


IMÁGENES.
ENCRUCIJADAS INTERDISCIPLINARES

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ENCRUCIJADAS INTERDISCIPLINARES

MARÍA ELVIRA MOCHOLÍ MARTÍNEZ
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UNIVERSITAT DE VALÈNCIA

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PRESENTACIÓN

LA INTERDISCIPLINARIEDAD EN EL ESTUDIO DE LA IMAGEN

La Iconología pretende una aproximación a la historia cultural desde el estudio de la imagen. Para tal propósito es necesario dominar y poner en relación una amplia variedad de disciplinas, como ya hiciera Panofsky, entre las que habitualmente destacan la historia, la literatura o la teología. Sin embargo, la interdisciplinariedad no se limita necesariamente al ámbito humanístico.

Por otro lado, pese al tiempo transcurrido desde los trabajos panofskyanos, no siempre se ha logrado una integración real entre la Historia del Arte, encargada del estudio de la imagen y a la que se han sumado los Estudios de Cultura Visual, y el resto de disciplinas. Entendida, en ocasiones, como una imposición metodológica, a menudo, la interacción interdisciplinar se ha resuelto de manera superficial. Y, en ningún caso, debe entenderse como producto de un pluralismo disciplinar.

La interdisciplinariedad se opone, por tanto, a otras categorías relacionales, como la multidisciplinariedad, en la que dos o más disciplinas cooperan, pero sin llegar a integrarse metodológicamente. Por el contrario, el objetivo de este volumen es promover una auténtica interrelación entre disciplinas para el estudio de la imagen. Concretamente, proponemos una aproximación, tanto al significado de esta como a su función cultural en diferentes contextos, desde perspectivas innovadoras.

Precedidos por la aportación de Hilaire Kallendorf, «Icons of Virtue: Women in the Literary and Artistic Imagery of Early Modernity», y ante la vastedad de las materias tratadas, el resto de trabajos se han agrupado en cinco ejes temáticos, en los que la imagen vertebrará la construcción de los distintos discursos (histórico, político, ideológico, arqueológico, etc.) propuestos en cada uno de ellos. En primer lugar, «Imagen y palabra» comprende los trabajos que interpretan la imagen desde la Filosofía, la Psicología, la Religión o la Perspectiva de género, entre otras disciplinas.

Seguidamente, «Imagen y pensamiento» establece una relación similar entre la imagen y la Literatura, incluyendo los textos escritos en las propias obras; pero también entre la imagen y disciplinas como la Paleografía o la Epigrafía. Todo ello en ámbitos tan dispares como la hagiografía y la liturgia cristiana, o la cultura maya. En tercer lugar, el eje temático «Imagen, música y espectáculo» comprende aquellos trabajos en los que la imagen solo puede entenderse en estrecha relación con disciplinas de carácter performativo, como la Música, la Danza, el Cine, pero también la Publicidad, la Televisión o los Videojuegos.

A continuación, la sección dedicada a «Imagen y cultura material» reúne trabajos en los que el estudio de la imagen se lleva a cabo en relación con la Arqueología

o, incluso, con el apoyo de las nuevas tecnologías. Para terminar, en el apartado «Imagen y naturaleza» encontramos estudios en los que una profunda comprensión de las disciplinas asociadas al mundo vegetal y animal, como la Botánica, la Zoología o el Paisajismo, han permitido llevar a cabo interpretaciones más meticulosas del significado de la imagen.

En definitiva, pese a la amplitud temática de los trabajos presentados en este volumen, así como la diversa procedencia de sus autoras y autores, tanto nacional como internacional, todos ellos tienen en común la necesidad de superar los sesgos formalistas de la Historia del arte para ofrecer una ajustada interpretación de las obras o imágenes que son objeto de su estudio.

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1

LA INTERDISCIPLINARIEDAD
EN EL ESTUDIO DE LA IMAGEN

ICONS OF VIRTUE: WOMEN IN THE LITERARY AND ARTISTIC IMAGERY OF EARLY MODERNITY¹

HILAIRE KALLENDORF
Texas A&M University

Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up tyme, supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness or manur'd with industry—why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills (Shakespeare, 1974: I.iii.320–26).

This passage from Shakespeare's *Othello* is remarkable for several reasons, not least of which is the fact that it is spoken by the evil Iago (hardly a go-to guy for moral advice). Another is the relatively unusual deployment of the word *gender*, derived from the Latin word *genus*, which can refer generically, as it were, to type. The word's modern definition places it squarely in the realm of sexuality, as we know, and I would submit that the bard's use of the term here is far from innocent. In fact, as Renaissance botanists understood (Dubler, 1955: 284), plants do exhibit certain traits which are still now being categorized as *gender* (Vyskot and Hobza, 2004) —fascinatingly enough, these include both «sexual strategies» (Lloyd, 1980) and the ability to change sexual identification (Borges, 1998). Needless to say, knowledge of these botanical qualities proved exceedingly useful to a pharmacist or *boticario* as he mixed drugs or antidotes for male versus female patients. Whether or not we accept categories like gender as relevant today (Butler, 1999; Butler, 1993), we would do well not to neglect them entirely as we attempt to account for early modern mindsets.

Plants and herbal antidotes were gendered in the Renaissance, and so was Virtue. The very notion of Virtue itself was connected etymologically to masculinity and men (Weiden Boyd, 1987: 193).⁷ The root of the noun *Virtud* in Spanish, derived from the Latin *Virtus*, was of course *vir*, or man (the source also for the Spanish word *varón*) (López de Mesa, 1960: 444). This web of associations goes back at least as far as ancient Rome, where Virtues were qualities attributed exclusively to male emperors in the process of their deification as gods (Mattingly, 1937: 111). In the words of Cicero,

and yet, perhaps, though all right-minded states are called virtue, the term is not appropriate to all virtues, but all have got the name from the single virtue which was found to outshine the rest, for it is from the word for «man» that the word virtue is derived; but man's peculiar virtue is fortitude, of which there are two main functions, namely scorn of death and scorn of pain (Cicero, 1927: 194–95).

Here Cicero confirms the gender-specific etymology of the word *Virtue* and mentions Fortitude as man's particular province. Thus, we see that in the classical period, the Virtues

1. Parts of this chapter appeared earlier in different form, and without the images included here, in Kallendorf H. [2017]. *Ambiguous Antidotes: Virtue as Vaccine for Vice in Early Modern Spain*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press.

as such were, by definition, exclusively male attributes, and that the Spanish word *Virtud* bears within it the Derridian trace (Kallendorf, 2007: 39) of this genealogy.

At first glance, Spanish Golden Age *comedias* would seem to echo this assignation of Virtue to the masculine realm, as when Diego flatters the Marqués don Fadrique in Alarcón's *Ganar amigos* with the words, «*os contemplo de prudencia, de nobleza, de justicia y fortaleza muro fuerte, y vivo*» (Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, *Ganar amigos*, Acto 2).² Virtue is equated with valor, from which women are excluded, as when Pompeyo protests: «*Pero estaba confiado de tu virtud, ni sabía, que en tanto valor cabía pensamiento afeminado*» (Lope de Vega, *La mayor victoria*, Jornada 3). Instead, women are depicted as weak and sinful:

*si del corazón del hombre
fueran las mujeres hechas,
o que tuvieran, don Juan,
de virtud y fortaleza:
son flacas, son temerosas,
que si tuvieran más fuerza
nos dieran mil azotes*
(Lope de Vega, *Pobreza no es vileza*, Acto 3).

This humorous forecast by the *gracioso* Panduro (whose name means *hard bread*) predicts that if women were stronger, they would give men 1,000 lashes with a whip. In like fashion, Calderón de la Barca takes a typically misogynistic stance in his character Tristán's approval of the mission to «*enseñar a las Mujeres tres Virtudes tan excelsas, callar, dar, y no tomar*» (Calderón, *Dicha, y desdicha del nombre*, Jornada 2). Case closed, apparently... or perhaps not.

On several occasions, theatrical characters –and their authors– are willing to acknowledge exceptions to the rule, both for women more generally and for Spanish women in particular. As Elisio says to Silvio in the pastoral mode in an eclogue appearing as part of the prefatory matter to Lope's *El Amor enamorado*, «*La virtud, y el valor de las mujeres conozco*», although he concludes with the disclaimer, «*si Porcias, si Lucrecias me refieres*» (Lope de Vega, *El Amor enamorado*, preliminaries to 1637 edition). Portia was Cato's daughter, the wife of Caesar's assassin Brutus [fig. 1];³ as a rape victim who failed to fend off her assailant, Lucretia's exemplarity in the realm of Chastity was considered problematic at best [fig. 2]. Tirso de Molina's *La prudencia en la mujer*, the title of which

2. All play references are to Teatro Español del Siglo de Oro (TESO), a digitalized database of 800 *comedias* distributed by ProQuest and available to university libraries by subscription.

3. Once again in Portia we find an ambiguous figure who became synonymous with Virtue in the Renaissance, whether she actually merited this distinction. Juan Luis Vives holds her up for Spanish women as a model, but modern commentators are left guessing as to why or why not: «Portia (or Porcia) was the daughter of Marcus Porcius Cato [95–46 BCE]. In 45, she married Brutus, who headed the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44. In the Renaissance, she had become the type of marital love, loyalty, and chastity. Perhaps 'the wisdom' Vives refers to... which Portia has gathered from her father, is his love of and dedication to republican values, the same values her husband was also believed to have espoused. Her status as a virtuous woman in the Renaissance is somewhat complicated by her suicide, with accounts holding both that she killed herself after and before Brutus's death» (Loughlin et. al., 2012: 102, n. 8).



Fig. 1. Pierre Mignard (1612-1695) or Guido Reni, *Le Suicide de Porcia* (17th century). Rennes, Museum of Fine Arts, Inv 1794.2.1 (public domain).

is already illustrative of the fact that women could possess this Virtue, contains a line that is partial to Spanish women in this regard: «*hay mujeres en España con valor, y con prudencia*» (Tirso de Molina, *La prudencia en la mujer*, Jornada 3). Here Spanish women are specifically linked to the Virtues of Prudence and Fortitude. Some characters and/or their creators are even willing to leave room for lots of exceptions to the general rule that women are not virtuous: «*No ofendiendo la virtud, de tantas mujeres buenas, de que están mil casas llenas*» (Lope de Vega, *El sembrar en buena tierra*, Acto 1). Here 1,000 houses are judged to be full of virtuous women... perhaps a counterpoint to the same playwright's 1,000 whip lashes from before? Although we should note that all these thousand virtuous women are pictured sitting at home, not out in the street... We may infer that their proper place is the domestic sphere.



Fig. 2. Felice Ficherelli, *The Rape of Lucretia* (late 1630s). London, The Wallace Collection (Art Resource).



Fig. 3. Francisco de Zurbarán, *Saint Jerome in the Company of Saint Paula and Saint Eustoquia*, (ca. 1640-1650). Washington, D. C., National Gallery of Art (public domain).

When feminine Virtue is acknowledged in these plays, men seem surprised to find it. As saint Jerome exclaims in Lope de Vega's hagiographical biopic *El cardenal de Belén*, «o soberano Dios, ¡que en las mujeres haya tanto valor, virtud tan grande!» (Lope de Vega, *El cardenal de Belén*, Acto 3). These lines are spoken about the godly women saints Paula and Eustoquia, with whom Jerome is pictured in a contemporaneous painting by Francisco de Zurbarán [fig. 3]. Jerome's words are unusual because they attribute to women the quality of valor or bravery, a Virtue often reserved for men, except in cases of the *mujer varonil*.

Normally praise of women is limited to more «feminine» Virtues like Chastity, as in the proposition, «Si está la virtud en ser doncella, casta, y hermosa» (Lope de Vega, *El bobo del colegio*, Acto 1). Note the prominent place given here to the state of being a *doncella*, or virgin, as well as physically beautiful (*hermosa*). Other Virtues, such as pity

or mercy, are also attributed more to women in contrast to men, as when Lope's Don Carlos urges Blanca in *La locura por la honra*, «no te alteres, que es la piedad en efecto, propia virtud de mujeres» (Lope de Vega, *La locura por la honra*, Acto 1). He tells her not to show weakness by crying, indicating also that some Virtues are «proper» to women (Jordan, 1990: 8). Women are deemed virtuous in their role as matrons —«las muchas matronas que por su virtud se alaban» (Lope de Vega, *El ejemplo de casadas y prueba de la paciencia*, Acto 3)—, this coming from Lope de Vega's *El ejemplo de casadas*. For young girls, Virtue may be used to catch a husband («Bien se casa la mujer a fama de su virtud» [Lope de Vega, *La mal casada*, Acto 1]); but notice that ironically, this line appears in Lope's *La mal casada*.

Once a woman is married, her Virtue may be used to enhance her husband's prestige, for a wife «con virtud y discreción es corona en el varón» (Lope de Vega, *El ejemplo de casadas y prueba de la paciencia*, Acto 3). This line comes once again from Lope de Vega's *El ejemplo de casadas y prueba de la paciencia*, a play about a peasant girl named Lucinda who marries Count Enrico, only to have him put her to a cruel test (the *prueba* of the play's title). She suffers a series of humiliations, including separation from her spouse and even her children's death, all ostensibly designed to prove her loyalty as a wife. The play shows not so much a woman's Virtue as her husband's Vice.

Which leads us to an interesting question: are there other instances in the plays which seem to indicate that women might actually be *more* virtuous than men? In Lope de Vega's

El mejor mozo de España the Duke of Nájera declares, «*Cuando en la virtud aprueban, son portento y maravilla las mujeres, Caballeros*» (Lope de Vega, *El mejor mozo de España*, Acto 1). Now admittedly, this could be a backhanded compliment: the implication is that women are so infrequently virtuous that when it actually happens, the result is a portent and a marvel. But the same playwright has one of his male characters, Nuño, note that both Virtue and Vice were routinely depicted in iconographical sources as female: «*Con nombre, y forma de mujer pintaron el vicio y la virtud antiguamente*» (Lope de Vega, *Con su pan se lo coma*, Acto 1). In the case of Virtue, such depictions go all the way back to the classical period, when Virtus was a female goddess with her own cult:

The goddess Virtus was worshipped by the Romans from the earliest times and the cult is referred to in Cicero's *De Natura Deorum*; in the first centuries of the Christian era this concept underwent a gradual metamorphosis. The goddess Virtus appears in the *De Nuptiis* of Martianus Capella where she advises Mercury to marry (Muir, 1966: 266).

The goddess Virtus appeared on the coins issued to commemorate many of the Roman emperors (Mattingly, 1937: 111-12). She later graced the Virginia four-dollar note issued by the U. S. Continental Congress in 1776 and is still emblazoned on Virginia's state flag.

But Lope de Vega does not limit his allowance for feminine Virtue to goddesses only. Citing Ovid's *Heroides*, he recalls actual flesh-and-blood women deemed illustrious by the ancients for their Virtue and wisdom: «*Heroídas llamaban los antiguos a las mujeres ilustres por virtud, y entendimiento*» (Lope de Vega, *De cosario a cosario*, preliminaries to 1624 edition). Ironically, in Ovid's text these women are arguably not exemplary at all; his epistolary genre centers around the trope of famous women sending letters to their absent lovers. But as Marina Brownlee explains, medieval exegetes performed a tour-de-force of transformative ethical interpretation on this text, with the result being that somehow these wayward women became paragons of Virtue:

If Ovid programmatically dismantles the exemplary, paradigmatic function that had initially accorded his heroines their legendary status by showing them to be all too humanly vulnerable, the Middle Ages effected a reversal of this hermeneutical procedure. [...] Wishing to leave nothing to chance, medieval exegetes make explicit what for them constitutes the extradiegetic, ethical exemplarity of the *Heroides*.

She goes on to examine the moralizing reception of Ovid's *Heroides* in Spain, noting that King Alfonso el Sabio was in large part responsible for Ovid's heroines' ethical recuperation here:

Alfonso looks to the same heroines as objective «proofs», universal examples of his extraliterary (decidedly imperial) public values. In so doing, he seeks, in effect, to return the legendary women to the heroic, external, public world of male values from which Ovid had liberated them (Scordilis Brownlee, 1990: 9-10).

Were early modern Spanish women deemed worthy heirs to this imagined tradition? At very least, such references tell us that in the minds of these dramatists, Virtue is possible (theoretically) for women.

It is true that in early modern Spanish stage plays we do not find many defenses of women that would go to the opposite extreme of privileging women's Virtue over men's.

This absence forms a contrast to such over-the-top Renaissance defenses of women as Galeazzo Flavio Capra's *Della eccellenza e dignità delle donne* (1525), written in Italy a little over a century earlier. For Capra, feminine Virtue is greater than the masculine variety, «*per esser le donne de più privilegi e virtù dotate*» (Capra, 1988: 106). But then again, this is the same guy for whom sex positions have moral connotations:

Per ragion dil luoco dicevano ancora l'uomo essere più degno, perciò che la donna è sottoposta e l'uomo sta sopra in luoco più nobile. Ma chi con diritto occhio riguarda, conoscerà che la donna negli ultimi diletti d'amore sta in luoco più nobile giacendo supina e con gli occhi al cielo, a guisa che debbono far gli animali dotati di ragione e l'uomo stassi come fanno le bestie col volto e con gli occhi verso la terra (Capra, 1988: 107).

With this bizarre assignment of moral superiority to the supine (eyes facing heaven) versus the missionary position for sexual intercourse (eyes facing the earth), he takes the traditional *querelle des femmes* to new depths of absurdity. If women must be defended this way, I dare say many of us would rather stay defenseless.

To sum up, then, early modern Spanish *comedias* and *autos sacramentales* do not offer any unified consensus on the question, «Is Virtue available to women?» largely because said Virtue is a myth. That is the overwhelming impression we receive from numerous references to the Virtues in Spanish Renaissance stage plays. The creative recycling of cultural capital from Biblical, legendary, and classical/pagan mythological sources is illustrative of the heterogeneous grab-bag which morality had ironically become in a society often characterized as dogmatic and hierarchical. The resulting ambiguity provides a strong undercurrent of subversion which contradicts the supposedly unified, coherent orthodox message we were taught to anticipate from a theatrical tradition which allegedly served as a propagandistic arm of the state.

This is a suitably ambiguous answer for a particularly thorny problem, given all we know about Spain's legendary *machismo*. The dramas do seem to offer some limited defenses of women, but they often restrict words of praise to classical figures or conventional *topoi* such as the *mujer varonil*. A notable exception to this rule is the hagiographical play, in which saintly women are praised to the heavens, and dramatists do not hesitate to pull out all the stops. Another sphere where women are more unequivocally praised is the domestic arena; particularly when, as in Lope de Vega's *Ejemplo de casadas*, the female character serves as a foil to point out the foibles of a man. Let us now examine a specific Virtue, namely Chastity, with which women have traditionally been most associated.

In its most basic definition, Chastity in Renaissance Spain was equated to virginity, as we see from the title of Pedro Galindo's *Excelencias de la castidad y virginidad* (1681) (Galindo, 1681). Going back at least as far as Spain's medieval period, Chastity was defined in negative terms as the lack of sexual activity: «*Es abstinencia de vil llogamiento / la tal castedad*» (Juan de Mena, *Laberinto de Fortuna*, 1444) (Mena, 1997: 139). Perpetual virgins are described in a play by Lope as never seeing marriage, thus deserving the palm leaf—a symbol of Chastity—as well as a seat with the angels in heaven, who were believed not to be sexual beings.⁴ In fact, virginity is identified so closely with Chastity in many

4. «*que las vírgenes no más, aquellas que el casamiento no vieron, y que la palma de castidad merecieron, con los Ángeles tendrían aquel purísimo asiento*» (Lope de Vega, *El capellán de la Virgen*, Acto 1). Angels' supposed lack of sexuality was tied to their lack of a need to reproduce themselves.

Renaissance Spanish dramas that it actually takes Chastity's place in discussions on stage of the Virtues; for example, in Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla's *Los trabajos de Tobías* we find the lines, «*El recato es un remedo de la virtud más perfecta, pues es la virginidad: y si en Dios caber pudiera una virtud, que sea más que esas otras virtudes; ésta más preeminente virtud que esas otras virtudes fuera*» (Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, *Los trabajos de Tobías*, Jornada 1). This author is not willing to acknowledge that all Virtues are not equal, but hypothetically claims that if there were a hierarchy, virginity would come out on top. This seeming obsession with sexuality, or avoidance of same, is telling in its refusal to contemplate fulfillment of desire.

Why was this Virtue, perhaps more than others, perceived as so urgently necessary? Chastity was needed in large doses to quench the raging fires of Lust (Kallendorf, 2013: 74-94). In Calderón's sacramental drama *El año santo de Roma*, the allegorical figure of Chastity declares it her mission to eradicate Lust: «*Porque aqieste es mi Oficio, que siendo la Castidad, es mi mortal Enemigo la Lascivia*». In this same play the figures of Chastity and Honor together drag Lust across the stage.⁵ In similar fashion, in the same playwright's *El año santo en Madrid*, Chastity is said to extinguish the fires of Lust: «*a la Pureza la Lascivia ofrece luego, por la Castidad, que es quien siempre apagó sus incendios, el Estandarte*» (Calderón de la Barca, *El año santo en Madrid*, auto sacramental). This scene alludes to outright war, replete with battle flags, in the very best *bellum virtutum et vitiorum* tradition (as we see from a drawing in an early manuscript of Prudentius' *Psychomachia* in which the female warrior-figure Chastity impales Lust with a sword). This trope is repeated in numerous other plays by this same author, for example:

la Castidad, que es la suma
Pureza, que vence a un tiempo,
para los Triunfos del Alma,
los Rebeliones del Cuerpo
(Calderón de la Barca, *Sueños hay, que verdad son*, auto sacramental).

The body is a mutinous faction whose rebellion must be brutally suppressed.

Not surprisingly, given the apparent gendering of this Virtue, most of the exemplary figures mentioned in relation to it are female. In addition to the Virgin Mary, one of the biblical figures mentioned is Asenath, wife of the Old Testament patriarch Joseph: «*Asenét, que es de Castidad ejemplo*» (Calderón de la Barca, *Sueños hay, que verdad son*, auto sacramental). Noble and well-educated, daughter to a priest of the Egyptian sun god Ra, the historical Asenath later gave birth to Manasseh and Ephraim [fig. 4]. Her marriage to Joseph was arranged by the Pharaoh to reward Joseph for interpreting his dreams. There is no biblical evidence of her being particularly chaste or unchaste (indeed, she is portrayed as sexy on one modern novel cover); rather, any association of her with this Virtue based exclusively on Scripture would seem to stem from an implied contrast with Potiphar's wife, who had previously attempted to seduce Joseph, thereby landing him in jail. Presumably this comparison could have been constructed to show that not all Egyptian women were lascivious. If we look at other ancient sources, however, namely the apocryphal *Joseph and Aseneth*, we find a prehistory of her life before marrying Joseph (*Joseph & Aseneth*, 1984).

5. «*Ábrese el primer Carro, y se ve la Castidad, y el Honor arrastrando a la Lascivia*» (Calderón de la Barca, *El año santo de Roma*, auto sacramental).



Fig. 4. Rembrandt Harmensz van Rijn, *Jacob Blessing Ephraim and Manasseh* (1656). Kassel, Schloss Wilhelmshöhe, GK 249 (Art Resource).



Fig. 5. Titian, *Diana and Actaeon* (1556-1569). National Galleries of Scotland, NG 2839 (Art Resource).

In this text, Asenath is a virgin who rejects many other potential bridegrooms before finally agreeing to marry a Hebrew. Her instinct toward Chastity even within her native pagan culture enhances her qualifications to become the mother of two of the twelve future tribes of Israel. In Calderón's auto *Sueños hay, que verdad son* she has become so completely identified with this Virtue that the allegorical figure of Chastity appears to Joseph in a dream, assuming the human form of Asenath. Joseph confirms this identification by pronouncing to her the words of the play's title: «*Sueños hay, que verdad son*».

In addition to biblical characters, figures from classical Roman mythology also make their appearance. The foremost of these is Diana («*Diana, Diosa de la castidad*» [Juan de la Cueva, *El Infamador*, preliminaries to 1588 edition]), a virgin goddess who swore she would never marry. Ironically, she became the patroness of hunters after transforming the hunter Actaeon into a stag and setting his own hunting dogs to kill him. She did this because he saw her bathing naked in the forest [fig. 5]. Such a fierce defense of Chastity could only selectively inspire emulation. Another figure from Roman legendary history who is

mentioned frequently in these plays in the context of Chastity is Lucretia (as in «*la castidad de Lucretia*» [Lope de Vega, *El perro del hortelano*, Acto 2]). These references portray Lucretia and women like her as scornful of men, such as «*en castidad Lucretia, que como a gusarapa te desprecia*» (Tirso de Molina, *Quien no cae no se levanta*, Acto 2). The Real Academia Española defines *gusarapa* as a water worm: «*animalejo, en forma de gusano, que se cría en un líquido*» (*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*, <<http://buscon.rae.es>> 2/10/2022). Not exactly a compliment to a man! What happened to Lucretia to make her hate men so much? While there are many variants on the legend, most versions agree on the basic facts of her

situation: she was a married Roman matron raped by prince Sextus Tarquinius who then committed suicide by stabbing herself with a dagger rather than live with dishonor. Her bloody corpse was paraded through the Roman Forum around the year 510 B. C., thereby inciting a revolt against Rome's tyrannical king, Sextus' father, and heralding the birth of the Republic. But do women have to be raped and commit suicide to demonstrate their Chastity (Jed, 1989)? This exemplary figure seems highly ambiguous in terms of potential life applications by Golden Age Spanish women.

Lucretia's name is repeated in one of Lope de Vega's many plays about gender and Virtue, *Virtud, pobreza y mujer*, this time in the company of two other women of renown: «*su casta fortaleza Sulpicia, Lucrecia, y Drias*» (Lope de Vega, *Virtud, pobreza y mujer*, Acto 3). Note here the conflation with the Cardinal Virtue of Fortitude. The interesting thing to notice about this characterization is that there are two possible Sulpicias to which this line could refer, and neither of them was especially chaste. Lope here almost certainly makes reference to a Roman woman by the name of Sulpicia who lived during the reign of the Emperor Domitian. She was married to a Roman man, Calenus. Some very sparse verses of poetry attributed to her describe the joys of erotic love within the context of marriage. While it is clear she was not promiscuous, her explicit description of naked lovemaking is difficult to square with received notions of Chastity. The other possible attribution is even more problematic. The other Roman poet Sulpicia lived under Emperor Augustus and penned a half-dozen elegiac poems to her lover Cerinthus. At least one classics scholar, Thomas Hubbard, believes that the poems' content is too risqué to have come from the pen of a high-born Roman woman (Hubbard, 2004). The third classical figure mentioned by Lope in conjunction with Lucretia, namely Drias (alternatively spelled Dryas; could she be an ancestor of the dryads?), according to Greek mythology was the daughter of Faunus and a sister of Acis. She hated men so much that she never even appeared in public. This legendary woman and her behavior seem to fit better with an extreme paradigm for Chastity such as the one promoted by the stereotype of the *mujer esquiva* (McKendrick, 1972).

Some further exemplary figures mentioned in the *comedias* in connection with Chastity stem from Arabic sources as well as Anglo-Saxon history. Antonio says of the female titular character in Lope de Vega's *El mayordomo de la duquesa de Amalfi*, «*en castidad ha igualado / A Zenobia, y a Etelfrida*» (Lope de Vega, *El mayordomo de la duquesa de Amalfi*, Acto 2). In the 3rd century A.D. Zenobia was queen of Palmyra in Syria before leading a revolt against the Roman Empire. Perhaps the original *mujer varonil*, whom we have already met in the context of Fortitude, she led her soldiers personally into battle and even at one point conquered Egypt. She was famous for her Chastity until her marriage to Septimius Odaenathus, King of Palmyra, who was later assassinated. She herself was eventually taken hostage by the Roman general Aurelian, who paraded her through Rome wearing chains made of gold. From there her fate is unknown, although at least some sources place her in Rome as the result of a second marriage to a high-born Roman, perhaps a senator or even a governor. Thus, the reference to her in the context of Chastity only makes sense in terms of her earlier life as an unassailable warrior queen.

Once again, Lope seems to pair a problematic example of Chastity with a more logical one, perhaps hoping that his audience will somehow take an average of the two. According to Antonio de Yepes' *Corónica general de la Orden de San Benito* (1609), Etelfrida was a saintly Anglo-Saxon nun of the 7th century, daughter of King Osubio of Northumbria and sister of Elfreda, who became an abbess of the monastery of Santa Hilda. Princess Etelfrida

herself lived in another monastery, this one run by an abbess named Congilda, whose holy life she imitated (Yepes, 1609: 367v). This exemplary figure, for a change, at least seems to have practiced the Virtue she was designated to exemplify.

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Still further examples of Chastity in the *comedias* are derived from the courtly love tradition (Bayliss, 2008), beginning with one of its foremost practitioners, Francesco Petrarca. Specific reference is made by Lope de Vega to Petrarch's allegorical *Trionfo della Pudicizia* (1351-1374), the protagonist of which is his elusive beloved, Laura: «*el Petrarca, en los triunfos que escribió de la castidad*» (Lope de Vega, *La necedad del discreto*, Jornada 2). This example is potentially ambiguous because in this text, although it is often interpreted as a straightforward paean to modesty, Laura leads illustrious women of legend such as Dido (mistress of Virgil's Aeneas) to take a ride in the chariot of Love. They end up at the Temple of Modesty, it is true; but taking a ride in Love's chariot would seem to lead them in the wrong direction, at least so far as Chastity is concerned. Further examples derive from the world of chivalric romance. In Lope de Vega's afore-mentioned *Virtud, pobreza y mujer* we hear the following exchange in reference to Ludovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*:

HIPÓLITO: *Valdrá en Sevilla mi hacienda
sin las naves que la India
navegan, y que Dios vuelva
cien mil ducados y más.*

DON JUAN: *Pues conquistaréis con ellas
a los bárbaros de Chile,
y no a la casta Isabela.
Que aunque se llama Isabel,
porque Ariosto celebra
una casta de este nombre,
de quien mil virtudes cuenta,
la llama Toledo así*
(Lope de Vega, *Virtud, pobreza y mujer*, Acto 1).

The tragic heroine Isabella who appears in Ariosto's text is a thinly disguised allusion to none other than the historical noblewoman Isabella d'Este, who was one of his patrons at the courts of Ferrara and Mantua [fig. 6]. As her characterization has been interpreted by modern scholars, Ariosto calls her «chaste» in an attempt to flatter her and secure further patronage (Regan, 2005: 51). Her namesake Isabel (or Isabela) in Lope's play lives up to her name because money cannot persuade her to give in to men's advances. But considering the fact that money was exactly what Ariosto wanted when he penned his praise of Isabella d'Este, at least through modern lenses, this example too becomes problematic.

Another Italian noblewoman mentioned in the *comedias* in the context of Chastity is Grimalda: «*Gentil es Grimalda, pues con tal noble guirnalda de castidad la cubris*» (Lope de Vega, *El Genovés liberal*, Acto 3). Wordplay aside (*Grimalda/guirnalda*), this line is probably a reference to Benedettina Grimaldi, a patroness of the Ospedale di Pammatone in Genoa that personally nursed patients there who were suffering from the plague and leprosy. She may or may not have been chaste, but she certainly was generous; here we see a conflation of the Virtue of Chastity with the Virtue of Charity, typical of the collapsing together of «distinct» Virtues which we have seen in other instances.



Fig. 6. Peter Paul Rubens, *Isabella d'Este* (ca. 1605, copy of Titian's lost *Isabella in Red* [1529]). Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, GG_1534 (Art Resource).

with Lust: he ventures the judgement, «*Mejor es la castidad, que el matrimonio*» but tempers this idea with the acknowledgement that Chastity –however preferable– is not mandated for all believers: «*el matrimonio es bueno, y permitido, porque su contrario la castidad, que es mejor, no es mandado*» (Calderón de la Barca, *Agradecer y no amar*, preliminaries to 1682 edition). This line echoes 1 Co 7,8–9:

But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to be burnt.

This dictate from Scripture would seem to breach no argument. But a small percentage of Catholic Christians through the centuries have interpreted things differently, choosing instead to give up voluntarily all sexual contact. Some early examples of these unusual individuals have been examined by Peter Brown in *The Body and Society*, a study of permanent sexual renunciation (continence, celibacy, and life-long virginity) among both men and women in Christian circles from around 50 A.D. to 430 A.D. The most fascinating part of Brown's book is its discussion of male attitudes toward sexuality and how, in one ancient mindset, Chastity could equal virility for a man, not its polar opposite:

A powerful «fantasy of the loss of vital spirit» lay at the root of many late classical attitudes to the male body. It is one of the many notions that gave male continence a firm foothold in the folk wisdom of the world in which Christian celibacy would soon be preached. The most virile man was the man who kept most of his vital spirit –the one, that is, who lost little or no seed (Brown, 1988: 19).

As multifarious as these historical and legendary examples are, they all have one thing in common: the exemplary figures mentioned in the context of Chastity in the *comedias* are primarily women. Chastity was not typical for men on the *comedia* stage; and when they were chaste, they seemed to worry that their Chastity could be confused with lack of virile potency. As King Alfonso declares in Lope de Vega's *Las famosas asturianas*: «*maguer que Casto me llaman. Que el Casto fue por virtud, no porque el brío me falta*» (Lope de Vega, *Las famosas asturianas*, Acto 3). He seems obsessed with clarifying that for him, Chastity was a choice, not a default setting. Even playwrights such as Calderón de la Barca who advocate Chastity for men are forced to concede, in line with saint Paul, that men have a stronger sex drive and thus it is better for them to marry than to burn

Stemming, according to Brown, from the voluntarily castrated Origen's «peculiarly majestic ideal of virginity» (Brown, 1988: xiv), this iteration of Chastity as a Virtue paradoxically also came to mean fear of becoming sexually depleted through too much sexual activity. In this «complex and resilient ecology of moral notions», writes Professor Brown, «[i]t was never enough to be male: a man had to strive to remain 'virile'» (Brown, 1988: xvi, 11). He clarifies regarding the typical Roman man that «scenes of battle and the submission of barbarians represented his *virtus*» (Brown, 1988: 16). This conflation of two of the Virtues at a deeper level—namely Fortitude with Chastity—shows just how inextricably notions of Virtue were intertwined. Eventually they became muddled up until they were impossible to separate or see as distinct entities.

It turns out that in Spanish literature also, Chastity is a virtue for men too. Juan de Mena devotes the entirety of stanza LXXXIII to this point in his *Laberinto de Fortuna* (1444):

*Aprendan los grandes bevir castamente,
non vençan en viçios los brutos salvajes,
en vilipendio de muchos linages,
viles deleites non viçien la gente.
Mas los que presumen del mundo presente
fuiçgan de donde los dapños renascen;
si lindos cobdiçian ser fechos, abraçen
la vida más casta con la continente* (Mena, 1997: 139).

Here a medieval Spanish author seems to uphold Chastity as a higher Virtue to which truly great men, *los grandes*, may aspire. He opposes the exercise of this Virtue to the behavior of brute beasts («*brutos salvajes*») who damage that most precious commodity of pure family lineage («*En vilipendio de muchos linages*»). Note here that the ever-present fear of miscegenation, which we acknowledge to be a hallmark of early modern Spanish culture, haunts this as well as other texts, lurking never very far in the background (Grieve, 2009: 11).

It may surprise some readers to discover that these complex attitudes toward male sexuality are carried over, likewise, to the Renaissance Spanish stage. Among male examples for Chastity appears saint Joseph, husband to the Virgin Mary, who says to her in Juan Bautista Diamante's zarzuela *El nacimiento de Cristo*: «*no, Esposa, olvidaré mi amor por mi castidad, vive con seguridad*» (Juan Bautista Diamante, *El nacimiento de Cristo*, zarzuela, Acto 1). Here he promises her that because of his Chastity, she will not have to worry about him making sexual advances. This was an interpretation of the nature of Mary and Joseph's marriage which ultimately derived from saint Jerome:

Christian understanding of the relationship between Joseph and Mary had undergone a dramatic development since the second and third centuries. Some early writers of the church, such as Tertullian, had argued that Mary and Joseph had had normal sexual relations after the birth of Jesus, bringing forth the brothers of Jesus—namely James, Joseph, Simon, and Judas (cf. Matt. 13,55 and Mark 6,3). [...] Jerome, however, dismissed these claims and defended Mary's perpetual virginity. Once having done so, however, he was compelled to consider the nature of the relationship Mary and Joseph enjoyed. Could they be seen as married partners if they never had consummated a union? [...] Jerome sees Joseph as Mary's companion and protector more than her husband, and he seems to hold that Joseph could have left Mary at any time in order to marry another woman. [...] Nevertheless, Joseph chose Mary, loved her, and preserved along with her his perpetual virginity in a union that forms an analogy to Christ's union with the church (Resnick, 2000: 354)

In «Marriage in Medieval Culture: Consent Theory and the Case of Joseph and Mary», Irvén Resnick has shown how the Holy Family's chaste marriage [fig. 7] became a paradigm for medieval couples, some of whom self-consciously chose to imitate Joseph's renunciation of what would have been the normal sexual hierarchy (Resnick, 2000).

As we might expect, decisions in favor of Chastity on the part of male or female figures in these plays usually appear as the result of a solemn religious vow. In Agustín Moreto's hagiographical drama *Santa Rosa del Perú*, the titular character predictably declares, «Yo en fin, dedicar a Dios mi castidad he resuelto» (Agustín Moreto, *Santa Rosa del Perú*, Jornada 1). The Virgin Mary makes it clear that in her case, she takes this vow on a purely voluntary basis: «que debo hacer por mí misma, siendo yo la que castidad voté, apeteciendo el morir con la palma del nacer» (Guillén de Castro, *El mejor esposo*, Jornada 1). Here she equates Chastity with a kind of death, or at least the death of her natural desires as a red-blooded woman. Nonetheless, it is a death which whets her appetite.

It seems important for characters who take this vow to clear up for their audience any possible confusion regarding their actions; while permanent Chastity may not technically be required of all good Christians, it exists as an option reserved for the select few who choose to accept this lifelong challenge. As the High Priest explains of ancient Hebrew culture, «el permanente estado de Castidad, nunca ha sido en nosotros recibido, ni en nuestra costumbre» (Guillén de Castro, *El mejor esposo*, Jornada 1). This line comes from Guillén de Castro's *El mejor esposo*, another play about Jesus' stepfather Joseph [fig. 8], who allegedly maintained the sanctity of Mary's womb while she carried the Christ Child by not indulging in sexual relations with her. Mary defends their choice: «el hacer voto de



Fig. 7. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Holy Family with a Bird* (ca. 1650). Madrid, Museo del Prado (public domain).



Fig. 8. Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *Saint Joseph and the Christ Child* (ca. 1670-75). Moscow, Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts (Art Resource).

castidad, no es romper los fueros de la costumbre» (Guillén de Castro, *El mejor esposo*, Jornada 1). In other words, both halves of this couple are aware that their decisions are unorthodox, to the point of running counter to prevailing cultural norms; but as Mary's divinely selected husband, Joseph too is being held to a higher standard. We can see in this choice of subject matter a fascination on the part of Renaissance Spanish playwrights with extreme or liminal cases which scholars have consistently highlighted as characteristic of Baroque Manneristic hyperbole (Del Río Parra, 2008: 40).

It may come as a further surprise to some readers that vows of Chastity were taken even by both spouses within a marriage, and not just in the extreme case of the Holy Family. We find this scenario in Lope de Vega's *Los locos por el cielo* in the line «*[l]a castidad ya jurada por el voto de los dos»* (Lope de Vega, *Los locos por el cielo*, Acto 1). This example is consummately ambiguous in the sense that the very title of the play calls these saintly figures crazy.

Sometimes in practice marital celibacy meant both spouses would retire to a convent. This is what happens with a saintly couple in Calderón de la Barca's *El purgatorio de San Patricio*. Their son describes his parents:

*Mis piadosos padres, luego
que pagaron esta deuda
común, que el hombre casado
debió a la naturaleza,
se retiraron a dos Conventos, donde en pureza
de castidad conservaron
su vida, hasta la postrera
línea fatal, que rindieron
con mil Católicas muestras
el espíritu a los cielos,
y el cadáver a la tierra
(Calderón de la Barca, *El purgatorio de San Patricio*, Acto 1).*

Here we see a formerly married couple –living separately in twin convents, no less–preserving their mutual vow of Chastity until they die.

But an even more surprising example of Chastity within marriage occurs when both spouses pledge to remain celibate while living together outside of a convent, although they are technically still married. This medieval practice has been studied for Germany by Claudia Bornholdt in *Saintly Spouses: Chaste Marriage in Sacred and Secular Narrative from Medieval Germany (12th and 13th Centuries)*, an examination of select very extreme cases of saints who agreed to remain celibate within marriage because they considered all sexuality to be sinful (Bornholdt, 2012). Spanish Renaissance plays make it clear that this kind of Chastity is not so high up as monastic celibacy in the hierarchy of Virtues. As saint Rose of Peru declares, «*La castidad conjugal es virtud de menos precio que la virginal»*. This line rather bluntly places a comparative price on Virtue. At this, a different character objects: «*Eso niego, que siempre es más consumada virtud la del casamiento»* (Agustín Moreto, *Santa Rosa del Perú*, Jornada 1). Here the dramatist Agustín Moreto plays humorously even in a serious drama upon the word *consumada*, which can mean both *consummate* and *consummated*.

Perhaps the classic case of Chastity within marriage occurs somewhat involuntarily and in a way that is only temporary in the apocryphal Old Testament story of Tobias and Sarah. In this tale, the beautiful Sarah marries several men in rapid succession, all of whom die

before the marriage can be consummated. After praying to God for a merciful death, finally she marries Tobias the younger (his father also bears the same name) and they decide to wait strategically for three nights before attempting to consummate their union. They spend those three nights in prayer. In Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla's version of the Tobias story from the Catholic Bible, the demon Asmodeo appears to Tobias and thunders the reproach, «[¿]Cómo de la castidad violaste el templo?» (Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, *Los trabajos de Tobías*, Jornada 3). (Here we should note that the discourse of the Virtues is available for appropriation even by demons). Following some advice from the archangel Raphael, Tobias is able to perform an exorcism of sorts and rid his poor bride of the demonic presence which had killed all seven previous husbands [fig. 9]. This temporary, strategic Chastity within marriage is the kind alluded to by Lope de Vega in his own version of this legend, *La Historia de Tobías*, in which he refers to the «limpieza matrimonial en los dos Tobías» (Lope de Vega, *La Historia de Tobías*, preliminaries to 1621 edition). Somehow or other –as often happens with legends– the exaggerated, larger-than-life qualities of their heroes multiply and expand to fill the space available, so that now Tobias the elder is also connected to Chastity within marriage. There seems to be no basis for this association in the Catholic Bible. But the book of Tobias offers some general words regarding Chastity and motivation for sexual union within marriage that generations of Catholics have taken to heart and even read aloud at wedding ceremonies. The angel Raphael speaks to Tobias:



Fig. 9. Jan Steen, *The Wedding Night of Tobias and Sarah* (ca. 1660). The Hague, Bredius Museum, Inv.nr. 112a-1946, Cat. nr. 155 (Bridgeman Art Library).

Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding: over them the devil hath power (Tob 6,16-17).

This passage may well have given rise to early modern Spanish confessors' apparent fixation on sex positions and the «sinfulness» of marital pleasure (Escobar y Mendoza, 1650: 177). This apocryphal text –considered to be canonical by early modern Catholics, and still accepted as Holy Writ by the Catholic Church today– clearly identifies procreation as the only acceptable goal of sex within marriage. As Tobias says to his young new wife Sarah, «for these three nights we are joined to God. [...] For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God». In his prayer he then specifies an acceptable motivation for sex: «And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which Thy name may be blessed for ever and ever» (Tob 8,4-5 and 9). From this text was derived

a curious idea so often repeated in Renaissance confessional manuals, namely that the Deadly Sin of Lust within marriage was still sinful (Kallendorf, 2013: 81).

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Was this an impossible standard? Did Chastity «work» as it was conceived in early modern Spanish culture and portrayed upon the early modern Spanish stage? I would argue that it did not, and that in true proto-Derridean form, the presence of Chastity was most notable in early modern Spanish culture by its absence. Countless lines from *comedias* reiterate this cynical view of Virtue, as in «*se rindió a la hermosura, que no hay castidad segura en santos que comen bien*» (Juan Pérez de Montalbán, *Los templarios*, Jornada 2). Here a man gives in to Lust, inspired by a woman's beauty, and Chastity is proven to be uncertain without monastic austerity to serve as a suitable framework. It is interesting to note here the conflation of Lust with Gluttony, and on the flip side Chastity with Temperance, as saints who eat well are pictured as giving in to other bodily pleasures too.

In these plays, Chastity is literally dispensable. For the sake of convenience, even a vow of Chastity can be nullified with a papal dispensation, as in Tirso de Molina's *Marta la piadosa*:

DOÑA MARTA: ¿Y el voto de castidad?

CAPITÁN URBINA: Con una dispensación, pues fue simple tu afición

(Tirso de Molina, *Marta la piadosa*, Acto 2).

Here the mere «simplicity» of a girl's state of mind when she made her vow can argue in favor of her breaking it later. Of course, Marta is not really so pious as Tirso's facetious title would at first make her sound. Even a priestly male playwright such as Tirso de Molina had to admit the inverisimilitude of asking women to be chaste right up until the point when they were married, then brazen sluts in the bedroom after the wedding in order to please their spouses: «*en todo el mundo celebrada por Vesta en castidad cuando doncella, ¿lasciva Venus es, cuando casada? Mil imposibilidades tiene [...]*» (Tirso de Molina, *La república al revés*, Acto 2). Here he invokes the Vestal virgins, ancient guardians of the domestic hearth goddess Vesta's shrine, in contrast to lascivious Venus, goddess of love.

On the rare occasions when Chastity does work, it is called rare, as in «*Estimo por cosa rara su defensa, y castidad*» (Lope de Vega, *El mejor alcalde, el rey*, Acto 3). A chaste woman is ambivalently described as a rose surrounded by thorns (Lope de Vega, *Mirad a quién alabáis*, Acto 2). In other words, Chastity protects a woman from grabbing hands, but it also inflicts wounds upon herself as well as her lover. Even when Chastity appears in full force, it can be expended more like social capital than an actual Virtue, as when a woman says, «*tú verás como le doy con mi castidad castigo*» (Lope de Vega, *El Amor enamorado*, Jornada 3). Here she cleverly plays upon the alliterative word pair *castidad/castigo* and uses (false) Chastity like a weapon to punish her would-be suitor.

Although Chastity may not always be subverted for other purposes, but instead exercised occasionally in good faith, doubts will still linger as to its authenticity. One thing is reputation, the other the reality: «*Mas esta castidad que maravilla consiste más que en conservar la fama*» (Lope de Vega, *El Perseo*, Acto 2). A person's Chastity is likened in these plays to the purity of gold, which (particularly in the age of alchemy) could allegedly be faked or fabricated from baser metals (Nummedal, 2004): «*y oro un metal que tanto puede dudar de la castidad y de la sangre que tiene*» (Lope de Vega, *El Perseo*, Acto 1). Upon further inspection, this Virtue might only be skin-deep, as in «*por dar a mi castidad estos esmaltes famosos*» (Lope de Vega, *Los prados de León*, Acto 2).

The tantalizing vestiges of ambiguity surrounding it lead to a discourse in which some kinds of Chastity are deemed «good» and others «bad». In Lope de Vega's *La vengadora de las mujeres*, we read that women should not imitate Dido, not because she was unchaste in her love affair with Aeneas, but because she committed suicide: «*Dido quiso matarse, por guardar su castidad, que no la gozase nadie*» (Lope de Vega, *La vengadora de las mujeres*, Acto 1). Lope shows an awareness of the multiple ambiguities surrounding the legend of Dido⁶ in the next few lines by presenting an alternative version of these same events: «*luego hay hombre que diga, / que se mató por vengarse / de los agravios de Eneas, / con quien fue huésped a fácil*». In another of Lope's plays, women are told implicitly, «Don't be like Dido»: in the playwright's words, «*no sea su castidad la de Elisa*»⁷ (Lope de Vega, *El perseguido*, Jornada 2). Why not? Is it because in Virgil's version, she was not so chaste, after all? Or because in either of the two main possible variants of her story, this «Virtue» only led to heartache and death?

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the inherent dramatic appeal, these dramas are full of «chaste» heroines who prefer death to dishonor. As Teodosia says in Juan de la Cueva's *Tragedia del príncipe tirano*, «*yo moriré en la firmeza, que debo a mi castidad*». She reiterates later,

*Sabrás, Rey excelente, que intentando
tu hijo hacer ofensa a mi marido,
mi honesta y pura castidad robando,
quise antes que ver mi honor perdido,
que a mis manos muriese el monstruo infando*
(Juan de la Cueva, *Tragedia del príncipe tirano*, Acto 4).

The situation here is one of murder, but with mitigating circumstances: the tyrannical prince of the play's title has first buried her husband alive and then had her sent to his bedroom where he means to violate her Chastity. In revenge, she murders him with her own hands. In this case it is the would-be rapist who dies instead of his victim; but even so, blood is shed at the altar of Chastity.

Almost any way you cut it, this Virtue requires human sacrifice. We hear in the chivalric legend of the enchantress Alcina, derived from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and repeated in Calderón de la Barca's sacramental drama *El pastor fido*, that a nymph who was wrongfully

*convencida de adulterio,
a muerte fue condenada,*

6. There was much confusion among late medieval and early Renaissance writers about whether Dido had been chaste or not. Giovanni Boccaccio apparently changed his mind about her legacy as a result of his contact with Francesco Petrarca. In his writings subsequent to this contact, the myth of a chaste Dido prevails. The alternative tradition of a chaste Dido, constructed in counterpoint to Virgil's poetic version in the *Aeneid* of a lascivious one, was rooted in an account by the ancient historian Justinus:

The alternative tradition of the historical Dido, however, gave Boccaccio an even better way to bring his criticism of the Dido story into line with the principles of epideictic criticism. By rejecting Virgil's account in favor of that found in Justinus and the *veteres historiographi*, as he does in *De claris mulieribus*... Boccaccio can put forth the image of a chaste and constant Dido, an image that is clearly worthy of praise and that he clearly prefers (Kallendorf, 1989: 73).

On the reception of the Dido myths in Spain, see Lida de Malkiel, 1974.

7. Elisa was another name for Dido.

*sacrificada en el Templo
de la Castidad, a no
dar Víctima humana, en precio
del Rescate de su Vida*
(Calderón de la Barca, *El pastor fido*, auto sacramental).



Fig. 10. Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Ruggiero Rescuing Angelica*. Paris, Louvre Museum, inv. 5419 (public domain).

In Ariosto's version, Alcina also takes captive a Saracen named Ruggiero [fig. 10], who then must be freed from her magical island. More innocent victims are slaughtered on Chastity's altar.

But allegorical and mythical treatments aside, the real victims on the early modern Spanish stage are wives legally murdered by their husbands on merely the suspicion that they might have been unfaithful. Matthew Stroud urges caution when it comes to interpreting the many Golden Age theatrical representations of uxoricide, or wife-murder, as indicative of real-life events:

Archival research into the historical accuracy and legal validity of the wife-murder plots reveals both that there were occasional cases in which a husband killed his wife or had her killed, and that there were laws that allowed a man to defend the sanctity of his marriage by violence, at least under certain conditions. It is also true, however, that the actual number of cases of wife murder was very small (Stroud, 2014: 93).

But even if we take such salubrious caveats into account, we are still left with at least 31 plays (Stroud, 1990) depicting wife-murder as (at very minimum) a cultural fantasy too prevalent to be ignored.

Given the bloody massacre these plays collectively represent, how could Chastity ever succeed? The plays and their packaging seem to indicate that some exemplary figures did succeed in this mission, at least according to the way Dido is praised in the prefatory matter to Lope de Vega's *Las almenas de Toro*:

*Fenisa Dido, que en el mar Sidonio
las rocas excediste conquistada,
y en limpia castidad, jamás violada,
conservaste la fe del matrimonio*
(Lope de Vega, *Las almenas de Toro*, preliminaries to 1620 edition).

But these words cannot fail to sound ironic, coming from the pen of Lope de Vega, that notoriously promiscuous womanizer whose series of affairs has been dramatized most recently in the historical fiction film *Lope* (Bayliss, 2015). And in fact, if we read further,

we discover that El Fénix was playing with us all along: his tongue-in-cheek «praise» of Dido was only meant to poke fun at her lack of Chastity. Referring to Guillén de Castro's play about her, *Dido y Eneas*, he offers the following sarcastic jibe:

*Que más gana tu fama con su pluma,
que pierde en ser burlada tu firmeza*
(Lope de Vega, *Las almenas de Toro*, preliminaries to 1620 edition).

One wonders how he would have felt about being the butt of such jokes.

Are we witnessing the famous double standard here, in which certain norms of morality were unevenly applied to women as opposed to men (Thomas, 1959: 106)? Or is this a case of *un aprovechado sin vergüenza*, a man who flaunted shamelessly the very moral standards he (as a priest, no less! [Ford, 1910]) was charged to uphold?

The double standard was a recognizable problem within Renaissance Spanish culture. For the real trouble with Chastity as a Virtue was that (whether this behavior was warranted or not) real-life wives were constantly being scrutinized by their husbands. In terms posed by Michel Foucault, in the Panopticon that was early modern Spain, women were the object of almost perpetual *surveillance*, including internalized forms of self-vigilance which operated even more effectively in the shadows than the (also-present) more bluntly obvious methods of control (Foucault, 1995). In *Perfect Wives, Other Women: Adultery and Inquisition in Early Modern Spain*, Georgina Dopico Black has offered the most persuasive account in recent years of the plight of women misogynistically assumed to be teetering on the brink of moral catastrophe (Dopico Black, 2001). It should not surprise us too much to find the men who accuse them populating these dramas. For example, in Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla's ominously-titled *La traición busca el castigo*, a husband says, «*juéz de mi causa misma, examino las virtudes de mi esposa*» (Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla, *La traición busca el castigo*, Jornada 1). Virtue here becomes an object for examination, where the language of the courtroom is specifically invoked to show the husband paradoxically acting as the judge of his own lawsuit. In similar fashion, Guillén de Castro's drama *El curioso impertinente*, fashioned after the model of Cervantes' intercalated tale by the same name, contains a preliminary assessment of the wife's faithfulness: «*Es en el mundo un retrato de la misma castidad, un Sol de la honestidad, y un ejemplo del recato*» (Guillén de Castro, *El curioso impertinente*, Acto 1). But we all know how that story ends: the curious man of the title puts his wife's Chastity to the test by asking his best friend to woo her and see if he gets anywhere. In the play, as in the novel from which it is derived, the wife's Chastity is not so infallible/unspotted as her husband thinks. He commits suicide upon discovering his error in judgement, realizing that he alone is to blame for leading her into temptation.

In historical fact as opposed to the theater's artificially constructed laboratory for the study of moral behavior, the litmus test is whether a wife will remain faithful in her husband's absence. This concept, as explored in Lope de Vega's *La viuda casada y doncella*, was known as «*castidad en ausencia*» (Lope de Vega, *La viuda casada y doncella*, Acto 3). Allyson Poska has studied actual Inquisition trials of women accused of bigamy because they remarried after waiting a certain amount of time past the point when their husbands had disappeared (Poska, 1998). If they happened to be the wives of soldiers or conquistadores, these abandoned women were considered –by their communities, at least– to be widows after a certain amount of time. But if their husbands surfaced later, whether released from

jail, returned from a battle front, or suddenly reappearing after making a fortune in the «New» World, then these women could be charged formally with crimes ranging from bigamy to adultery. The ironically-named Lucrecia worries over this danger in Lope's *Los Porceles de Murcia*: «no diga mi esposo ausente, que fui adúltera, y me maten» (Lope de Vega, *Los Porceles de Murcia*, Acto 2).

An extension of this Chastity *in absentia* theme would be the widow's comportment after her husband's death. Several *comedias* allude to the societal expectation that widows will behave chastely, as when the Countess claims in Tirso de Molina's *El castigo del penséque*, «en la constancia imito a la viuda de Sicheo,⁸ en fortaleza la igualo» (Tirso de Molina, *El castigo del penséque*, Acto 1). Note here once again the conflation of Chastity with Fortitude. The source of a woman's strength is said unequivocally to be her husband's love, as in «da el amor del marido a la mujer fortaleza» (Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, *Los favores del mundo*, Acto 3). With alliterative splendor, one female character rather humorously claims that she is so strong, she has actually become a mountain of asperity: «con las nueve efes de Francisca, fe, fineza, firmeza, y fortaleza, soy toda junta un monte de aspereza» (Lope de Vega, *La esclava de su galán*, Jornada 2). She can perhaps be forgiven for poking fun mildly at her society's unattainable expectations for her.

By way of conclusion, let us focus our attention on an image which can also be admitted as evidence, given that it is a cultural artifact not too distant in terms of either time or place from the stage plays we have been studying. The image in question is a sculpture, namely Antonio Corradini's allegorical statue of Pudicizia, or Modesty, in the Sansevero Chapel of what was historically the Spanish kingdom of Naples (at the time of the sculpture's creation, 1751, Naples was no longer part of Aragon and the Spanish Empire but instead a sovereign state operating under a branch of the Spanish Bourbon monarchical dynasty). This image is an arrestingly sensual depiction of a woman who is supposed to be a figure of Modesty, but definitely isn't. A gauzy veil clinging to her firm, upright nipples—for she is very clearly experiencing a heightened state of arousal—this woman holds a garland of roses draped seductively across her pelvis. Her slightly parted lips and barely slanted eyes communicate a «come hither» message rather than its opposite. If this is modesty, I would hate to see wanton abandon!

It may be argued that this late Baroque flowering of moral ambiguity in the visual arts serves as a suitable counterpoint to the multiple instances of indeterminacy, not to mention downright confusion, we have seen in this chapter regarding the specific Virtue of Chastity. Virtue itself may be a myth. But like any myth, it has a history, particularly in terms of the reception of classical and biblical precursors. Renaissance Spain looked to its past for models, but sometimes did not recycle its collective cultural capital in all the traditional ways we might expect. It did not perform Chastity (or any other Virtue) as simply or uncomplicatedly as we had perhaps anticipated. The resulting dramatic tradition presents a unique synthesis of myth and history, culture, and literature, old and new.

We would do well here to recall Constance Jordan's assessment of how even texts which allegedly offer defenses of women prove contradictory:

Despite the polemical nature of the debate on women, many texts cannot be characterized as simply for or against women. Treatises ostensibly defending women are

8. The widow of Sicheus is another reference to Dido.

sometimes ambiguous because their intention is in fact twofold and to a degree contradictory. They are designed both to praise and to blame women, to allow them a dignified and honored place in society while at the same time demonstrating that this place is beneath that of men, and to make attractive to women their (new) role as social subordinates by stressing its basis in divine and natural law. In a more general way, this literature is intended to guarantee that the authority of men is unquestioned by anticipating and coming to terms with certain kinds of disaffection among both men and women. It attempts to make acceptable the traditional (and probably reemphasized) subordination of women, both by extolling the virtues required by household government (likening them to the civic virtues needed by men) and by severely circumscribing the actual activities in which these virtues are to be brought into play (Jordan, 1990: 18-19).

The evidence we have gleaned from early modern dramatic texts in Spain both affirms Jordan's conclusions and extends them into even farther-flung cartographies of gender and virtue.

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