogatives in the final scene, ominous signs that the King lacks the ability to govern begin to loom over the play as text.

The given circumstances of the world of the play and the metaphorical significance of the play as text intersect in the central scene of the *comedia*, where a King who finds himself caught in a structural prison that has stripped him of his power refuses to take seriously the political implications of the *gracioso*'s

seemingly trivial joke about impotence. The Pedro Coquín limns in his story is not the Pedro who struts across the stage. This eunuch-King is a diminished sovereign, who does not belong to the world of the play. He exists only as a bit of dialogue, as a kind of "text as play"—that is, as a joke—that is then inscribed at the heart of the larger play as text. The world of the play and the play as text are different and independent frames of reference. One frame does not subsume the other, nor do they relate to each other as foreground and background; rather, they offer two contradictory perspectives of the King, which, while they cannot be reconciled, nevertheless coexist on the same interpretive plane in the center of the *comedia*. If the Pedro of the world of the play is a fully externalized man of action for whom knowledge is power, as he brings Gutierre to heel in the final scene of *El médico*, the eunuch who stands in for Pedro in the play as text, a man who thinks of himself as something less than a man, reveals a kind of inwardness that the Pedro of the world of the play lacks. Unlike the Pedro of the world of the play, the eunuch is aware that he is projecting power he does not have, that is, he is aware of himself as a fragmented being with knowledge of his own impotence. As a purely textual character, however, this eunuch is doubly impotent, because he is powerless to affect the action on the stage. Unable to affect the course of events and aware of his own fecklessness, Coquín's eunuch offers up an image of kingship that Pedro dare not see.[7]

Reception

Coquín's joke is not the only moment in the play that calls into question the King's power. Pedro is not unaware that his confrontation with Enrique may have political consequences. When Diego informs the King that the prince has left the court, Pedro fears that Enrique has gone to Consuegra to join their brother in a plot against him. Despite Diego's assurances that the brothers pose no threat ("Tus hermanos son, / y es forzoso que te amen / como a hermano, y como a Rey /

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[7] The inherent tension between the King Pedro within the world of the play and the King Pedro within the play as text complicates the characterization of the king on the contemporary stage. In her analysis of Adolfo Marsillach's 1986 mounting of *El médico* with the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico, for example, Susan L. Fischer (2009) notes the discrepancy between Calderón's play and Marsillach's playscript. Where Calderón's text projects strength, Marsillach's play script attenuates the strength found in Calderón's text in order to present a more consistent characterization of King Pedro: "The king's inability to exert authority in his realm was rendered transparent, initially, when the two noblemen Arias and Gutierre illegally and irreverently unsheathed their swords in his presence. Pedro exclaimed, not '¿No tembláis de ver / mi semblante?' (1. 986-87), as in the original, but '¿Es que mi poder / no es bastante a deteneros?'" This was, Fischer comments, "one of the few instances where Calderón's verses were altered, perhaps to depersonalize if not politicize the monarch's weakness, but maybe only to render the text less opaque" (16–17).

te adoren; dos naturales / obediencias son" [3. vv. 2518–22]), the local musicians suggest otherwise:

> Para Consuegra camina
> donde piensa que han de ser
> teatros de mil tragedias
> las montañas de Montiel. (3. vv. 2634–37)

History confirms what the street musicians imply and what Pedro's confrontation with Enrique at court portends: Pedro will die at the hands of his brother in 1369 shortly after they meet on the battlefield of Montiel. Coquín has been right all along: Pedro/Peter is an impotent King whose reign is cut short by a civil war that will leave Pedro/Peter slashed to death in Enrique's quarters and Enrique/Henry King of Castile (López de Córdoba 1997, 294–301; Suárez Fernández 1985, 79).

From the point of view of the world of the play, however, this historical event lies in the future. The Pedro on the stage, the powerful King who confronts his brother and forces Gutierre to marry against his will, has no knowledge of what lies ahead. Such knowledge belongs to another king, one who is himself obliquely evoked in the play in such a way that links him to King Pedro, one who is in a position to recognize the full import of the musician's verses: the seventeenth-century Habsburg King Philip IV.

Although the early performance history of *El médico de su honra* remains somewhat murky, its publication history is not: *El médico* appears in the *Segunda parte de las comedias de Don Pedro Calderón de la Barca* published in 1637, which means that the play had to have been composed sometime before that date. Drawing on the work of G. Cruzada Villaamil, who published a number of documents related to the performance of plays at the early seventeenth-century Habsburg court, J. E. Varey and N. D. Shergold (1961) give a brief account of the early performance history of a play entitled *El médico de su honra.* The documents Cruzada Villaamil brings to light "were, for the most part, extracts from the accounts of the secretary of the Royal Chamber. . . and the plays concerned had all been performed before the King and Queen as private entertainments" (274). Varey and Shergold's analysis of these records reveals that there were two performances of a play entitled *El médico de su honra,* the first taking place on 8 October 1629 and the second occurring six years later on 10 June 1635, although it cannot "be stated definitively that the 1635 performance was of the play by Calderón" since the first could have been a play attributed to Lope de Vega, of which Calderón's version was a *refundición* (281). In the introduction to his edition of the play, D.W. Cruickshank (1987) cautiously suggests that that second performance "podría haber sido la versión de Calderón" (11), while C. A. Jones (1961) is more definitive, averring that "Calderón's *El*

médico de su honra was first presented at the Royal Palace by the company of José Martínez de los Ríos on 26 August 1635" (ix). Given the documentary evidence, we can say that it is possible if not probable that Calderón's *El médico de su honra* was put on at court in the summer of 1635, and that King Philip IV and his wife Queen Elizabeth were in attendance. But even if this conjecture were to prove incorrect, we do know that by the mid–1630s Calderón enjoyed such success at court that the king had begun the process of initiating him into the Order of Santiago in 1637 (Cruickshank 10). Even if his *El médico de su honra* had not been presented at court, and even if the king and queen had not seen it, Calderón could have at least anticipated that this play, like so many others of his works, would have found royal favor.

There is some textual evidence to suggest that Calderón was writing *El médico* with Philip in mind. When Leonor appears before the King to seek redress for the wrong Gutierre has done to her, for example, she addresses the monarch, saying, "Pedro, a quien llama el mundo Justiciero, / planeta soberano de Castilla" (1. vv. 609–610). Both of the epithets Leonor uses have historical resonance. To Peter's traditional epithet as "Justiciero," Leonor adds "planeta soberano," which serves to identify Pedro with King Philip IV. Known as "el rey planeta," Philip was the "Sun King," the sun being the fourth planet in the traditional Ptolemaic system, "whose very presence was sufficient to restore light and harmony to a world of darkness and confusion" (Elliott 1986, 177). In her address to King Pedro, then, Leonor establishes a link between the King-on-stage and the king-in-the-audience, whose point of view constitutes yet another frame of reference from which to understand the play, one that exists independently of but on the same interpretive plane as the world of the play and the play as text.

Philip's point of view would have been conditioned as much by his own circumstances as by his historical knowledge of the medieval King Peter. As J. H. Elliott and Jonathan Brown (1980) explain, *El rey planeta* is both Philip's identity and a projection of that identity onto the world stage. Such a king needed a palace befitting his exalted station. And so he built one. Between 1629 and 1635 his *privado* Olivares oversaw the construction of the Palacio del Buen Retiro, complete with the Salón de Reinos or Hall of Realms, that housed the coat of arms of all 24 of the Monarchy's realms, portraits of the king and his family, canvases depicting triumphant battle scenes, and a series of paintings of Hercules, the mythical forebear of the Habsburg kings. It was a room where the greatness of the Monarchy was on full display (Brown and Elliott 31–54).

Philip's projection of power was just that: a projection. Although historians may disagree about the extent to which the seventeenth-century Spanish Monarchy was in complete decline, it is clear, at least for some, that, as Diego says at the beginning of *El médico,* "nada nos está bien" (1. vv. 35). Ongoing conflicts with the Dutch and the French, coupled with military loses on land and

sea, marked the beginning of the end of Spain as a European power. Things were no better on the home front. Not only did rebellions in Catalonia and Portugal threaten the political unity of the peninsula (Kamen 2003, 381–437), but conflict in Europe led to financial crises at home as the periodic shipments of gold and silver from Peru and Mexico eventually made their way into northern Europe by way of the foreign bankers (Kamen 293) who extended the credit Spain used to finance its wars and carry on its trade. The bullion disappeared almost before it arrived. "As the precious metals and colonial produce made their way to the peninsula, they became prey to systemic fraud. Since those who really controlled the economy were outsiders, it was to them that the bullion and profits went rather than to Spain" (Kamen 296). The bullionism that financed the Monarchy's global reach did not and could not lead to the kind of capital investment necessary for significant economic growth, with the result that by "the end of the seventeenth century, after two hundred years of imperialism, in nominal control of the human and natural resources of dominions in America and the western Pacific, Spain, like its imperial neighbor Portugal was an underdeveloped, stagnant area of western Europe" (Stein and Stein 2003, 3).

The credit needed to keep the Monarchy afloat was in many ways psychologically and epistemologically destabilizing. The profligate use of credit did more than allow the king to spend now and pay later. It undermined the foundation of sovereignty itself. Elvira Vilches (2010) for example, has argued that the "minting of coins was both a symbol and the real source of the monarch's sovereignty. The golden *ducados* (and, after 1537, *escudos*) embodied the affirmation of such power, which confirmed that there was an undeniable link between royal authority, purchasing power, and metallic substance. Gold represented immanent and everlasting value, as well as truth" (227). Once minted and stamped with the *escudo* or coat of arms of the monarchy, gold and silver became a medium of exchange that simultaneously represented the king as the guarantor of value. Credit, however, ceded control of the economy to foreign creditors, thus undermining the power and authority of the king and placing value on unstable footing. This new economy, argues Vilches, "created the most advantageous opportunities for profit and the swift accumulation of wealth. It also created keen anxiety, because people confronted a wave of conceptual and social change that they perceived as confusing, threatening, and unrelenting" (Vilches 31). What Vilches calls anxiety, Antonio Maravall (1975) calls "un estado de inquietud," a state of disquiet "que en muchos casos cabe calificar como angustiada—y, por lo tanto de inestabilidad" (96). It was an "estado de inquietud" that was as much psychological as it was political, social, or economic.

The tension between the *rey planeta*'s public projection of the wealth and power of the Spanish Crown, and the underlying sense of decadence and decline within the Monarchy, was not lost on everyone. The *arbitristas,* those often-

maligned proponents of economic and social reform, tried to offer solutions to what they saw as the weaknesses of the imperial project. *Arbitristas* like González de Cellorigo and Pedro Fernández de Navarrete "took on the guise of curing a sick patient, advising on the appropriate action to take to ensure a full recovery" (Rawlings 2012, 34). As early as 1625, for example, Fernández de Navarrete (1792) identifies an abundance of wealth poorly disbursed and unwisely distributed as the cause of the kingdom's economic ills:

> toca á los próvidos consejeros el tomarle el pulso, el conocer las enfermedades, el exâminar y averiguar las causas de las que se origináron, para aplicar los remedios contrarios, proporcionándolos con las fuerzas y robustez del enfermo, como en esta occasion lo hizo el real consejo de Castilla, que habiendo con particular atencion mirado y conocido los accidentes de que va enfermando el reyno, ha propuesto al enfermo que mire por sí, porque la enfermedad es gravísima, pero no incurable, como el doliente se reduzca a dieta: porque como la mayor parte de las enfermedades de los reynos ha tenido origen de la abundancia y de las riquizas mal gastadas, y peor disipadas, es forzoso que habiéndose de curar con sus contrarios, se les recete la templanza y frugalidad. (408–9)

Fernández de Navarrete's prescription for the economy found some sympathetic ears at court, at least in the early years of Philip IV's reign. The impulse to reform was strong in the 1620s. Olivares in particular sought "to bring some order to the royal finances—a task made all the more necessary by the sharp increase in military and naval expenditure that followed on the resumption of the war with the Dutch. Financial austerity was now the order of the day" (Brown and Elliott 1980, 17). But the fiscal restraint that Olivares sought to implement would also have implications for his desire to put the power and the wealth of the Spanish Monarchy on public display. As Elliott (1986) explains, "The need for economy, which was generally recognized, ran directly counter to the traditional conception that liberality was an integral part of kingship. . . . Could economy and austerity be made compatible with majesty? It was a dilemma that Olivares would never succeed in resolving" (113). Nor would Philip.

We can hear a distant echo of Fernández de Navarrete's words in *El médico de su honra*, for if the *arbitrista* advocates for a diet of temperance and frugality to cure his patient, Gutierre recommends a diet of silence to cure his. "Yo os he de curar, honor" (2. vv. 1665), says Gutierre in his soliloquy, adding, "y así os receta y ordena / el médico de su honra / primeramente la dieta / del silencio" (2. vv. 1672–75). Gutierre, however, does not relish his role as physician of his honor. He would prefer to be the loving husband to a wife he considers his sun. To Mencía's accusation that Gutierre still harbors feeling for Leonor, for example,

Gutierre defends himself, saying:

> Ayer, como al sol no vía,
> hermosa me parecía
> la luna; mas hoy, que adoro
> al sol, ni dudo ni ignoro
> lo que hay de la noche al día. (1. vv. 520–23)

Yes, Gutierre tells Mencía, he once loved Leonor; but she was merely a moon who could not compete with the beauty of Mencía's sun, a trite metaphor that returns in Gutierre's soliloquy as the nobleman rehearses in his own mind the events leading up to his discovery of Enrique's dagger in Mencía's bedchamber. Having found evidence of Mencía's innocence, Gutierre puts an end to his ruminations, finally concluding that "Mencía es quien es, / y soy quien soy; no hay quien pueda / borrar de tanto esplendor / la hermosura y la pureza" (2. vv. 1649–52). But Gutierre's joy quickly turns to alarm as his metaphorical reasoning takes an ominous turn away from proper meaning that leads him to draw the opposite and wrong conclusion: "Pero sí puede, mal digo: / que al sol una nube negra / si no le mancha, le turba, / si no le eclipsa, le hiela (2. vv. 1653–56). The sun is no longer the guarantor of truth or value for Gutierre. It, too, can be besmirched.

If Philip IV had attended a court performance of Calderón's *El médico de su honra* in the summer of 1635, he would have seen a king on stage projecting power the play as text suggests he does not have. Because Philip knew what would befall the historical King Peter, however, he had knowledge those within the world of the play could not have had. This was a dramatic irony that would have afforded the royal audience the opportunity to draw the conclusion that King Pedro's reign within *El médico* had no future. It was nothing more than a hollow shell, or, as Coquín in his joke puts it, a "casa. . . desierta" (2. v. 1475), a "cáscara sin fruta" (2. v. 1480). But it could also not have escaped Philip's attention that Leonor's invocation of King Pedro both as "Justiciero" and as "planeta soberano" linked his monarchy to that of his medieval forebear, which would leave Philip—and us—to wonder if the Habsburg king was going to share Peter's fate. Political and financial storm clouds were threatening to besmirch the splendor that *el rey planeta* sought to project onto the world stage. By 1635, Spain had suffered one crisis after another: it was constantly in debt; it was losing its position as a European power; and it was facing political unrest in Catalonia and Portugal. Meanwhile, plans for the construction, decoration, and furnishing of the Buen Retiro Palace, a royal residence designed to promote Philip's reputation at home and abroad, proceeded apace. What Philip would have seen as he watched *El médico de su honra* on the stage was the hubris of a preening but impotent

medieval Castilian king theatrically projecting power he might not have. What he would have seen was an image of himself.

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A Cubist reading that allows multiple perspectives of *El médico de su honra* to exist simultaneously on the same interpretive plane seeks not to elide the inconsistencies and incongruities within the play but to make them visible. *El médico* is not an act of mimesis. It is not a mirror. It does not reflect a unitary vision of kingship. It is, rather, a fractured play in which the world of the play and the play as text, two frames of reference with equal claims to truth, reveal themselves as the central antagonists of the *comedia*. The tension between these two frames does not have a resolution. King Pedro is at once powerful and powerless; he seeks the truth and refuses to listen. The spectator, be that spectator the seventeenth-century King Philip IV or the twenty-first-century critic, must understand the play as what the Cubist critic Apollinaire (1970) calls an "art of conception"(17), through which "the artwork. . . becomes the equivalent of the concrete object, not its imitation" (Genova 2003, 56). The spectator must understand *El médico* as the aesthetic equivalent of royal authority, the "touch of the real" to which Greenblatt's New Historicism aspired. But because this "touch of the real" is itself a critical act of creation available neither to the page nor to the stage—not to the eye but to the intellect—*El médico* requires a Cubist reading, one that will bring to the surface an understanding of royal authority as fractured as the play itself.

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