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**The lovers of Verona in Lope de Vega and Shakespeare:
Problems in comparison**

Badendyck, Cynthia Rodriguez, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1990

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THE LOVERS OF VERONA IN LOPE DE VEGA AND SHAKESPEARE:
PROBLEMS IN COMPARISON

by

Cynthia Rodriguez Badendyck

A dissertation submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Comparative
Literature in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1990

c 1990

Cynthia Rodriguez Badendyck

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Comparative Literature in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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May 1, 1990
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The City University of New York

Acknowledgements

. . . .

earth cannot contain.

He moves, he moves

Upon dismembered breath;

halt grave, awake him once to know.

. . . .

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Introduction

My initial approach to the comparison of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Lope de Vega's Castelvines y Monteses was critical in intention. But on the way to what would have appeared to be a simple, straightforward comparative task, I encountered first some puzzling questions and later some unexpected and fairly serious difficulties.

The first question encountered concerned bibliography. William Shakespeare is considered the greatest dramatist of the greatest period in the history of the English theater. Lope de Vega has been considered the greatest playwright of the greatest period in the history of the Spanish theater. They were born within two years of one another, and each wrote a play based upon the popular story of the lovers of Verona. The plays derive--although at different removes--from the same Italian source, but the playwrights have given their works radically different endings. In Shakespeare's play the fate of the lovers is tragic; in Lope's play they live to reunite their families. Critical comparison seems inevitable. And yet Lope's play has barely been mentioned in critical discussions of Shakespeare's play, even after almost four hundred years of opportunity and a colossal

quantity of scholarship on what periodically has seemed to be every imaginable aspect of Shakespeare's work. On the comparison of Romeo and Juliet with a major analogue of which we have been aware for hundreds of years, one would expect a staggering bibliography. But in fact the bibliography is considerably less than staggering. It consists of some minor glancing references, two extremely free English translations/adaptations a hundred years apart (one translating only the parts that seem to parallel Shakespeare, and summarizing the rest;¹ one "apples vs. oranges" appreciation by Ezra Pound; and a couple of recent comparative studies, not primarily critical in nature, that have dismissed the merits of Castelvines y Monteses with very short shrift before the study is even begun.² Even editions of the text itself are rare. Only two have been, to my knowledge, published in the twentieth century, one in the Real Academia Española series and one in the Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, both acknowledging missing lines. The play was printed in Parte XXV, after the playwright's death, and the text is very imperfect. Lope's play has not been, it seems, of much aesthetic interest to anyone.

At the same time, a much greater number of sympathetic interpreters have addressed themselves to the much smaller canon of Shakespeare's work. Even though Romeo and Juliet has not been considered by

critics to be one of Shakespeare's best plays, it has received the benefit of an enormous quantity of careful study. In contrast, it is Lope's canon itself which staggers, and not the accompanying criticism. With over four hundred plays for study, and new manuscripts still being discovered, few will waste time on a lost cause like Castelvines y Monteses, a play that invites comparison with the incomparable: Shakespeare.

Even so, one would expect more discussion of it than I found. Even if the play had no interest except as an analogue, it is at the very least an important contemporary document for the study of Renaissance dramatic discourse on the subject matter of Shakespeare's play. It seems an almost irresistible text for a new historicist.

There are in the canon of Renaissance Spanish drama several plays which are analogues of plays by Shakespeare or other English playwrights of his time. Among these are plays which share sources or essential subject matter with Antony and Cleopatra, Henry VIII, Coriolanus, The Duchess of Malfi, and, of course, Romeo and Juliet, of which there are actually two noteworthy analogues.³ These plays were written by major playwrights of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries during a period of unprecedented theatrical activity and creativity that paralleled to the decade the rise of the drama in Elizabethan England. One of the major

playwrights, Lope de Vega, gained prominence as a dramatic artist during the same half dozen years that saw the rise of Shakespeare's dramatic reputation, and dominated the Spanish drama of his time to an even greater degree than Shakespeare during his lifetime was able to dominate the English drama.

At this time, furthermore, Spain ruled over the most powerful and far-ranging empire the world had ever seen, and England, whose future empire was deliberately to follow paths blazed by the Spanish and Portuguese, was half an island (under Elizabeth), later a whole island (with the accession of Scottish James), struggling to define itself as a nation, unable to secure even nearby Catholic Ireland while Spain dominated Europe, claimed the riches of most of a hemisphere and continued to maintain sovereignty over the seaways between. The precedent as well as the presence of Spanish power, and the anxiety that England might be engulfed or undermined by Spain and/or Spanish Catholicism was ever present in the social and political instabilities that form the background for much of Shakespeare's work. How is it that Spanish analogues to Shakespeare's work have not been deemed relevant to the context of Shakespeare's thinking?

The particular Shakespearean play of our discussion, Romeo and Juliet, furthermore, has always been an extremely popular play, arguably the most

popular play Shakespeare ever wrote. Yet it has been as popular in radically adapted forms as in the texts put forth by scholars. Critics have never counted it as among Shakespeare's best works and have given a great deal of attention to the problematic nature of the "tragic" outcome, and yet the idea that the play pleased audiences for almost a century in an adaptation with a comedic (I say "comedic" rather than "comic" to indicate "happy" rather than "humorous") ending has been considered merely a symptom of transient bad taste. But Lope's play strikes right to the core of the problem. Lope's play is designed from the outset for a comedic ending, while the tragic potential of the story is concentrated in the death of Otavio Castelvín at the turning point of the action. The tragicomedia form developed by Lope, and exquisitely realized in Castelvines y Monteses, is directly relevant to the principal "problem" that critics and theater professionals have identified in Shakespeare's rendering. It is not that "tragicomedy" form which Fletcher defines in his introduction to the printed text of The Faithful Shepherdess as "want[ing] deaths," the form some have identified with romances such as Cymbeline and others with "problem comedies" such as Measure for Measure. Rather it is a conceptual option that is innovative, distinctly Spanish, and profound in its implications. Why has Lope's radical and relevant

departure been of no interest in considerations of the genre question in Romeo and Juliet?

If the first question, then, is why has the study of Castelvines y Monteses been so peculiarly neglected when the play seems to be such a crucial analogue, the second question must be why has Castelvines y Monteses seemed of no interest except as an analogue? Truth to say, whatever attention the play has received, it seems to have received by virtue of its parallel to Shakespeare's. Lope's play is rarely discussed except in comparison. But Castelvines y Monteses has regularly been passed over twice, first as a source of illumination for Romeo and Juliet and second as a play which--once analogy has called attention to it-- might be of interest in itself. Even those Hispanists who have actually read Castelvines y Monteses (it is scarcely available to anyone else) pass it off with little examination and less defense. It has become no more than a foil, "the other leading brand," as it were, in commercials for Shakespeare. Insofar as it differs from Shakespeare's treatment--even those elements of his treatment that are considered less than satisfactory--it is assumed, without question, to be in error. Insofar as it averts a tragic catastrophe--even though Shakespeare's catastrophe may be less than warranted--it is called a shallow thing. Even if Shakespeare is wrong, Lope cannot be right. Especially

if Shakespeare is wrong. The widespread assumption is that Castelvines y Monteses just isn't a very good play. But this is an assumption made without any real attempt to grapple with the tremendous difficulty of forming anything approaching an unbiased comparison of these two plays, and, therefore, since Castelvines y Monteses seems to exist only comparatively, anything approaching an unbiased evaluation of Castelvines y Monteses.

It is both the cause and the consequence of this peculiar neglect that we read Lope's play relatively unaided, while the sheer quantity of written interpretation, commentary, appreciation, critical exegesis, and illumination of Shakespeare's work is daunting, and the quantity of much of that observation, the product of centuries of intense and eloquent advocacy, is unrivalled. Shakespeare appreciation, furthermore, has a tremendous momentum. When interpreters now address Shakespeare's works, they by and large expect to find excellence, they exert themselves to find it, and then, not remarkably, they do find it. As recent studies in reader response and reception have shown, what we look for in a text is what we are likely to discover, what we see depends largely on our horizon of expectation.

Yet if one peruses the Spanish play carefully, it is possible to see Castelvines y Monteses as rather a

good play, in fact as an exceedingly good play, by traditional standards--that is, by the standards that have long been applied to Romeo and Juliet. In fact, for purposes of this comparison, I will attempt very little in the way of new reading of Romeo and Juliet, but depend almost entirely on observations made in critical introductions to respected and widely read editions of the play. All I shall do that is innovative will be to raise these points in a radically unfamiliar context. The sources for my comments will be H.B.Charlton, G.B.Harrison, Frank Kermode, G.Blakemore Evans, and other mainstream critics. And I will simply note again the standard weaknesses these critics have remarked in Romeo and Juliet, after all a play no one considers Shakespeare's masterpiece. The story is pathetic rather than tragic, many have said. The causes of the catastrophe are uncertain or unconvincing. The character of Romeo is less than admirable. Much of the dialogue can seem artificial and inappropriate. Yet Castelvines y Monteses is deliberate, resonant, and masterly in just those areas where Romeo and Juliet has been found wanting. The fact that new modalities have enabled very recent critics to bypass old objections does not alter the issue we face here: Why has critical comparison, for all its eagerness to apply Shakespearean criteria when such criteria might disadvantage Lope's play, been

unwilling to apply the same yardstick to both plays in other areas? It has been standard practice to measure Lope's weaknesses by Shakespeare's strengths. This paper will deliberately set out to measure Shakespeare's weaknesses by Lope's strengths. But this approach is not simply a matter of tit for tat. It is an attempt to demonstrate how egregious the distortions are that inhere in the standard practice, distortions that impede our perception of Shakespeare's play as well as our perception of Lope's.

No innovative methodologies will be required for the kind of critical observations I have to make about these two plays. And yet this dissertation could not have been written twenty years ago, or perhaps even ten years ago; because although the critical apparatus has been available for decades, in some cases even for centuries, it was not until Marxists, feminists, new historicists, and others had refuted the myth of Shakespeare's "universality," rooting his work in its particular time, place, sociological climate and historical exigency; it was not until reader response and reception theorists had called into question the notion of "objectivity" in reading; it was not until Marxists, feminists, students of canon formation, and others had pointed out the political dimension of all art and entitled us to the concept of the "resistant reader;" it was not until the phenomenon of

Hispanophobic propaganda known as La Leyenda Negra, or the Black Legend, had been identified and soberly documented by historians, that the tangle of prejudicial assumptions that have obscured Lope's play could be engaged and challenged.

Half of this essay, therefore, will be a fairly simple comparative close reading, involving examination of such standard elements as plot, character, structure, imagery, and genre. But before that can be essayed, it must first be made possible, by an examination of the reception problems that continue to privilege a play by Shakespeare and prejudice a play by Lope de Vega, particularly and definitively when the plays are similar enough to suggest rivalry. It is not possible to evade the issue and simply call one apples and the other oranges when apples are implicitly valorized by the existing climate of reception far and away above oranges.

It is not my intention to suggest that Shakespeare's reputation is therefore simply bogus, but merely to point out (and I am by no means the first to do it) that more than Shakespeare's excellence has gone into building it, merely to observe that it has a powerful dazzling effect of its own which is as likely to be blinding as illuminating. Thus, of necessity, the first chapters of this essay will confront some of

the major prejudicial elements that inflate our preconceptions, and therefore our perceptions, of Romeo and Juliet and that deflate our preconceptions, and therefore our perceptions, of Castelvines y Monteses. The second part of the paper will then address the critical comparison itself. But in a larger sense the two sections of the paper cannot be separated. A discussion of the problems inherent in a comparison of Castelvines y Monteses with Romeo and Juliet will inevitably involve some reference to current reception theory. Indeed, such a discussion could hardly be attempted at all without the multiple revolutions in criticism of the past decade. But the object of this discussion will not be to exercise a particular methodology, and although the implications of such a study as this are highly provocative, the central concern here will not be to scamper far afield into broad generalizations and implications. Rather it will be to present a broad preliminary appreciation of Castelvines y Monteses, to free it from a complex of prejudices which have obscured it not only for English-speaking audiences, but also for the Spanish themselves. In the process, it may inevitably deflate Romeo and Juliet from an unreasonable and contradictory assumption of a relatively modest position in the Shakespearean canon and absolute preeminence over anything by anyone else, but it will also, I hope,

illuminate it, by means of a long-overdue comparison of the play with the its single most important contemporary analogue.

CHAPTER I will address three of the most conspicuous prejudicial elements in the reputations of the playwrights themselves.

First the so-called Leyenda Negra must be dealt with. Historians have long recognized that during the age in which Lope and Shakespeare lived the antagonisms between their countries bred a great deal of printed anti-Spanish propaganda in England and also a great deal of lively anti-Spanish sentiment, reflected from time to time in the drama, in which Spaniards were often portrayed as villains or made the butts of humor--as Shakespeare's Don Adriano de Armado in Love's Labour's Lost. The Spaniards, who did not feel their national integrity threatened by England, and who sincerely believed that most English people were devout Catholics in their hearts, whatever the errors of their monarchs, did not reply in kind; there is no comparable anti-English literature in Spain and the drama on the whole does not treat the English as more likely than Spaniards to be evil or foolish.⁴ But the religious and political history of both the Old World and the New, unfortunately, gave recurrent cause for the themes and even the stories of sixteenth-century Hispanophobic

sentiment to be resurrected in the interests of English-speaking territorial claims and ethnic bigotry. The decline of Spanish power and its subsequent political and cultural isolation made it easy for many stereotypes born of the Leyenda Negra or "Black Legend" to take root in the minds of even many intellectuals and reappear over and over again as accepted "truths" about the peculiar and perverse nature of the Spaniard, his race and his culture. In the classic anti-Armada film Fire Over England (made in 1936), young Laurence Olivier's character reports in horror to Queen Elizabeth I, that well-known patroness of free speech, "The Spanish herd minds as we herd cattle!" For the English, even on the eve of World War II and at the outbreak of Spain's tragic Civil War, the defeat of the Armada endured as a potent symbol of the triumph of English values over darkness, ignorance and repressive evil still most effectively represented by Spanish Catholicism. It is no wonder that the reputation of Lope de Vega, who personally sailed on that ill-fated expedition and lost a brother on it, has been undermined. And the reputation of Shakespeare more than that of any other literary figure has been both the instrument and the beneficiary of the enduring Leyenda Negra, directed in its most concentrated form against the Spain of Shakespeare's--and Lope's--time.

Since the Golden Age was followed by a long and

acute decline in power, in wealth, in prestige, even in autonomy for Spain, since it heralded loss of empire and the withdrawal of Spanish culture first from European and then from world-wide dominance, Spaniards have identified it even more with their misfortunes and mistakes than with their hour of glory. The Black Legend, vigorously promulgated by other Protestant countries as well as England, in the end succeeded in tarring the reputation of the Spanish Golden Age, and most particularly the playwrights, not only internationally but even within Spain itself. Spanish self-deprecation parallels Spanish deprecation of Lope.

It is undeniable, furthermore, that Shakespeare owes some important measure of his reputation to English advocacy of their national playwright. Without such advocacy German, colonial, and other admirers are unlikely to have sought Shakespeare out or to have invented groundwork upon which to build their admiration. To the English, Shakespeare is inalienably identified with a period their national mythography has apotheosized as Glorious, the beginning of world power, of the empire upon which the sun never set, of the ultimate global dominance of the English language. Indeed, it was at one time fashionable to perceive Elizabethan "lustiness" and "confidence" as clearly recognizable elements of Shakespeare's greatness. From the Restoration to the Romantics, Shakespeare was used

as the standard-bearer of English (or Germanic?) culture against the threatened dominance of France and the French. Colonials adopted and adapted Shakespeare to show they were not barbarians.

Any discussion of the works of Lope and Shakespeare, then, particularly in head-on comparison, must confront a great deal of prejudicial baggage in the way of long-standing political, ideological and ethnic associations which declare Shakespeare to represent historic forces of enlightenment, benignity, and broad-mindedness; and Lope, however personally engaging, to represent a dying culture of narrowness, paranoia, and cruelty. It requires no theory of conspiracy to suggest that the hegemonic discourse has implicitly recognized Castelvines y Montes as subversive of this winner-writes-history alignment. If Castelvines y Montes, a play by that Armada Spaniard, turns out to be more enlightened, more resonant, more masterly, than Shakespeare's culturally treasured Romeo and Juliet, then the whole alignment is called into question. Therefore, the data of these two plays which would disturb and contradict it have reflexively been suppressed or disqualified.

Chapter II addresses the extremely complex issue of theatrical history and what I shall call "appropriation." Romeo and Juliet may be--in one version or another--the most often-performed play in

the history of the drama. It has been translated not only into every major verbal language and most minor ones, but also into all the major artistic languages: visual illustration, sculpture, dance, music, parody, adaptation, and film. There is even a recent Spanish film whose title alone, Montoyas y Tarantos, echoes Lope's play but whose story, the publicity material informs us, is consciously taken from Shakespeare--adapted to gypsy rivalries in Andalusia and featuring the electrifying eloquence of virtuoso flamenco dance in place of verbal poetry! We might as easily credit Bandello or DaPorto with this story, since virtually everything which Shakespeare can be credited with putting into it has been deleted from this version, the Nurse is sober and conscientious and the character called Mercucho is a peacemaker dedicated to dancing, not dueling. But Shakespeare and the Shakesperaeon cultural hegemony have clearly been the means by which the story reached this filmmaker, and Shakespeare continues to collect a kind of royalty in the form of homage. Shakespeare's play continues to accrue a kind of shadow glory, as if the power of the dance in this film had been inspired by Romeo and Juliet, when, of course, both the dance and the story owe their power to sources that have nothing to do with Shakespeare. Castelvines y Monteses, on the other hand, is an obscure play whose theatrical history is a

blank. It has not been credited with influencing comedic versions of Shakespeare's play, even though it preceded them. Even the parallel form of the Spanish film's title is probably coincidence (or a common cultural orientation). The name Montoya is more likely to be a reference to the famous family of dancers by that name than to Lope's Monteses. Culturally, then, Romeo and Juliet is considerably more than a play and Castelvines y Monteses is less. It is virtually impossible to filter out of our reading of Romeo and Juliet all those enhancements which come to us from sources other than Shakespeare's text. Indeed, it is customary to credit the text with anything creditable that has been done with it--in general culturally or in particular theatrically--and to appropriate to Shakespeare's infinite genius and our own spontaneous recognition of it what has in fact been provided over hundreds of years by the great genius and great labor of many others.

At the same time it is easy to assume of Castelvines y Monteses that the lack of theatrical enhancement in our reading represents a failure in the text. Not only do we half-consciously reason that if the play had been worthy it would have been performed, but we also tend to attribute the limits of our own theatrical imaginations as we read to limits in the text. Chapter II isolates by way of example certain

visual associations that adhere to Romeo and Juliet although they do not have their source in Shakespeare's text. Indeed, they may be more clearly justified by Lope's text, with which we decline to associate them.

The next chapter, Chapter III, deals with the all-important question of genre, where the failure of previous comparisons has been most acute. The objections scholars have raised to the tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet are reviewed as well as various illuminating discussions of its comic elements. Then the genre of Castelvines y Monteses is examined and evaluated. It is argued here that the tragicomedia form of Castelvines y Monteses does not represent a trivialization as many have superficially assumed, but is in fact the pattern of a deep-rooted cultural vision of the human condition in relation to death and the godhead, whose implications are carefully worked out by Lope in this curiously disarming play. Where Shakespeare is forced in some sense to improvise a situational metaphysic to accommodate certain aesthetic effects his story commits him to, Lope radically changes the story to get at central implications which express a highly refined, culturally resonant metaphysic for which many of his countrymen and -women were willing to live and die. It is not Lope's vision which is trivial.

Once the unthinkable has been thought and the

unsayable has been suggested, that Lope's play reveals some essential speciousness in Romeo and Juliet, we cannot turn back from examining even more uncomfortable questions. Chapter IV explores the original creative contexts of the two plays, particularly as regards the use of boys to play female roles on Shakespeare's stage and women to play such roles on Lope's stage. It is argued here that Shakespeare's medium, by its exclusion of women, made a statement which no dramatist had the practical power to contradict. Because the homosexual element in Shakespeare's theater has been so long and so disingenuously denied and reference to it is still so threatening to that mainstream thinking which most people would like to believe Shakespeare represents, it is necessary to explain at some length why this element can be assumed--not simply in the Sonnets as Joseph Pequigney has argued, or in the transvestite comedies, as Lisa Jardine contends, but across the board, in all the plays, because it was endemic to the theatrical context in which the plays were created, performed, and received. That homosexual intellectuals have long been reluctant to claim Shakespeare as their own, however, must stem not only from the reasonable fear of dangerous personal revelations combined with seemingly assured failure to wrest so powerful an icon from the heterosexual hegemony, but also from understandable uneasiness about the form of homosexuality the

institution of the boy actress in Shakespeare's England represents--predation by adult males upon pre-pubescent boys, just that form of abuse which homophobes love to publicize to panic the mainstream, just that form with which homosexuals of integrity are most loathe to associate themselves. Sexual predation is, of course, much more commonly practised upon girl children than upon boy children, but the particular conventions of Shakespeare's theater eroticized young boys even more than young girls, since whatever the age of the heroine portrayed, the boy portraying her was young enough to retain his childish soprano voice, a voice that may change normally as early as eleven or twelve. But it is also argued here that the adjustments Shakespeare made to accomodate particular attitudes towards pedophilic homosexuality, towards women, and towards parent-child relationships in his creative community, his audience, his society, and probably even in himself, are still visible in his text, and account for a number of elements which have troubled critics.

The discussion of theatrical convention opens then into a discussion of the resources available to Lope in medium, creative community, audience, society, and personal experience, which allowed for a very different and extraordinarily insightful treatment of heterosexual love, women, the bond between parent and child, and the family as a moral paradigm. Because the

idea of homosexual love that prevailed in the fashionable circles of London and in the theater of Shakespeare's time was of classical pagan origin, via Italian Renaissance interpretation, it was strongly misogynistic and pederastic. It is not remarkable, therefore, that families in Romeo and Juliet are perceived so negatively and that the love of Romeo and Juliet is both infantilized and short term. Lope's idea of family, however, is highly Christianized and reflects in its forms, lessons, and redemptive capacity the Holy Family as the archetypical context of love-made-flesh. The presence of women on his stage, furthermore, and Spanish cultural attitudes towards children and the family, reinforced the vivacity of female participation in the action, the outcome, and the significance of Lope's now poorly understood play.

The discussions of Chapters I-V lead directly into the concerns of Chapter VI, which focuses upon the characters of the old men in these two plays. Since the old men are the ones who are to be taught a lesson by the tragedy or the nearly averted tragedy, it is important to examine what they learn and indeed what the playwrights suggest they are capable of learning. I contend that what Old Montague and Old Capulet are supposed to learn at the end of Romeo and Juliet is essentially bogus, because the action has not illustrated the supposed moral. Furthermore, neither

character learns from his experience, but requires the instruction of the Prince of Verona, and even then their understanding is problematic. Lope's old men, on the other hand, are much more complex figures, and the nature of their understanding at the end is far deeper than the simple volte face comedy would require. They illustrate a kind and level of maturation that the characters in Romeo and Juliet never achieve. At the end of Lope's play we are prepared to believe that the old men have learned much more than they say; they have learned what they show, what to relinquish and what to hold fast. They have learned who they are by yielding up false icons of identity. All of the elements of this luminous parable, then, serve a highly sophisticated and coherent moral vision of redemptive power of love. Yet Castelvines y Monteses is so finely controlled and engaging, so charming, funny, human and theatrically adroit, that it has been possible for superficial readers to dismiss as trivial a play which is in fact a much deeper and more serious work than Romeo and Juliet.

Introduction Notes

¹ The abridged translation was published in London by W. Griffin, 1770. In 1869 F.W.Cosens translated the play in full for private distribution, London: Chiswick. Excerpts were published in A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare, H.H.Furness, ed. Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1871. I have recently been made aware that a new translation is seeking publication. I am myself preparing another.

² Of the five entries I have listed in the Bibliography under "Castelvines y Montesés and Comparative Studies" it must be admitted first that all five are comparative. I know of no article-length or longer study of Castelvines y Montesés by itself. Two of the four entries, those by Duque Díaz de Cerio and Villarejo, argue that Shakespeare was influenced in the writing of Romeo and Juliet by Spanish sources, including La Celestina and Castelvines y Montesés. The evidence for the influence of Lope's play on Shakespeare's is extremely far-fetched and has not proved widely persuasive. In any event, the generally accepted dating of Lope's play (by Morley and Bruerton) at least a decade later than Shakespeare's has effectively laid that small controversy to rest.

The article by García-Prado, after insisting that the writer has "ni menor intención de decir cual de los dos es él que merece mas la consideración del público en general ni la de los críticos en particular," ("not the least intention of saying which of the two most merits the consideration of the public in general or the critics in particular") (67), goes on to conclude that despite the charm and naturalness of Lope's art, "Castelvines y Montesés, obra de improvisación un tanto frívola y descuidado, no es, como muchos quisieran, una obra de verdadero y durable mérito artístico." ("... a rather frivolous and careless work of improvisation, is not, as many would like it to be, a work of true and enduring artistic merit") (86) And yet, "[a] pesar de sus imperfecciones de forma y de contenido, esta tragicomedia nos interesa y casi nos fascina." ("in spite of its imperfections of form and of content, this tragicomedia interests us and almost fascinates us.") (86)

However, the only other writer I have found who is in the least bit fascinated is Ezra Pound, and he but modestly.

The peculiarly distorting comparison of Donald Wadley will be discussed in Chapter V.

My own article, "The Neglected Alternative: Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Lope de Vega's Castelvines y Montesés," will appear in Parallel Lives:

Spanish and English Drama, 1580-1680, forthcoming from Bucknell University Press. Needless to say, my position in the article, as here, differs from the traditional one.

³ The other is Los bandos de Verona by Francisco de Rojas Zorrilla. It was translated in the nineteenth century by F.W.Cosens, who essayed Castelvines y Monteses also, and was also printed privately in London, 1874.

⁴ Don W. Cruickshank, "Lisping and Wearing Strange Suits: English Characters on the Spanish Stage and Spanish Characters on the English Stage, 1580-1680," in Parallel Lives (See note 2 above).

Castelvines y Monteses

Plot Summary

Young Roselo Montés, his friend and kinsman Anselmo, and his servant Marín are loitering outside the house of Antonio Castelvín, patriarch of the great clan of the Castelvines. In the house a great feast is being held and the young men are drawn by the blazing lights, the music, the laughter, the splendor of the guests going in and out. They begin to egg each other on to crash the party, even though, as Anselmo soberly points out, Roselo's father is patriarch of the house of Montés, hated enemy of the Castelvines. And Antonio Castelvín "will not even suffer these people to be mentioned in his presence, much less countenance them in his house." But youthful bravado wins out. The two noble youths and their unwilling accomplice procure masks and slip into the feast unchallenged.

At the feast Antonio Castelvín and his brother Teobaldo have sought the coolness of the garden where they are engaging in some gentle matchmaking. Antonio has ill-concealed hopes that his daughter, Julia, will marry Teobaldo's son, Otavio. But although Otavio gravely and earnestly pursues his cousin with every encomium he can memorize, the restless and imaginative

Julia finds him a thumping bore. Her cousin and best friend Dorotea, Otavio's sister, cannot help but sympathize. When the Montés interlopers appear upon the scene, however, the electricity is instantaneous. Julia and Roselo are immediately drawn to one another, as are Dorotea and Anselmo. Even Marín, Roselo's servant, finds himself smitten by Julia's pretty maid. But when Roselo drops his mask in wonder at Julia's beauty, Antonio Castelvín is enraged to recognize the son of his hated enemy, and calls for his sword. But Teobaldo calms and rebukes his brother. Antonio stays his hand, and the young people secretly arrange a tryst at Otavio's expense. Julia gives one hand to Otavio and the other, behind her back, to Roselo. Then, when her hapless cousin believes she is arranging to meet him, Roselo knows otherwise.

Meanwhile, Arnaldo Montés, Roselo's father, is listening to a servant's lurid reports of Roselo's activities as a scapegrace. If only the boy would marry and settle down.

Unknown to his father, Roselo is making his own wedding plans. While Otavio, arriving at his overbooked tryst, is sent to hold Julia's father in conversation and distract his suspicions, Julia and Roselo arrange to meet secretly and be married.

When Act II opens, a stupid squabble has broken out over places in church. It began as the pettiest of

incidents involving Dorotea and a mistake by a servant of the Montés faction, but Teobaldo, whom we have seen as a sensitive and decent old man, a peacemaker at the ball, in the irritation of the moment chides his son, and Otavio is smarting to prove himself. They stride angrily together into the church. Meanwhile Roselo strolls innocently upon the scene, confiding to Anselmo the joys of his married life. The newlyweds have contrived to meet as often as possible, Roselo climbing at night over the wall into the fragrant garden of the Castelvines. Suddenly the voices of Arnaldo Montés and Antonio Castelvín are audible from within the church and then the sound of clashing swords. The feud in full force erupts into the street, surrounding Roselo. Even Anselmo draws his sword and aligns himself with the men of Montés. But Roselo rushes to place himself physically in the breach, praises the valor of both sides, and pleads for peace. Otavio belatedly stands forward to defend the honor of his house, will discuss nothing, and accuses Roselo of cowardice. Roselo cautions him but even so proposes that marriages, not bloodshed should resolve the antipathy between Castelvines and Monteses. Anselmo shall marry Dorotea, Otavio shall marry Roselo's kinswoman Andrea whose servant caused the immediate offense, and Roselo himself shall marry Julia. Otavio will have none of this and warns Roselo to defend himself or be killed

"Como a mujer" ["Like a woman"]. Roselo turns to both sides to witness that he is provoked to violence against his will, draws his sword, and in the ensuing fight kills Otavio. While Roselo hurries to get his father away from danger, the anguished Teobaldo takes up the body of his son with the terrible recognition, "Que yo soy la causa desto!" ["I am the cause of this"].

The Prince of Verona enters with soldiers and pursues Roselo to a tower, where he is surrounded and captured. His life is spared through the testimony of Julia, who, although she has seen nothing and believes herself to be lying, tells the truth about Otavio's provocation and Roselo's attempt at peace. Roselo is banished.

A final formal farewell parts the lovers Julia and Roselo, and in comic counterpoint, Julia's maidservant Celia and Roselo's man, Marín.

Yet even the dead man's sister Dorotea cannot find it in her heart to blame Roselo. Only the grieving and self-lacerating Teobaldo still cries for vengeance.

Meanwhile Paris and Roselo have met on the road and become travelling companions. When a message arrives for Paris from Antonio Castelvín, the count after reading it hands it to Roselo. It is the news that Paris has been accepted to be the husband of Julia and a member of the house of Castelvín. Paris parts

ways with Roselo, declining to cross swords with a friend, but severing for the future their association. An anguished Roselo believes that Julia has betrayed him.

Act III, the distraught Julia is in fact persuaded by her father to consent to marriage with Paris, even though she argues that she cannot and will not do so because Paris has failed to avenge the murder of her cousin by killing Roselo Montés. But Antonio counters painfully that his word has already been given. Had he known her feelings he never would have gone against them, but having given his word, he is bound. Julia breaks down.

But alone with Celia she is beside herself, rejecting a cordial Celia offers her which has been kindly sent by the friar that married her to Roselo, and hysterically willing herself to die before the fearful bigamous marriage can take place. Celia helplessly tries to console her and again presses upon her the soothing cordial. Julia drinks it down and then with horror feels its real power. A moment ago she was screaming that she wanted to die. Now, in terror, she looks death in the face, cries out, and falls to the floor.

The faithful Anselmo, meanwhile, finds Roselo in Ferrara, well received by the women there, but unable to forget his wife. Anselmo first informs Roselo that

Julia is dead--and then informs him that her death is a ruse to avoid marriage with Paris. The three friends who breached the Castelvín feast together must now break into the Castelvín tomb.

Broken with grief, the brothers Castelvín, to save what is left of their house apply for a papal dispensation so that Antonio may marry his brother's daughter Dorotea and--if it is still in his power--beget another heir. Thus the obsequies of the unhappy Julia are to be followed by a wedding scarcely happier.

In the black darkness of the tomb Julia awakens, unaware of the ruse and believing herself dead. Roselo enters with a lamp, accompanied by the slapstick buffoonery of Marín, and leads her out into the light. All that remains now is for the young people to save Dorotea, who loves and is loved by Anselmo, from marriage to Julia's father--and, of course, to reconcile the families. But when the ingenious Julia is herself again, this is scarcely a problem. Pretending to be her own ghost, she speaks to her father through the upper floor of the peasant cottage to which he has retired for his melancholy nuptials, and with the awesome voice of mortality itself she enjoins him to be reconciled to the man who was her secret husband in life, Roselo Montés. Castelvín agrees. When Teobaldo enters with the captive Roselo,

Antonio pleads for Roselo as for his own son: "Que Roselo fué mi hijo/ Y que serlo tuyo tiene" ["For Roselo has become my son,/ and so he must be yours"]. The bewildered Teobaldo is about to offer Roselo the hand of his own daughter Dorotea, when Julia reveals herself. Dorotea shall marry Anselmo and Marín, Celia. Julia and Roselo make the last distributions of Castelvines y Monteses.

Chapter I

There are three elements which may be singled out as having most crucially prejudiced the reception of Spanish Golden Age dramatic literature in general and concomitantly privileged the reception of Shakespeare-- particularly but not exclusively in England and North America. All three of these elements began during the centuries bridged by the lives of Lope and Shakespeare and endure as powerful conditioning agents of perception even today. The first is the so-called Leyenda Negra or Black Legend, a mythography of Hispanophobic propaganda directed against "the Spaniard," culturally, politically, religiously, and even racially by Nordic Protestant groups in times of political confrontation, and carried over as enduring stereotypes. The second is what may be termed the "internalized" Black Legend, a series of factors that have caused Spaniards themselves to berate their own history and repudiate their Golden Age playwrights. And in contrast to these elements prejudicial to the Spanish canon both at home and in the English-speaking world is the extraordinary, indeed unparalleled advocacy of Shakespeare by the English, and by English speakers, to the position of quasi-divine superiority over all other writers of all other times in all languages.

The Hispanophobic propaganda that came to be known as the Black Legend was first defined and examined at length in the years before World War I by Julian Juderías y Loyot, a multi-lingual translator and social reformer with a passionate interest in history, who coined the term and outlined the forms it most commonly took:

En una palabra, entendemos por la leyenda negra la leyenda de la España inquisitorial, ignorante, fanática, incapaz de figurar entre los pueblos cultos lo mismo ahora que antes, dispuesta siempre a las represiones violentas; enemiga del progreso y de las inovaciones; o, en otros términos, la leyenda que habiendo empezada difundirse en el siglo XVI, a raíz de la Reforma, no ha dejado de utilizarse en contra nuestra desde entonces, y mas especialmente en momentos críticos de nuestra vida nacional. (28)

[In a word, we understand by Black Legend the legend of an inquisitorial, ignorant, fanatical Spain, incapable of figuring among cultivated peoples either now or in previous times, disposed always to violent repressions; enemy of progress and innovations; or, in other terms, the legend that having begun to be

diffused in the sixteenth century at the outset of the Reformation, has not ceased to be used to our disadvantage from that time, but most especially in critical moments of our national life.]

The Black Legend is a complex historical phenomenon, but its general outlines can be traced rather simply, and its forms are extremely repetitive. All nations at all periods have spoken ill of their enemies, but the propaganda that began to be disseminated against Spain in the sixteenth century had characteristics that were to make it particularly distinctive and powerful. To begin with, Spain at this time had dynastically inherited the power and territories of the Holy Roman Empire, and, following upon the expeditions of Christopher Columbus and several generations of colonists and conquistadores, it also ruled world-wide over the largest empire history had ever seen. Spain's presence in the affairs of Italy, France, the Netherlands, the Germanies, and of course, England, and its monopoly over the riches of most of a hemisphere would seem more than enough to have provided it with enemies. But there was more. The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century had split Europe laterally into fierce camps. W.S. Maltby in The Black Legend in England explains the consequences for Anglo-Spanish relations:

Elizabethan England was generally regarded as

the natural leader of the reformed camp, while Spain was the natural leader of the Catholics. Though possessing a large Catholic population and a queen who was temperamentally averse to ideologies, England was one of the few European states that possessed both an established non-Roman church and the means with which to resist revived papacy. Spain, on the other hand, was the greatest military power in the world. It possessed a strong central government and it was overwhelmingly Catholic in policy and popular sympathy: the logical champion of the Counter-Reformation and right arm of the Pope. In the pamphlet literature of the day, the Pope and the King of Spain are rarely mentioned separately. It is not surprising, then, that Spain and Catholicism came to mean much the same thing to Protestant Englishmen and that the hatred felt for the one could be applied equally to the other. (29)

What made the anti-Spanish propaganda not only particularly widespread and virulent, but also particularly potent was the extremely effective use of what Maltby has called here "pamphlet literature." Printing with movable type had only been invented in the middle of the fifteenth century. But by the middle of the sixteenth it was available for the broadcast

dissemination of anonymous political diatribes both verbal and--sometimes worth a thousand words--pictorial. Hispanophobic propaganda had an extraordinary tool available to it. All it needed was an extraordinary text.

The key text in the history of the Black Legend was written by a loyal Spaniard, the Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas, in 1542. It was called Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias and was addressed to King Charles V himself. It was an attempt to persuade the king to enact legislation against abuses in the encomienda system, a system which had originally been set up to prohibit the enslavement of the conquered populations of the New World while allowing the conquistadores to be rewarded with some measure of the power and privilege universal custom had led them to expect. But the encomienda system had been grossly violated both in spirit and in letter, and de las Casas argued that tighter curbs needed to be placed upon the treatment of His Majesty's American subjects by their Spanish overlords. Like the townspeople of Fuenteovejuna in Lope's play or Pedro Crespo in Calderón's El alcalde de Zalamea, de las Casas followed a very typical Spanish paradigm of the time in seeking justice from his king against the tyranny of lower-ranking powers, appealing to a value system that abhorred cruelty in unusual and licentious forms and recognized certain human rights as

inalienable to even the humblest individual. His rhetorical strategy made use of hyperbolic statistics of slaughter and hideous narratives of bizarre cruelty, such as a Spaniard's feeding a native baby to his dogs. We know the figures are wildly inflated--although much smaller figures would certainly be outrage enough--and many of the narratives have the stamp of hearsay and apocrypha--although accuracy in even a few would be adequately repulsive. But his purpose was to horrify in an age that accepted official torture as normal and a certain level of brutality in everyday life as unavoidable. And the strategy worked. As in Fuenteovejuna and El alcalde de Zalamea, the Spanish king championed his lowest subjects and interceded against their victimization. Unfortunately, the real-life story does not end here. The legislation instituted by Charles at this point was later rescinded by him, and the debate over the rights of conquered races continued. It was not resolved even a century later when the thirteen English colonies of North America became an independent nation with a constitution that denied to conquered Africans the legal personhood which Spanish law accorded native Americans under the conquistadores. But the point is that the Brevísima relación would have been pointless if feeding babies to dogs had been sanctioned by Spanish culture and custom, if the atrocities narrated there had in fact been normal expressions of the "cruelty natural

to the Spanish temperament." De las Casas set out, after all, to raise indignation in Spanish sensibilities, not in English ones, and to appeal to standards of compassion and justice that he expected his king and countrymen to recognize--which they did recognize. The Old Testament Jeremiad of this friar, the holy man facing down the king to demand justice for the poor and forgotten, is in fact an example of what is ethically most admirable in Spanish culture. And yet the Brevísima relación became a primary source of anecdote and example for English propaganda against "Spanish depravity." Again, Professor Maltby points out the ironies:

Internal criticism, however constructive, was rarely tolerated in Elizabethan or Stuart England, and it was hard for men to believe that absolute monarchs like Charles V and Philip II encouraged it among their subjects. Apart from matters of faith, freedom of speech was a cherished Spanish prerogative during the Golden Age, and it was not suffered to lapse through disuse. (Maltby 12)

England was not the only nation in Europe to promulgate a Black Legend against the colossus that was Renaissance Spain. France, the Germanies, the Low Countries, and to a lesser extent Italy, all had political and/or religious reasons, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and later, for conscious attempts

to influence public opinion against the Spanish hegemony. But England had particularly intimate and Oedipal reasons to nurture, both consciously and unconsciously, an idea of Spain as the great bogey of the West. At this time Spain ruled over the most powerful and far-ranging empire the world had ever seen, and England whose future empire, and whose future sins, were to follow paths blazed by the Spanish and Portuguese, was merely two thirds of an island (under Elizabeth), later a whole island (with the accession of Scottish James), struggling to define itself as a nation, and having difficulty establishing its sovereignty, even by the most ruthless means, over the small neighboring island of Catholic Ireland. The precedent as well as the presence of Spanish power, and the anxiety that England might be engulfed or undermined by Spain and/or Spanish Catholicism, were ever present in the social and political instabilities that form the background for much of Shakespeare's work. One of the first and most basic tenets of English self-definition at this crucial time came to be a negative one: whatever England was, it was not Catholic Spain.

The mythological centerpiece of that Assertion of not-Spanishness was, of course, the debacle of the Armada in 1588, but the initial declaration of it was made a generation earlier with the decision of Henry VIII to divorce his popularly beloved Spanish queen at any cost. It was Henry who first defined England's autonomy (part

and parcel with his own) as defiance of the Pope and the king of Spain, perhaps particularly the spectre of his politically brilliant and recurrently humiliating great Spanish father-in-law, Ferdinand the Catholic. The bloody alternation of Protestant and Catholic allegiances in the succession Henry bequeathed to the throne, so unpleasantly similar to the York-Lancaster civil lesions of the century before, was resolved only tentatively by the long, childless reign of Protestant Elizabeth, and between Henry and Elizabeth a Spanish king, the formidable Philip II, had been royal consort of England. Under Elizabeth's successor, James I, son of that Catholic Queen of Scots whose execution had precipitated the Armada, diplomatic relations with Spain were resumed, and a generation later James's son, the future Charles I, thought it the height of romantic adventure to run off to Spain in disguise with the elegantly persuasive Spanish ambassador Gondomar, to court a Spanish Infanta. The Spaniards feted him, fooled him, and ultimately rejected him, but his Catholic inclinations were to cost him his head and England a bloody Civil War. The presence of Spain was never very far from the nerve-center of English politics, or from its economy either. The principal source of the unusual increase in English wealth during the reign of Elizabeth, after all, was state-supported piracy against Spanish treasure ships from the New World. While the pitiful Roanoke venture melted into air, the

Spanish strode both continents of the Western hemisphere at will. For crucial centuries, wherever England struggled to assert herself those damnable proud Catholic Spaniards were in her path.

And yet modern guides to the political context of Shakespeare's work give anything but this impression. Although during the lifetimes of Shakespeare and Lope de Vega Spain was immensely more powerful and influential than England, English mythography figures its Elizabethan-Jacobean age as disproportionately glorious, and the power which England did not actually achieve until centuries later is foreshortened into the English Renaissance as a potential so palpable as to be as good as manifest. The failure of the Armada expedition is easily described as "England's defeat of Spain," giving the episode the color of a conquest, or the color of later conquests, or the color of later historical circumstances which were not really conquests but involved the rise of English power and the decline of Spanish power and so might metaphorically or metonymically or perhaps just jingoistically be called conquest, even--as many small associations agglutinate--as an inevitable conquest, the supplanting of a decayed, reactionary, death-obsessed society by a vigorous, healthy, liberal one. Although the notion that Shakespeare's England was healthy and liberal is as

unsupportable ultimately as the equally fanciful notion that the Spain of Lope was decayed and death-obsessed, yet it has been common to define Shakespeare, the "voice of his age," as embodying those values and characteristics which have been presumed to make England and Anglo-Saxon culture great, and Lope (alternating or along with Calderón) as embodying those values and characteristics which have made Spain and Hispanic culture, well, inferior.

Compounding the tendency towards distortion, for the Spaniards themselves every century since Lope's has been marked by some political disaster. This along with the powerful Catholic tradition of constant self-examination and contrition for sin has left even anti-Catholic Spaniards with a fierce habit of self-criticism worthy of Bartolomé de las Casas himself. While intellectuals in England were asking themselves, "What is there about the Anglo-Saxon that makes him capable and worthy of ruling over other races and cultures?" the preoccupying question of Spanish intellectuals has been, "What is wrong with Spain and Spanish culture?" and specifically, "What was wrong with seventeenth-century Spain that caused its glory to depart?" In its vulnerable position as the poorest where once it had been the richest, morbidly influenced by the criticisms of others, Spain has turned upon the masters of its Golden Age drama. "One disturbing Spanish phenomenon which, some thought, had

steered Spanish civilization into a wrong, sterile direction," as Bruce Wardropper puts it, "was the ethos of her classical theater." (viii)

The assumption that the Spanish classical drama, representing three reigns, a century of development, a dozen major playwrights, and hundreds upon hundreds of plays, had a single, unified "ethos" may certainly be called into question. But particularly for Spanish intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century, the so-called Generation of '98, that witnessed the loss of Cuba and the Philippines, the last possessions of Spain's world-girdling empire, to a world-girdling Anglo-American empire, a paroxysm of historical self-loathing was in order and a repentable "nostra culpa" had to be identified. It is to the specific repudiations of this generation that Prof. Wardropper refers, but subsequent generations have yet to recover fully from the reflexive association of their classical drama with political and economic decline and a concomitant decline in national self-esteem. Even today the director of the Spanish national theater is a man with no particular interest in the drama of his nation's Golden Age. And the Comisión Nacional Quinto Centenario, in charge of celebrations for the Columbian Quincentenary in 1992, has consented to subsidize an eight-hour, as-yet-to-be-written stage adaptation of the Quixote by producer Joseph Papp but has not found funds to subsidize any Golden Age plays for the same producer.

Because there are so many plays in the Spanish canon, furthermore, it is particularly easy to avoid works that trouble one's preconceptions, to select for study only such works as sit comfortably with the non-Spaniard's need to find color and forbidden barbarism in peninsular drama and with the Spaniard's need to find, and to extirpate, some cultural sin for which the loss of glory and power must be a punishment. While English-speaking critics have with quiet conscience declared that the conduct of Hamlet, Macbeth, Lear, Romeo, or Prospero is not at all peculiar or contrived, but represents what any one of us--or any one of us with that very common sort of temperament--might do under the same circumstances, Spanish critics have only too often joined in begging the question regarding their own heritage and have addressed themselves to "explaining" what is assumed to be something distinctly perverse in Spanish culture and character as it is represented in their drama. And the Spanish plays which engage discussion are often plays like El pintor de su deshonra and El medico de su honra, which show Spanish conduct at its most outré. A play like Castelvines y Monteses, in which the conduct of characters is remarkably thoughtful, plausible, and humane, has not been of interest. Thoughtfulness, plausibility, and humanity are not what people normally read Spanish plays for.

In this regard it is relevant to point out that the

single most popular and influential Renaissance Spanish text world-wide, the one which, unlike the plays, was almost immediately available in English and has remained enormously prestigious in the English-speaking world, is Miguel de Cervantes' two-volume Don Quixote. Now Don Quixote is a masterpiece, surely, but at the same time it has also been a powerful paradigm for the perception of Spain as a barren, backward, definitively rural country populated by madmen, muledrivers, bumpkins, and an embalmed aristocracy, endlessly enamoured of a past that never was. Don Quixote is singularly digestible by even the most errant Hispanophobe, unfortunately, because it allows a reader comfortably to forget that Cervantes' Spain ever had a cosmopolitan and sophisticated urban life, a lively and cantankerous intelligentsia, art, music, theater, playwrights, humanists, scientists, and a great deal of important literature that was not foolishly chivalric. It leaves existing prejudice regrettably intact, and even reinforces it.

Don Quixote himself, furthermore, is more potent as an embodiment of the "fantastical Spaniard" than Shakespeare's own noteworthy contribution to the legend, Don Adriano de Armado in Love's Labour's Lost. In both cases we have not only a lethal parody of the Spanish gentleman's perceived pretensions, but also of the general Spaniard's learning and attitude towards language--both vain, wordy, silly, sophisticated, and

ultimately self-delusive. Although at least in the case of Don Quixote we may read the parody affectionately, yet affection does not preclude contempt, especially when contempt serves a pre-existing purpose. As with the Brevísima relación, we have an honorable Spaniard's censure of a particular excess in his society translating into a foreigner's definition first of what is noteworthy, and very soon of what is typical.

And with a pre-existing--albeit by the twentieth century largely unconscious--prejudice to be served, the apocryphal conquistador with the infantivorous dogs comes to represent something essential in Spanish character while the actual de las Casas, courageous and compassionate, does not. The fantastical, fictitious Don Quixote becomes the national folly personified, but his creator's vision is not allowed to indicate any national toughness or wisdom. The Duke of El castigo sin venganza is studied as a sociological barometer for the public acceptance of wife-murder, but the Lope who cared for a blind, mentally incompetent mistress in his old age is no measure of his culture's deeper values.

En vano somos, no ya modestos, sino humildes;
 en vano tributamos a lo ajeno alabanzas que por
 lo exageradas merecen alguna gratitud; en vano
 ponemos lo nuestro--aunque sea bueno--al nivel
 bajo posible; en vano también progresamos, pro-
 curando armonizar nuestra vida colectiva con la
 de otras naciones: la leyenda persiste con

todas sus desagradables consecuencias y sigue ejerciendo su lastimoso influjo. Somos y tenemos que ser un país fantástico; nuestro encanto consiste precisamente en esto, y las cosas de España se miran y comentan con un criterio distinto del que se emplea para juzgar las cosas de otros países: son cosas de España. (Juderias 22)

[In vain are we, not only modest, but humble; in vain do we attribute to that which is foreign virtues which for their exaggeration deserve some gratitude; in vain do we rank what is our own--although it be good--on the lowest level possible; in vain likewise do we progress, endeavoring to harmonize our collective life with that of other nations: the legend persists with all its disagreeable consequences and continues to exercise its deplorable influence. We are and we must be a fantastical country; our charm consists precisely in this, and things Spanish are seen and commented upon with criteria distinct from those which are employed to judge the things of other countries: they are things Spanish.]

What must be emphasized here is that the Black Legend is not simply a collection of political or racial prejudices, but bears with particular weight upon the

drama of the Golden Age, which in the eyes of both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking critics has been identified as particularly guilty of expressing those cultural values--reactionary and repressive religious fanaticism; cruelty; shallowness, superstition, and lack of intellectual sophistication; obsession with petty points of honor--with which the Legend tars Hispanic culture as a whole. Like Shakespeare, Lope is seen to be the voice of his age and his race, but unlike Shakespeare, Lope has drawn little credit in recent centuries for this. That Golden Age Catholicism might have given voice to any of the civilizing principles of the Judeo-Christian tradition, principles other than the repressive, reactionary ones, that it might have been exceptionally enriched at this moment in history by the cosmopolitan influence of African and American experiences, has not been a common hypothesis of criticism, although prominent historians like Garret Mattingly have beaten back the Legend to some extent in the area of professional historiography.

As the reputation of his age and race have suffered, so has Lope's own, and has yet a long way to go to recover. A student of Spanish Golden Age playwrights traditionally has been invited to discuss the weaknesses and faults of the masters along with their strengths. The very first of the "Proyectos Basados en <<La vida es sueño>>" suggested for students by the standard Diez

comedias del siglo de oro is "Enumerar las bellezas y defectos principales del drama de Calderón" (699). What student of Shakespeare--even in contemporary classrooms--has been trained in this way? Even lesser writers in the English canon have been shown more respect than this. If their shortcomings are acknowledged by the instructor, critic, or scholar, yet the student's task has been primarily to "learn to appreciate," to examine what a ranking writer does rather than what he or she fails to do. Indeed, the tendency to find fault with accepted masterpieces (rather than simply to recognize inevitable historical limitations) is a tendency that professors of English literature have long set themselves to train out of students. The case of Shakespeare is merely--or perhaps not so merely--the most extreme case of a normal pedagogic protocol. But where, whatever the revolutions of the past two decades in theory, the practising pedagogy of at least a century has instructed developing readers to thrust down any rebellious objections they might feel towards the stated absolute excellence of the English bard, as if they were the promptings of the devil of barbarism, the parallel pedagogy of the same period has made a degree of contempt quite requisite to the study of Golden Age playwrights. Shakespeare is assumed to have transcended his time and circumstance except in such cases as no one could have transcended his time and circumstances and it is foolish

to expect him to. Lope, on the other hand, is assumed to have been the toady of his time. We give Shakespeare the benefit of the doubt; we are careful not to be taken in by Lope. To be too gaga over Lope de Vega is to show ignorance and lack of judgment. Lopistas have warned their students against untempered enthusiasm, even as Shakespeareans have warned theirs against less than perfect admiration. Where Shakespeare students have been urged to show themselves brilliant by finding new beauties where none were seen before, Lope students have been cautioned against looking for too much.

In the prologue to his invaluable Historia del teatro español, written twenty years ago, Francisco Ruiz Ramón declares at the outset his "firm intention" to avoid three temptations: The first is the temptation to concoct a catalog of titles and authors. The second is the temptation to forget that dramatic works must be evaluated on the basis of their dramatic quality. The third, and presumably climactic one, is the temptation to succumb to chauvinism (7). In the context of this discussion, there is something extremely poignant and self-defeating about this Spanish scrupulosity. Professor Ruiz Ramón's three caveats to himself as an honorable intellectual translate into significant disadvantages for Spanish plays when they come up for comparison with Shakespeare's. The staggeringly vast Golden Age age drama shall have no clear valorized

"canon." The plays shall be evaluated as dramatic works when they are rarely performed and are without a history of dramatic performance. And nationalistic concerns shall play no part in aesthetic advocacy. All of Professor Ruiz Ramón's scruples are honorable and intellectually defensible, and yet none of these "temptations" can be completely avoided. Furthermore, the refusal to single out a manageable handful of texts for intense regard and study, the demurral at engaging these plays for their literary value independent of the stage--and above all the insistence that cultural pride shall have no place in critical interpretation, all handicap the Golden Age drama mortally when it comes to confront the Leviathan that is Imperial Shakespeare.

Gary Taylor in his recent book, Reinventing Shakespeare has discussed much more thoroughly than I can here the historical importance of outside influences on our perception of Shakespeare's plays as great, and much of what I say here is akin to, if not actually grounded upon, the work of radical British scholars such as Professor Taylor and the contributors to Alternative Shakespeares and The Shakespeare Myth. Yet the work of such scholars is still both very recent and very controversial, and one of the points it makes most strongly is that chauvinism played a powerful and perhaps critical role in the reception of Shakespeare's work.

For historically Shakespeare studies have been

hobbled by no such scruples as Professor Ruiz Ramón's. Indeed, very much the reverse. The extreme foregrounding during the nineteenth century and after of four "great Shakespearean tragedies," for example--Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear--allowed concentration of effort and high visibility, later for the analysis of "character" in the Bradleian mode, and for parallel theatrical performance in which the charisma of powerful and attractive performers could fuse with critical ingenuity to fill in the spaces between Shakespeare's words, to fill in the "gaps" as they are currently called, with a dense, rich, multivalent mythography of significance. From the four manageable "must-know" tragedies and a few more plays, study could move outward, and the excellences identified by intense scrutiny of the prime texts could be looked for subsequently in the secondary ones, which provided relief from satiety and accommodated "radical" personalities within the hegemony of Shakespearean admirers. If you wished to rebel against the everlasting establishment praise of Hamlet, you could always sow your wild oats by championing Measure for Measure or The Winter's Tale. One need know only a handful of Shakespearean plays to feel reasonably well-based in English Renaissance drama. But what handful of plays could possibly provide a comparable sense of control over the Spanish Renaissance drama? Not only are there vastly more plays, more playwrights, and more kinds of plays,

but the normative categories have been much more slippery. A whole class of plays, the so-called honor plays (particularly the ones involving wife-murder) have been disproportionately studied very frankly because they strike English-speaking critics as morally bizarre, and only secondarily because they demonstrate artistic skill, aesthetic excellence, psychological insight, or even dramatic power to a greater extent than other plays by the same playwrights. The study of Lope, Calderon, and Tirso is much more diffused than the study of Shakespeare, and a good deal of effort has gone into simply cataloguing, classifying, and attributing. A short, canonical list of titles and authors, reductionist and simplistic as it might be for Professor Ruiz Ramon's idealistic purposes, would still be of immense practical value for the establishment of a wide-based public familiarity from which widely-influential individual work might be generated. Unfortunately, the educated generalist is much more likely to know Lope's "characteristics"--particularly those designated as faults--than his plays.

The study of Shakespeare's plays as "poetry," on the other hand, allowed a fall-back position for plays that had not been made to "work" on stage, and preserved or even raised them in public esteem so that the theater would be prompted to try again. The professed desire of certain "literary" critics to wrest Shakespeare from the

theater and enthrone him as the prince of poets certainly did Shakespeare-as-theater no harm. Rather it expanded the horizon of expectation for his plays, stimulating both for actors and for audiences the sense of what was possible. And more than that, it made the plays a prize, goading the theater to greater efforts and audiences to greater attention by insisting that players and popular audiences were unworthy of Shakespeare, could not hear the glories of the language, could not fathom the complexity of the art. Hispanists who plead (and I have succumbed to this myself) that we cannot know Lope and Calderón until the theater shows them to us, may all unwittingly have adopted the worst possible tactic for their purpose.

But most important of all is the third "temptation," or weapon, which the earnest--some might irresistibly say "Quixotic"--integrity of critics such as Ruiz Ramon has denied to the Spanish Renaissance drama, even perceiving it, as the term "temptation" implies, as a kind of "sin." And that weapon is the illumination, interpretation, and even advocacy of a work of art by critics who identify with the culture that produced it and who see themselves, in defining the work of art, as speaking for the importance, as well as for the virtues, of their own ethnicity and cultural values. Cultural chauvinism has played a powerful role in the advancement of Shakespeare to his current preeminence, and want of it has prejudiced

the Spanish canon in incalculable ways. At the same time, non-Spanish Hispanists, as Bruce Wardropper has pointed out, "find Spanish cultural history interesting precisely because of its peculiar institutions. The Inquisition, cante jondo, tauromachia exert a mysterious fascination over foreigners, who are addicted to the 'Romantic Spain,' the 'Arabic Spain' of Andalusia."

(viii) But this appetite for exoticism, affectionate as it may be, expressly inhibits the perception of a culture or its works as representing normal or "universal" human experience, and expressly precludes Lope from candidacy in that rarified realm of greatness in which Dr. Johnson (an Englishman) first defined William Shakespeare (an Englishman) as inhabiting.

His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world; by the peculiarities of studies or professions, which can operate but upon small numbers; or by the accidents of transient fashions or temporary opinions; they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion. In the writings of other poets a character is too often an individual; in those

of Shakespeare it is commonly a species.

(Johnson Reader 317)

And yet Dr. Johnson could readily recognize, and even take pride in, the fact that Shakespeare wrote as an Englishman, particularly when he defends the "native genius" against Voltaire. "Other modern languages," as far as Johnson was concerned, had no playwrights so influential. Nor does he feel it necessary to support this assertion by reference to Corneille, Racine, Moliere, Lope, or Calderón. Coleridge took both the praise and the nationalism even further: "The Englishman who without reverence, a proud and affectionate reverence, can utter the name of William Shakespeare, stands disqualified from the office of critic."

(Harrison, Complete Shakespeare, 79) In Alternative Shakespeares, a recent anthology of radical Shakespearean criticism, Christopher Norris sums up the problem thus:

From Dr. Johnson to F.R. Leavis, critics have looked to Shakespeare for linguistic intimations of an 'Englishness' identified with true native vigour and unforced, spontaneous creativity. Johnson, of course, ran into all sorts of difficulty when he tried to square this idea with the practical business of editing Shakespeare. 'Nationalism and universalism'--to recall Derrida's formulation--turn out to have sharply paradoxical consequences for Johnson's project. (49)

On the one hand, the plays are held up, by critics from Coleridge to F.R. Leavis, as the central and definitive achievement of literary language at full creative stretch. Of literary English, that is, although there is often a larger (and vaguer) claim in the background: that Shakespearean English embodies an ideal of cooperative thought and sensibility transcending all rootedness in time and place. By such means has criticism managed to reconcile the otherwise contradictory demands of 'nationalism' and 'universalism.' (57-58)

Professor Norris's words must rise to mind often when we read even the commentary of many English-influenced Hispanists. "The fact is," we are informed by Robert Kirsner, professor of Spanish, in the official publication of The Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission, "that the word 'compromise,' as it is understood in the Anglo-Saxon world, does not exist in Spanish (46).

Blind obstinacy, we are to understand from this sympathetic explanation, is part of the Spaniard's cultural identity. Spaniards, the message is, are not reasonable like Anglo-Saxons, and pig-headed intransigence, so alien to the cooperative thought and sensibility of the English-speaking mind is, alas, built

into the Castilian tongue itself. English as the norm of rational speech and civilized dialogue, indeed Englishness as the norm of humanity, was carried around the world with the Empire and with every military/political conquest of the Anglo-American hegemony. "The War is going to be All Right, my son," wrote Shakespeare's biographer Walter Raleigh ecstatically when the United States formally entered World War I. "The English language is safe to be the world language" (Hawkes, Alternative Shakespeares 40).

And in 1982 G. Wilson Knight could respond to the Falklands/Malvinas campaign in no uncertain terms: "I have for long accepted the validity of our country's historic contribution, seeing the British Empire as a precursor, or prototype, of world-order. I have relied always on the Shakespearean vision as set forth in my war-time production This Sceptered Isle at the Westminster Theatre in 1941 (described in Shakespearean Production, 1964)." One can well understand why Professor Ruiz Ramón shudders at the specter of chauvinistic criticism, but one can hardly confront such a discourse as this unarmed with a bit of one's own.

For Shakespeare has become even more than a manifesto of world-order-in-Englishness. "It may well be," wrote Alfred Harbage in 1966, "that Shakespeare idolatry is drawing strength from something other than its roots in the past. Having lost their anchorage in

the faith of their fathers. many are seeing a substitute in secular literature." (Alternative Shakespeares 3)

Shakespeare's work has become not simply art, but Holy Writ. And this is one great obstacle we are up against when we try to compare Castelvines y Monteses with Romeo and Juliet--a kind of secularized religious war wrapped in criticism's hide. First we are to admire Shakespeare's works for eschewing theology. Second, we are to worship them.

"Imagine a time when people murdered eachother [sic] for theatre seats," invites the director's program insert for a recent execrable English-language production of El burlador de Sevilla, ". . . and churches were used primarily for illicit encounters in a country claiming to be the most Catholic in the world." The director's credentials include a Fulbright scholarship at Oxford University. The translator has a Spanish name.

While bad productions of Shakespeare redound upon those that produce them, bad productions of Lope and the Spanish masters, saturated in ethnic bigotry and Black Legend attitudes, continue to be seriously destructive to the reputations of these playwrights.

Chapter II - "My Shakespeare"

Appropriation and Theatrical History

The purpose of this study, as I have said, is to compare two plays, and towards that end to identify prejudicial elements that normally distort the comparison. Once the elements are identified, it is assumed that we can by an act of will discount them. But, of course, discounting our deepest cultural prejudices is never an easy thing. And it is probably never possible to do it completely or with anything approaching perfect consistency. Furthermore, it is not only in the area of cultural chauvinism and prejudice that we find we have simply not been measuring Romeo and Juliet and Castelvines y Monteses with the same ruler, but as if we assumed that a pound on Earth and a pound on the moon were the same weight, we have accepted as equivalents measurements made under crucially different conditions. Nowhere is the difficulty more evident than in the area of the enrichment bequeathed to a Shakespearean play by its theatrical history.

More than a century ago Charles Lamb observed, "It is difficult for a frequent playgoer to disembarass the idea of Hamlet from the person and voice of Mr.

Kemble. We speak of Lady Macbeth, while we are in reality thinking of Mrs. Siddons." But the problem we face is by now considerably more complex than that, indeed by Lamb's time was already so. On the purely visual level, it is more than the persons and voices of particular performers, singly or in composite, that embarrass our idea of Romeo and Juliet. Centuries of pictorial representation, of "Shakespeare Illustrated," tableaux and ballets and photographs, parodies and allusions, costume adaptations and scenic renderings of every sort are part of our cultural imagination in the West (and further than the West) before we even approach in high school a paperback called "Romeo and Juliet by William Shakespeare," usually with a picture on the cover. "Juliet cap" is an entry in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, with an accompanying illustration. Romeo is a generic term. Indeed, in contrast to a play like King Lear, for example, Romeo and Juliet has been the subject of an extremely high proportion of theatrical and other visual interpretation as compared with critical interpretation. Educated people will be familiar with the image of mad Lear on the heath, but even the illiterate will know that in a play by Shakespeare Romeo speaks to his beloved from below with one hand reaching upward, while Juliet looks down upon him from a balcony. This is before we even begin to consider

taking a tape recorder into the field to examine the way ideas about the plot and content of the play have permeated our cultural imagination.

To ask knowledgeable readers to discount visual images of a garden from the balcony scene in Romeo and Juliet-- indeed to discount the balcony from the balcony scene, since the balcony, a relatively late theatrical innovation, is not provided by Shakespeare's text--is tantamount to asking them to stand in the corner and not think of a white bear.

Lope's play, on the other hand, has essentially no theatrical heritage. That is, there is no record left us of a performance that influences our present reading. Or to put it another way, Castelvines y Monteses is only hypothetically a play. We have no experience whatsoever of its theatricality manifest. We may read it as we read such novels-in-dialogue as the Dorotea or Fernando de Rojas' Calisto y Melibea; indeed, we have no choice. Claire Bloom's pure oval face, John Gielgud's thrilling voice, Leslie Howard's profile, Franco Zefferelli's sets, even Jerome Robbins' choreography, do not pass behind the translucency of Lope's text as they do behind Shakespeare's, although Shakespeare created none of these enhancements. We are alone with Lope's script and with whatever an individual imagination can--when it will--supply. Like a language learned in adulthood, Castelvines y Monteses

is without the evocative richness of experiential memory and pre-memory. We are so sure the garden is in Shakespeare's poetry. It is not. Here is the garden:

Poniendo una escala
 Las mas noches con silencio
 A la pared del jardín
 De los naranjos y cedros,
 Bajo. (2.7.p.9)

[Silently, many nights
 with a ladder to the garden wall
 among the orange trees and cedars,
 I climb down.]

Even if the lovers in a particular production of Romeo and Juliet plight their troth on a fire escape, there is still a primary scene in our imaginations to which this particular staging is a reference or commentary. The odds are very much against the possibility that anyone reading what I say here might have read the play for the first time or heard the play for the first time without ever having heard of it previously, and having heard of it previously is almost inevitably to have an achingly romantic, flowering moonlit garden somewhere in our associatons. Yet in fact Romeo's language emphasizes Juliet's window very much at the garden's expense:

It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!
 Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
 Who is already sick and pale with grief
 That thou her maid art far more fair than she.
 Be not her maid since she is envious.
 Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
 And none but fools do wear it. Cast it off.

(2.2.2-9)¹

This is an evocation, not of a hushed, enchanted place, of dreamlike motion and the tenderness of moonlight, but of a splendidly disrobed mistress, lusty and sunlike, in an aggressive act of rebellion and murder. The garden itself does not figure in Romeo's sensuality and the moonlight, sick and green, is not at all charming. The question here is not whether Romeo's famous soliloquy to his lady and their subsequent dialogue constitute beautiful poetry or communicate charged emotion. They do both, surely. The question is whether Shakespeare's language alone is responsible for what we think this scene evokes. And clearly it isn't. The references to night are frequent, but not to the sensuality of the place. Their love is at this stage a "bud," and then there is, of course, the rose which by any other name would smell as sweet, but other than these no flowers or fragrance or verdure. The aroused feelings of the lovers do not seem to have made

them particularly sensitive to other kinds of sensuality in the environment. Roselo's noiseless descent at night into a garden of aromatic trees (a reference to his happy married life rather than to his courtship and therefore even more likely for narrative readers to skim over) is much closer than anything in Romeo's speeches to giving us in language what we think is in the language of the "balcony scene," but what in fact is bequeathed to us from the theatrical tradition and from sources other than the words either as poetry or as prompts for the imagination of dramatic situations in the mind of a reader.

One of the greatest inequities we confront in the comparison of Romeo and Juliet with Castelvines y Montes is that the Romeo and Juliet we carry in our minds is the product of many more geniuses than Shakespeare's as well as the product of historical/political prejudices such as those we have discussed in the previous chapter. In the previous chapter, likewise, we touched upon the subject of advocacy by literary critics under the influence of political allegiance, but the contribution of the theater to the particular problems of our current comparison is equally insidious. Although critics have inveighed against the liberties the theater has taken with Shakespeare's script, it may be argued that the theater has done more for Romeo and Juliet than any

critic has. Time and again the theater has shored it up where it was weak, enriched it where it was inadequate, and has taken the blame where it was unsatisfactory.

It is not only that theatrical production has vivified, enhanced, interpreted and enriched our understanding of the play in the way a good--and even sometimes less than good--production will for any play. But over and above that, while production has served Shakespeare's oeuvre as a whole uniquely, the theatrical history of Romeo and Juliet in particular is a telling example of the interaction of literary and theatrical exponency in creating that Shakespeare which we have inherited.

Romeo and Juliet has never been as respected on the page as it has been popular on the stage, but the stage has kept the play vividly and insistently before the eyes of vulgar and intellectual alike--pretending for the moment and for the sake of decorum that these are distinct categories--until the intellectual was forced to explain why its favorite playwright's most popular play was one of his lesser ones. In some sense, indeed, it is a fallacy to isolate the critical history of this play from its theatrical history, because the critical history has always been either implicitly or explicitly in dialogue with performance and other forms of popularization, usually in the role of antistrophe. It has responded, by and large, rather than stimulated. In the stage history of Hamlet, for example, performers

like John Barrymore and most subsequent major interpreters have been strongly influenced by Ernest Jones' Oedipal theory, while after long disregard the minor history plays were given new life in performance by Tillyard's critical definition of them as part of an epic cycle. But criticism has not initiated rushes of interest or major changes of interpretation in the performance of Romeo and Juliet. On the contrary, to an unusual extent it has found itself set to searching within the text for qualities to account for the inordinate affection of the public at large for the play in performance, or incorporating, without attribution, interpretations propounded previous on the stage by actors or directors. David Garrick, Spranger Barry, Charlotte Cushman, John Gielgud and Peggy Ashcroft, Leslie Howard and Norma Shearer, Franco Zeffereilli and his various casts, have given our culture its Romeo and Juliet more definitively than critics have. But behind all of them lies an even more powerful theatrical influence, William Davenant.

[Again, the relationship of these interpretations to the quality of the text is problematic. When, for example, Fanny Kemble was cast in the role of Juliet, she was working a stale, sentimental role. What her looks, personal magnetism and ingenuity brought to the role in the way of fire and conviction has been credited to the role itself subsequently under the

rubric of "potential." The role always carried this "potential," which Kemble simply released or revealed, as, presumably, Charlotte Cushman, in transvestite performance with her sister as Juliet, revealed a dimension of naked physical passion that had always been there potentially. But here we come uncomfortably close to the old story of "Stone Soup," in which a couple of starving rascals, instead of asking for food, offer instead to feed the whole village on stone soup. They ask for a fire, a large cauldron, and water to fill it up. Then they add the washed stones and boil them. Then they taste the soup, declare it splendid, but request a few spices to enhance the flavor. Then they request, a few onions, some vegetables, and so on until they have made soup, not from the stones, but from the enhancements that other people brought to fulfill the presumed potential of the stones. Indeed, psychologically the stones did provide the basis for the soup, but physically no more than a few trace minerals. This is not to declare that Shakespeare's text is as inert as the stones of this story, only to suggest that Lope's stones might stand up much better against Shakespeare's for flavor potential had they been as advantaged by the willingness of others to add a ham and a sack of peeled onions.]

Although during his lifetime Shakespeare enjoyed great success and recognition, he was not at the time

his death, largely as a result of the peculiar genius of poet-playwright-producer-royalist Sir William Davenant. If we remove from the scales that element which was introduced by Davenant, the balance between Lope and Shakespeare will alter drastically and critically. And the element Davenant introduced is appropriation, what we shall hereafter have reason to call the Great Precedent. As early as the seventeenth century major plays were doctored radically to wild public acclaim and that tradition continues to the present. Bowdler bowdlerized his work, Garrick cut and rewrote his work, Lamb insisted it was literature and should not be performed at all, Tillyard declared that the history plays in historical sequence were England's "epic" even though they had never been seen in historical sequence by Shakespeare's audience, the Royal Shakespeare added hundreds of lines as well as performance in sequence to illustrate that this was true, Peter Hall declared (after Jan Kott) that King Lear was an existentialist masterpiece and altered the text to prove it. This habit of expectation, accommodation, and adaptation which did not begin with Davenant but which was crucially defined, focused, and given impetus by Davenant, advantages Shakespeare incalculably.

Davenant's Precedent is the Great one, although John Heminge and Henry Condell had certainly prepared

the ground with the publication of the First Folio some half dozen years after Shakespeare's death. What is distinctive--or more correctly transitional--about the relationship of Heminge and Condell to Shakespeare's plays is that when they published their version of Shakespeare's canon they were only in a fairly ordinary way publishing what was legally as well as to some degree legitimately their own. Not only were these plays the transcripts of the ephemeral glories of their own performances, but it must certainly be assumed that many of their own ideas, suggestions, interpolations, incorporated accidents, manifest talents and physical resources were represented in this written product as well. While Lope published a great number of his own plays, and bequeathed even more for his daughter and son-in-law to publish, Shakespeare did not, or could not, bequeath his plays to his family. The plays were the property of the King's Men, in whose name Condell and Heminge could give them to the press. John Heminge, moreover, had for most of the years of his association with the company been its business manager. "The good management of the financial affairs of the company," says Thomas Baldwin unequivocally. "is to be credited chiefly, if not entirely, to him." (39)

Heminge had a sound head for business, then, and there can be no doubt that the decision to publish as many of Shakespeare's plays as possible in folio form was a

well thought out business decision as well as an act of affectionate commemoration. It made good practical sense to market as literature assets that could no longer pull in revenue as theater. The interests of Shakespeare's reputation, the interests of the company, and the personal interests of John Heminge and Henry Condell were in this case identical. Half the canon that immortalized Shakespeare might never have been available to us had these two old actors not found supra-artistic reasons to market some of their company's old literature, wholly or partly by Shakespeare, in expensive, durable, suitable-for-the-library form. Truly the reception process begins with the very transcription and publication. We do not, for example, have Cardenio (a play, interestingly enough, almost certainly derived from a story in Cervantes' Don Quixote) or Love's Labour's Won for reasons only Condell and Heminge could have explained to us.

In the years immediately following his death, as the publication of the First Folio does not contradict, Shakespeare's reputation was in eclipse. "It is not a little remarkable," Granville-Barker remarks, "that, in that copiously elegiac age, there is no trace of the decease of the greatest English dramatist and the foremost figure in English literature having called forth at the time a single line of elegy." (Companion 5) Clearly not everyone at the time shared

Granville-Barker's estimation. Although the poet's friends might complain, eventually in verse, Shakespeare was not buried in Westminster Abbey alongside immortal Chaucer, as his rival Ben Jonson and his collaborator Francis Beaumont were. "Even before the theaters were closed in 1642," as F.E. Halliday points out to us in The Cult of Shakespeare, Shakespeare had been overshadowed by Beaumont and Fletcher and Ben Jonson, and when they were reopened at the Restoration he was remembered not very vividly as a once-popular dramatist who wrote before the age of enlightenment." (xi) Enter Sir William Davenant.

William Davenant, knighted in the field for services to the crown in the time of Cromwell, was the son of a couple who had operated an inn on the route between London and Stratford. The inn was a convenient place for Shakespeare to have stopped with some frequency, and it is accepted that the playwright's friendship with the Davenants was such that he became godfather to their son. The boy's Christian name was the same as his own. We have no way of ascertaining whether or not Sir William's later claim that Shakespeare was in fact his biological father is true, but cuckoldry for his father and adultery for his mother with her husband's trusted friend, not to mention bastardy for himself is certainly a peculiar claim to have made if it were not true, even given the

extravagant admiration that Davenant had for the playwright and his strong preference for poetry over innkeeping in his own life. Shakespeare certainly did not, in his will or in any other extant document, acknowledge young Davenant as his son, but Davenant's fierce and extreme desire to ingest, to digest, to make Shakespeare himself, his own, his progenitor and his heir, and in glorifying Shakespeare to fulfill ambitions even greater than those he aspired to in his own name is crucial to every aspect of Shakespeare's subsequent reputation and the pattern of many other dedicated appropriators for centuries to come. The great Shakespeare forgers--William Henry Ireland, another namesake, who fulfilled his father's dream by "discovering" Shakespearean documents; J.P. Collier, a dedicated scholar and founder of the first Shakespeare Society, who forged annotations that he simply "knew" should be there; Delia Bacon, whose sincerity and earnestness in explaining why Shakespeare must have been her own ancestral relative, Francis Bacon, moved even people who were convinced she was mad--all shared aspects of this same obsession.

In a clinical sense these fixations may be not unlike those of the sad psychopaths who pursue modern celebrities, or at the other extreme those of the most ordinary desire to possess something one admires, or to declare in print that one has finally cracked the

enigma of the Gioconda. But whatever its clinical kinships, the willingness not simply to interpret the words, but to add, delete and/or alter the words of the printed textual source in major ways purely on the basis of one's own revealed vision of the "true" intention of the playwright is more characteristic of Shakespeare interpretation, particularly in the theater, than that of any other playwright. It is not a notable characteristic of Lope interpretation.

Davenant set up Shakespeare as the English answer to the French masters, and he did this not only by freely adapting--as Macbeth--but in some cases--as The Tempest--by totally re-writing, with the help of young John Dryden, to such a degree that in modern terms one could scarcely call the result anything more than "inspired by" a play by William Shakespeare.

F.E.Halliday explains it in this way:

The reputation of Shakespeare had changed vastly between 1660 and 1668. Then his plays had been read by only a few, now they were seen, even if seen in mangled versions rather than heard in their original forms, by crowded houses who clamored for more. This was mainly the work of Davenant. Moreover, he had handed on his work to the next generation. It was he who first taught Dryden to admire Shakespeare, as it was he

who fired Betterton with the desire to emulate Burbage by playing all the great Shakespearean heroes, and to find out more about the dramatist to whose work he was indebted for his success. Dryden and Betterton had thirty to forty years of active life before them, time enough to consolidate what Davenant had begun (29).

But Davenant had handed on not only his passionate dedication to the idea of Shakespeare, but his enthusiastic high-handedness with what was to be defined as "Shakespeare" as well. He handed on his Great Precedent to Dryden and Betterton and all who were to follow. We are not free of it even today. What Halliday does not confront is that what crowded houses were clamoring for was not exactly Shakespeare, sometimes it was barely Shakespeare, and that Shakespeare's reputation was established first on an idea of what Shakespeare represented and only subsequently on what we call "the authentic texts". First he was called great and then those areas perceived as faulty were re-examined with the express purpose of finding greatness where none had been found before. This is still standard critical procedure with canonical texts, but nowhere to such a degree as with Shakespeare.

Why do we not say that from the time it was

retired by the King's Men until the middle of the eighteenth century Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, - enjoying no particular critical esteem, was considered by theater professionals as well to be flatly unplayable, and was not performed? We insist that what was played to clamoring houses was Shakespeare, albeit "mangled Shakespeare", and that the colossal reputation was built really upon those definitive elements of the "mangled" texts with which the genius of our bard can be credited. Or if it wasn't, it is now. Even the death scene so exquisitely rewritten by David Garrick must be counted in the final judgment as "mangling," a piece of waywardness which impeded recognition of the true and perfect Shakespeare of the ancient texts. Retroactively, the reputation Shakespeare enjoyed in the years between the Restoration and Garrick's Jubilee was deserved by Shakespeare even if it was not unequivocally earned by Shakespeare's work. And we insist on all this at least in part because Davenant's assertion that anything using Shakespeare's work was Shakespeare, and owed its excellence to Shakespeare, is still operative.

Numerous speeches and scenes, the essential plot and characters as Shakespeare had taken them over from Brooke (although Brooke's reputation garners no commensurate royalties), and the figure of Mercutio (who, although easily replaced in the plot, provided

the diversion of much sophisticated wit with which fashionable gentlemen could identify) were salvageable stuff which could be and were incorporated into fresh love dramas. Shakespeare left us no other play, after all, in which the passions of young lovers--the staple of so much dramatic representation since Lope de Vega--are foregrounded in this way. The lost Cardenio, if it indeed followed the outlines of Cervantes' story, might perhaps have filled the bill, but the Quarto publishers and the King's Men have left us no copy. And, therefore, Romeo and Juliet has been particularly precious. When we turn to examine the way in which the reputation of Romeo and Juliet was established on the post-Revolution stage, we find reference only to a lost adaptation by James Howard, an adaptation with a comedic ending. Shakespeare's name was invoked, and Shakespeare's reputation was credited, as Davenant's Precedent insisted. But on what grounds do we consider this hugely popular lost comedy as Shakespeare's play?

Even when the play was given a happy ending, as it was for almost a century, even when it was set in ancient Rome with the names, title, and much of the substance changed, as it was in Otway's Caius Marius, the cachet of Shakespeare's name served the prestige of the work and the success of the work served Shakespeare's reputation even when Shakespeare was at

best only a dead collaborator. The Shakespeare Legend, culminating in Garrick's great Jubilee in 1764 (in which no plays at all were performed) was built as much upon the idea of Shakespeare, as Davenant had passed it on to subsequent literary critics and theater practitioners through the discipleship of Dryden and Betterton, as it was upon the published work of the Folios and Quartos. Of course, during Lope's lifetime many plays were also passed off under the Lope's famous name, but these plays were not put to the purpose of making Lope's reputation as the broad stage "adaptations" of the century between the re-opening of the theaters and the Jubilee of Garrick were put to make Shakespeare's. And nowhere in Lope's canon do we have a phenomenon like this one: the reputation of Romeo and Juliet was firmly established by plays that in crucial respects are not Romeo and Juliet at all.

The play is Shakespeare's only major treatment of romantic love without irony or cynicism. Or at least it has generally been assumed that the treatment is without irony or cynicism, and the play seems to have served some important audience need. Even critics who find Romeo and Juliet wobbly as a work of art have often maintained an extraordinary tenderness for the lovers and for the story itself. Yet the story itself is, of course, not Shakespeare's. And the critics also, by whatever means were available to thier own

discipline, have followed Davenant's Great Precedent in altering the terms of interpretation for the play in order to turn it into the play they want Shakespeare to have written. Even the movement towards the restoration of a "true" Shakespearean text, begun more or less in the middle of the eighteenth century, while reflecting changing attitudes towards data and historiography, provided in consequence yet another way of refurbishing the old plays and trimming them to the times. "Authentic" texts were the rage for a while--lasting somewhat longer than "authentic" staging. And now that even authenticity has been called into question, modern critical methodologies continue to serve the Great Precedent. Both staging and critical exegesis are praised for uncovering hitherto unsuspected statements which, through no fault of the author's, have been missed by everyone in Western civilization for almost four hundred years. This is but the old appropriation in a new form.

Meanwhile, strategies for the interpretation of Lope's plays have moved very little beyond what was available to the Generation of '98, little as that was. Plays by Lope which have scarcely been studied at all by Shakespearean standards are not available for revisionism and the uncovering of new levels of meaning. They stand in comparison to Shakespeare's plays as if they only had one level of meaning for

purely inherent reasons, while Shakespeare's plays, for purely inherent reasons, had not only many but an infinite number, only a relative handful of which interpreters have actually, by their purely secondary efforts, been able to make manifest. As of this writing the interpretation of Castelvines y Monteses represented in this essay is the only in-depth study there is. To which interpretation of Romeo and Juliet is it to be compared? That the Spanish play should "be" as it were only a single interpretation while the English play is a polysemous fantasy in the Western imagination cannot be attributed wholly to factors which the respective playwrights put into the words of the texts which we have before us to examine. The "rules" even for what is called Shakespeare and what is called Lope, for what has been credited to Romeo and Juliet and not credited to Castelvines y Monteses, have been strikingly different since the age that deemed that Le Cid (adapted from Las mocedades del Cid) and Le Menteur (adapted from La verdad sospechosa) would be Corneille while Caius Marius (adapted from Romeo and Juliet) would be Shakespeare.

If any single characteristic--again, excluding some "pure" aesthetic excellence not rooted in cultural experience--can be considered definitive in recommending Shakespeare to the extraordinary reputation he has come to enjoy, it must be his

capacity to present, as it seems, an endlessly "open" text in which anything can be read that appears to be true at the time. And if any accusation has been mortal to Lope, particularly in comparisons with Shakespeare, it is the accusation that his texts are "closed", that their meanings are both shallow and narrowly specific, representing just those limitations which Dr. Johnson so roundly deplored: "the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world."

The impression left by centuries of "meddling" is that Shakespeare's texts are remarkably versatile, somehow embodying all of human wisdom, no matter what the fashion in human wisdom may be this year, when in fact it has required a great deal of ingenuity on the part of others to keep him current. We are quite certain that Shakespeare had something very profound and enduring to say about the human condition, even if we're not at all certain what it was. Lope, on the other hand, has been remorselessly nailed into whatever critics perceive as the prejudices of his age and nation, and of his personality as it is read from mountains of biographical data. It is customary to appropriate Shakespeare. It is customary not to appropriate Lope.

"My Shakespeare," Milton called him in that famous sonnet, and it is this epithet, more than more romantic

and facetious ones, that bespeaks the role that has made him preeminent. His transparent memory has left us no aggressive personal identity to obtrude upon our projections. Because all we know about Shakespeare the man is that he seems to have been moderately normal for his time and well liked by his friends, he has become the perfect cipher for our fantasies of that paternal sage who utters inside our minds from within the Book. Alec Guinness's trained Shakespearean diction as Obi Wan Kenobi comes insistently to mind.

In contrast, Lope, who published his own plays and told us what he thought of them, did not leave his work free in this way, but seems to have intruded his possession of them between us and the impulse to appropriate. Lope's plays, we feel, are his own, and a certain persistent testiness that the citizens of all time exhibit towards that particular larger-than-life, unable-to-be-avoided, flawed, petty, sublime, sensual, devout, impecunious, tender, lonely, exhibitionistic, selfless, egotistical, clamorous, pungent, transpiring personality of Lope the man leaches into the overall evaluation of his work. The avalanche of intimate data, of the sort that scholars are always digging for but are not always comfortable having dumped on them, barricades the work behind the man. Accept my work, accept me. Hundreds of years after his death, we still have difficulty finding in this permanent metaphysical

copyright some loophole by means of which we may twitch Lope's work from his grasp and call it our own. Custom has given us license to "open" Shakespeare, but has expressly discouraged by numerous means the taking of such liberties with Lope. The usual question of "What is the text?" becomes even more confused than usual with the question of "Whose is the text?". A great deal of discussion has been given in recent years to the issue of authorial intent, but here we have a singular paradigm of what is at stake. Shakespeare may be the most extreme case we have of the appropriation of intention by interpreters, Lope a comparably extreme case of the constriction of interpretation by very narrow and insistent assumptions about what the playwright could have meant. In one way these habits of approach have greatly benefited Shakespeare's reputation, allowing the credit of much critical richness and complexity to accrue to the playwright.

But in some sense, then, although we may think the danger is in favoring Romeo and Juliet because we know it better than Castelvines y Monteses, in fact the problem is that we know it worse, because we see it through the prismatic distortions of so many encrusted non-verbal images, so many centuries of active falsification, "adaptation," and modulation.

Therefore, when in this paper I compare one line of approach to Romeo and Juliet with one line of

approach to Castelvines y Monteses, there will be readers who will reflexively object that I have neglected other lines of approach to Romeo and Juliet. Who will make the same objection to my single, preliminary reading of Castelvines y Monteses? Since very little work has been done with it, we have very little understanding of its potential. But there is every reason to believe that its potential is considerable.

Chapter II Notes

¹ All quotations from Romeo and Juliet are taken from Shakespeare: The Complete Works, ed. G.B.Harrison (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1952).

Chapter III

The Question of Genre

Yet another problem in the critical comparison of Castelvines y Monteses with Romeo and Juliet involves the question of genre. In the Royal Shakespeare's famous production of Nicholas Nickleby, brilliantly adapted by David Edgar, young Nicholas achieves brief glory on the stage, bringing down the house as Romeo in the final moments of what we immediately recognize as a spoof on all those popular--and now utterly discredited--stage doctorings of Romeo and Juliet that were perpetrated and shamelessly relished before the age of authenticity. One by one Juliet, Romeo, Paris, Tybalt, Mercutio--every blessed corpse available, leaps to his or her feet to explain him- or herself in iambic doggerel. Not a one is really dead after all, and the whole deliciously preposterous fandango rises to a glorious climax of silliness as Wagnerian Mrs. Crummles in the martial vesture of Britannia bosoms her way through the resurrected multitude to lead a mad patriotic chorus of "England, Arise!" For any moderately educated twentieth-century audience, this is more or less the image that a happy ending to Romeo and Juliet conjures up. A happy ending for this most

famous of all tragic love stories is simply not to be taken seriously, and the conviction that such an option can only result in hokey trivialization brings critics to Lope's play with very little patience to consider if the great innovative Spaniard might have proven otherwise.

But let us consider it here. It is not, after all, only the play's early revisers who have quibbled with the outcome of Shakespeare's tragedy. Perfectly reputable English-speaking scholars of the twentieth century have questioned whether that ending is justified by the circumstances that Shakespeare gives us. Indeed, dissatisfaction with the play as tragedy is one of the earliest and most persistent objections raised by critics of Romeo and Juliet. As Frank Kermode sums it up in the very first paragraph of his introduction to the play in The Riverside Shakespeare, "A certain unease about the dramatist's intention, some suspicion that, in the early moments of the play at any rate, he lacks the rhetorical control which marks his great period, and--above all--a conviction that he offends against his own criteria for tragedy by allowing mere chance to determine the destiny of the hero and heroine--all these have conspired to limit the critical prestige of Romeo and Juliet" (1055).

The objection has been most notably articulated by H.B. Charlton, who excuses the central weakness of the

play by calling it "an experimental tragedy." In writing it, says Professor Charlton, Shakespeare is attempting for the first time to follow the innovative theories of the Italian Cinthio, using a tale from modern fiction to address a modern audience. The great theme of "modern" fiction, of course, is love. And so Shakespeare chooses a simple tale of young love thwarted and attempts to give it pith and moment by emphasizing the portentous operations of fate and an implacable feud, which together bring about the destruction of the these "ravishingly attractive young folk" through no significant fault of their own.

What the playwright discovers, according to Professor Charlton, is that the new formula doesn't work, or at least that he cannot make it work. The forces that destroy the lovers--fate and the feud--are not convincing. And even if they were, the destruction of innocents would still not qualify as an edifying spectacle. Romeo and Juliet, concludes Professor Charlton, "is indeed rich in spells of its own. But as a pattern of the idea of tragedy, it is a failure. Even Shakespeare seems to have felt that, as an experiment, it had disappointed him" (Twentieth Century Interpretations 59).

Other critics, particularly Susan Snyder, have gone even further, developing Professor Charlton's perception that the play is not only inadequately

tragic, but that in some respects it is actually comic: Young lovers of the minor aristocracy and irascible old parents who forbid their marriage are the traditional stuff of comedy from classical times well past the Renaissance. And indeed no harm is done in the first confrontation of the play, which features buffoonery from the servants and impotent spluttering from the overheated old men. That young love will heal this foolish enmity is a reasonable expectation. The world, furthermore, is at first a world of choice and accomodation, Professor Snyder points out, not tragic inevitability. Romeo changes his undying love for Rosaline to undying love for Juliet with the agility of Proteus, Demetrius, Phoebe, and Olivia, the pliant lovers of comedy. Tybalt is overruled by the laws of feasting, and neither vengeance nor anything but love seems at first very urgent. The Nurse and Friar Laurence, those pragmatic and indulgent facilitators, are characters from a comic vision of the world in which there is always a way out of a scrape.¹ Although Professor Snyder, like Professor Charlton, feels called upon to credit the play for what she presumes it to attempt rather than for what she perceives it to achieve, yet her study serves to set the classic difficulty in sharper relief.

"Romeo and Juliet is in essence a comedy that turns out tragically," writes John Wain succinctly. And

again: "Its gaiety and good fortune are drained away by the fact--also a *donnée*--that the lovers are 'star-crossed.' It is, to that extent, arbitrarily shaped" (Twentieth Century Views, 104).

The Chorus and various characters tell us how to interpret the outcome of Romeo and Juliet, but the actions and circumstances we see unfolding more readily suggest the workings of plot manipulation than of Destiny. Shakespeare's play has notorious difficulty in deciding what the real cause of the lover's doom should be. Is it the feud? Is it fate? Is it rashness in the lovers themselves? But why should the feud be such an obstacle to Romeo's romance with Juliet when it has been no obstacle to his romance with her cousin Rosaline, who is accused of frigidity, not partisan hostility? Moreover, Capulet himself so downplays the enmity that he refuses to allow Romeo to be frowned at in his house: "An ill-beseeming semblance for a feast" (I.5.67)*

"A feud like this," as Professor Charlton puts it, "will not serve as the bribe it was meant to be; it is no atonement for the death of the lovers" (Twentieth Century Views, 58).

Is the problem fate, then? Or defects in the characters of the lovers? "The doctrines of individual responsibility and of fate as a social Nemesis offer divergent motivations:" points out Professor Stauffer,

"this play may fail as serious tragedy because Shakespeare blurs the focus and never makes up his mind as to who is being punished, and for what reason." (Ibid. 55-56). Romeo and Juliet has its defenders and apologists, to be sure. But objections such as these have never been fully laid to rest.

"Tragedy," in the words of Oscar Mandel, "taken all in all, exposes an original and fatal defect in the relation between a purpose and something within or without. Here we leave Aristotle to name the precise condition of downfall: inevitability impresses us as the kernel of the definition. No work can be tragic without it." The tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet has persistently been found wanting in inevitability.

George Steiner explains further: "Where the causes of disaster are temporal, where the conflict can be resolved through technical or social means, we may have serious drama, but not tragedy. More pliant divorce laws could not alter the fate of Agamemnon; social psychiatry is no answer to Oedipus. But saner economic relations or better plumbing can resolve some of the grave crises in the dramas of Ibsen. The distinction should be borne sharply in mind. Tragedy is irreparable" (8). The series of exasperating mishaps and contretemps which, along with what appears to be a very firm determination on the part of the lovers to die, cannot in their petty and perverse

aggregation add up to the primal power that inheres to tragedy in its most serious forms.

It is for these reasons that the play has been called, "pathetic rather than tragic," "an idyll with an adventitiously melancholy ending," (Mandel, 27) "a formal exercise in romantic tragedy" with "a slightly cloying over-sweetness," (Brooks, 81 and 106) or even, by one of its greatest admirers and interpreters, flatly "romantic melodrama" (Gielgud in Levenson, 48).

"Melodrama accepts wholeness without question; for its purposes, man's loyalties and his directions are neither uncertain nor conflicting. He is not troubled by motives that would distract him from the outer struggle in which he is engaged. . . . It is in tragedy that man is divided; in melodrama, his troubles, though they may reflect some weakness or inadequacy, do not arise from the urgency of unreconciled impulses. In tragedy the conflict is within man; in melodrama, it is between men, or between men and things." (Heilman 79)

"Romeo," says Robert Heilman in Tragedy and Melodrama, "is a lover whose troubles are almost exclusively outer ones." (174)

In defense of James Howard, Thomas Otway, David Garrick, and other early rewriters of Romeo and Juliet, as well as numerous more modern revisionists, we may well apply the old show business crack that you don't have to be a chicken to know a bad egg. Although the

ability to spot a bad one does not, alas, inevitably confer the ability to lay a better one, the revisers did have a sense of what has been persistently unsatisfactory about the play as it stands. According to many critics, the tragic ending of Romeo and Juliet is affecting, but arbitrary, and--Nicholas Nickleby or no--the people who have had to make this play work on stage have often concurred across the centuries with this line of critical opinion.

What about the credit accorded the play by some as an "innovation" in tragedy, as an experiment that prepares the ground for other works--although imperfect in itself, a deliberate act of significant daring? "Romeo and Juliet, the most elaborate product of (Shakespeare's) so-called lyrical period, was his first experiment in tragedy," Harry Levin tells us, footnoting H.B. Charlton. "Because of that very success, it is hard for us to realize the full extent of its novelty, though scholarship has lately been reminding us of how it must have struck contemporaries. They would have been surprised, and possibly shocked, at seeing lovers taken so seriously. Legend, it had heretofore been taken for granted, was the proper matter for serious drama; romance was the stuff of the comic stage." (SQ, "Form and Formality" 6) But, as we have seen, H.B. Charlton believes the experiment is anything but a "success."

Furthermore, the credit accorded Shakespeare's "innovation" in this play must be tempered with the recognition that he transferred to the stage with very little modification a plot which had already been called "The Tragicall History of Romeus and Juliet" by Arthur Brooke when he couched it in narrative verse. Nor was Shakespeare's the first dramatic version of the story; Luigi Groto had done essentially the same tale, derived from Boastuau and Bandello and other Italian antecedents, as a play in 1578. There is even the possibility that an earlier dramatization existed in English before Brooke. Shakespeare was trying something new, but not something unprecedented.

Moreover, he very likely had available his friend Mabbe's English adaptation of the enormously popular and influential Calisto y Melibea by Fernando de Rojas. Rojas's work recounts the seduction of young Melibea by the ardent Calisto with the help of an old bawd called the Celestina, by whose name the story is known. As in Romeo and Juliet the lovers die. The story is "tragic". And the character of the Celestina, incidentally, is often cited as a source for Shakespeare's conception of Juliet's Nurse, who is called (once) Angelica. Rojas' work is written in the form of dialogue with act divisions, but like Lope's Dorotea it is really a literary play or a novel in dialogue, meant to be read, much too long and

impractical for performance. Mabbe's English adaptation, however, is a performable play. Professor Levin and others of the inflated "innovation" school seriously underpay Shakespeare's debts for Romeo and Juliet as a tragedy. There is no contemporary evidence, moreover to suggest that Shakespeare's audience was ever "shocked" by the novel features of any of his plays as audiences were later to be shocked by Hernani, The Playboy of the Western World, or Waiting for Godot. Shakespeare and the other sharers of his company made a solid bourgeois living from their work in the theater, as few of their contemporaries did, and we have no support but our own post-romantic fancies for the idea that the Lord Chamberlain's Men (or at the time of the composition of Romeo and Juliet perhaps Lord Hunsdon's Men) would have risked "shocking" away paying customers merely for the sake of artistic experimentation. Somewhat novel, yes. Daring, unprecedented, shocking, no.

There is another argument that must be addressed before we are able to consider the real innovation of Lope's comedic treatment, for which there is no precedent in his sources. And that is the argument that Romeo and Juliet does not fail as a tragedy because it was never meant to be a tragedy in the sense of King Lear or Oedipus Rex. It is something else, the preferred classification being some sort of Liebested.

The double suicide according to this line of reasoning is not a catastrophe but a consummation, the apotheosis of a love that transcends life.

Liebestod has, of course, never achieved the prestige of tragedy as a confrontation with the human condition. There has always been something suspect and decadent about it, a poetic convention that does not answer enough questions about experience. "There is something sinister about Courtly Love and its Daysongs," Francis Fergusson has observed in his own introduction to Romeo and Juliet "In that tradition love is always amoral, all-powerful, and so wonderful that it can be fulfilled only in or through death."

(16)

But even as Liebestod, Shakespeare's play is thin, particularly in comparison with such a paradigm as Tristan and Isolt, for example. In the pseudo-religion of courtly love, after all, love martyrdom, patterned upon Christian martyrdom, had to be earned, not jumped into after a brief passion, however intense. Lovers studied to love well over long periods of service and self-denial. Death came only after everything else had been tried, and courtly lovers were nothing if not resourceful. They learned to know one another and created languages and symbols for intimate communication which others were not meant to understand. One important way in which love proved

itself was by endurance in the face of vicissitudes, obstacles, frustrations, temptations, and time, sometimes not only years but decades. But after one night of intimacy, which appears to be neither more nor less lovely than anyone else's happy wedding night, *Romeo and Juliet*, we are to believe, have exhausted all the love experience possible in this life. The Liebestod argument founders on the same reefs as the tragic argument. The double suicide is not any more plausible as consummation than as tragic catastrophe. It is precipitated by foolish recklessness, baffling incompetence, and far-fetched coincidences, not by the ripening of love into transcendence.

At this point it is probably wise to make clear yet again that the purpose of this study is not to "prove" that Romeo and Juliet is an indefensible play. The purpose of this study is to compare it with Castelvines y Monteses. And to that end it is necessary to demonstrate that previous comparisons, including the implicit comparison involved in neglecting the Spanish play entirely even as a relevant analogue, have been distorted by a consistent unwillingness to measure the plays equitably. From the seventeenth century to the present the single most problematic element in Romeo and Juliet has been perceived to be its "tragic" ending. Lope's play resolves that problem. That resolution deserves serious examination.

In the first place, the comedic outcome of Castelvines y Monteses is a clear innovation in relation to Lope's (and at one remove Shakespeare's) source in Bandello. In the second place, this outcome, as we have seen, works logically out of potential inherent in the story. It should not be seen either as trivialization or as cobbling. Where Shakespeare has simply followed his sources to a pre-determined conclusion that he could not justify dramatically, Lope has seized creative authority and drawn out the story according to a sure and brilliant understanding of its richest implications.

In the third place, although comedy allows for much freer play with plausibility than tragedy does, even sanctioning the creative concoction of situations that openly defy credibility, Lope in countless small ways consistently and carefully anchors his play in the plausible, even when the logic of the action requires cutting loose into various levels of ludic extravagance. When he does this, he frequently makes us turn to Shakespeare's play with new questions.

In the opening scene of Castelvines y Monteses, for example, three young fellows of the house of Montés--Roselo, his friend Anselmo, and his manservant Marín--are hanging about outside the Castelvines' where a party is going on. They begin to egg one another into crashing the party after the ancient you-go-in-me?-

why-me? modality with which all socialized human beings over the age of seven can instantly identify. "Pero el peligro es notable," Anselmo points out to Roselo,

Porque del bando Montés
 Tu padre cabeza es.
 Y aun no sufre que se hable
 Deste gente en su presencia
 Cuanto mas verla en su casa. (1.1.p.1)

[But the danger is considerable.
 Your father is the head of the Monteses.
 And Castelvín will not even suffer
 You people to be mentioned in his presence,
 Much less to be seen in his house.]

This is a perfectly natural thing for Anselmo to say under the circumstances, but what should immediately strike anyone familiar with Romeo and Juliet is that no one in Shakespeare's play says it, or anything like it. Neither Benvolio nor Mercutio nor Romeo nor any of their masquing comrades ever refers to the nasty concrete contingency that Romeo might be killed if he is recognized in the Capulet house. Romeo bemusedly refers to "some consequence yet hanging in the stars" while in essence walking blindly out into traffic. However one may deplore that none of Lope's young gallants says, "Oh then, I see Queen Mab hath

been with you," one must still find it enormously refreshing that they do say so many alert things that are appropriate to the situation, not merely to the conversation. The difference is not simply that Romeo and his fellows live in a world more surcharged with tragic significance but that the obsession with tragic significance, or ironic significance, or romantic significance, often causes all of them, but especially Romeo, to be particularly and maddeningly not-at-home on the literal level.

At the ball Lope is careful always to alert us to the fact that Roselo, once recognized, is being watched. This seems appropriate, and therefore plausible. Roselo also conducts himself in a manner which, however reckless, is consistent with an awareness of being under surveillance. Furthermore, the observations of others are noted and accounted for. Anselmo and Marín watch him. Castelvín and his brother watch him. Otavio glares at him from the moment he approaches Julia, who is also aware that her conduct toward the stranger is being observed. Again, this raises questions about Shakespeare's play. Why does no one watch Romeo, a recognized interloper in the house of his enemy? Neither Tybalt out of choler, nor Capulet out of caution, nor Benvolio out of concern for his friend's safety, nor Mercutio out of rascally curiosity to see how he will approach Rosaline keeps an

eye on Romeo Montague or observes him kissing his host's daughter on the mouth. Why is Tybalt not Romeo's shadow, waiting for a false move? A feud that is supposed to be implacable is intermittently of no concern to anybody. It is whipped up and snuffed out at the convenience of a dramatist who needs to get his lovers together and then needs to get them dead. Where are Benvolio, Mercutio, Rosaline, and by the way Paris, anyway? From a guest list of some two dozen people (we cannot know how many "daughters" or "nieces" are intended or how many "revelers" crash), how can one sixth disappear? When some half a dozen people present have specific reason to observe either Romeo or Juliet or both, how do their actions remain invisible? Shakespeare's sloppiness in accounting for things like this is probably another reason that Romeo and Juliet is hard to believe.

In sum, not only does Lope's decision to lead the story to a happy outcome avoid the greatest weakness of Shakespeare's play, but Lope's control of moment-by-moment situational plausibility, his better memory for what he has said is going on--even in a genre that would accomodate greater license--points up Shakespeare's failure to achieve such control in Romeo and Juliet. This is a far cry from what we have been led to expect we would discover if we bothered to compare Shakespeare's play with this Spanish analogue.

Furthermore, if we have assumed that Lope's choice of a comedic ending must inevitably entail the sacrifice of seriousness, we must check ourselves at once. Recently important theorists of genre have argued for the dignity and importance of the comedic vision and for its particular relevance to a Christian culture.² But we need to go even further. Christian comedy in an important sense appropriates to itself the authority of pagan tragedy, because the redemptive ending is part of a central philosophic metaphor, a paradigm of Christ's promise that human history itself has been made comedic. The ending that ends all endings shall be a wedding feast, and the final season shall be springtime. For Lope as the most viscerally Catholic of all playwrights, this story opened immediately into a deeper vision of the redemptive power of love over hatred, as the comedy of divine forgiveness embraces tragedy, which is merely the agon and not the epiphany. Lope did not need to, nor do I believe he intended to, make his play in any specific way a religious allegory, but there is a recurring allegorical dimension to it. And the moral vision with which he makes sense of the story is inevitably both deeply Catholic and deeply Spanish. More importantly, it is a whole, integrated vision, in which all the parts serve a multivalent but coherent purpose.

A word also must be said on the idea of tragedy in

the Golden Age theater, since it is easy to suggest that Lope was constrained to serve up a comedic outcome because suicide is under Catholic doctrine a mortal sin. Yet it would have been easy enough for a master plotter like Lope, if he felt his censors would not allow him the latitude of Italian narrative writers, to have devised a way for the deaths to be violent accidents incurred by the desperation of the naive and youthful lovers, a fall in escaping, perhaps, a ruse that backfires, or even better a case of mistaken identity in which a father kills his own child believing him or her to be the child of his enemy. Golden Age theater is not without a concept of tragedy had Lope thought a tragic outcome appropriate. Indeed, the Golden Age theater is responsible for a profoundly innovative idea of Christian tragedy, an idea central to Castelvines y Monteses even though the ending is comedic. Since the Christian doctrine of redemption confers immortality on any character who deserves our pity, a protagonist's death cannot, as many have pointed out, carry classical tragic meaning. But Spain's new kind of tragedy was based not only on an articulated theology, but on deep implicit cultural values. The death of a beloved other, particularly one's child, replaces one's own death as the tragic locus. And spiritual death replaces physical death as the unbearable abyss to be confronted. The greatest

moral suffering that a protagonist can face in Golden Age drama, therefore, is the realization that he (typically he) is guilty of abetting the moral death of his own son. Since repentance and redemption are always possible to the last spark of life, this moment of realization usually occurs at the son's death. Then, even if the son makes his peace with heaven, the terrible guilt and loss of the father remain. Like Oedipus (and perhaps Othello, that most Spanish-seeming of Shakespeare's tragic heroes)--and unlike Macbeth, Hamlet, Lear, Antony, Brutus, Troilus, Timon, or Coriolanus--the protagonist of a true Spanish tragedy struggles to forgive himself for a sin that is almost unbearable to know.

It is not necessary to share Lope's theology--any more than it is necessary to share that of Homer, Sophocles, or Dante--to appreciate the aesthetic strength that such a highly refined, culturally-grounded system can provide for a work of art. It is, however, necessary--as with Homer, Sophocles, or Dante--to be able to respond positively to something essential in the human values of the system. As a deeply-held personal feminism may hopelessly disgust one's palate for Paradise Lost or a fierce moral objection to Liebestod may raise one's gorge against Tristan and Isolt (or Romeo and Juliet for that matter), so an extreme position of individualism must

alienate a reader or playgoer from Lope, for whom individualism, essential as it is, cannot provide a whole human identity--love is the other half.

To this ideal, moral awareness and free will are essential. In Shakespeare's play, free will is scarcely an issue. Passion governs conduct, not reason. One tends to think of Romeo and Juliet as an "immature" work. It is often referred to as such, although Shakespeare was over thirty when he wrote it. And what gives this impression is in part the failure of promising parts to cohere into an integral and convincing whole. But it is also in part the extreme immaturity of the protagonists who, even for young teenagers, are extraordinarily lacking in awareness or self-governance. The lovers struggle against various obstacles, real or perceived, but not with moral choices. Indeed, although young lovers in Renaissance drama are commonly two-dimensional, critical introspection rarely being their strong suit, Shakespeare's characters in this play, and Romeo most markedly, are almost bizarre in their failure to consider either the causes or the consequences of their actions.

In striking contrast, the characters in Castelvines y Monteses, passionate as they are, are yet held fully accountable for their actions. The extravagant body count that Shakespeare felt he needed

to sell a serious play at this stage in his career is not apparent in Lope's play--not because Lope's play will be a comedy, quite the contrary. It is the value Lope's characters place on human life which seems to generate the possibility for comedy. There is one death in Lope's play, and that death counts in a way that the slaughters of Mercutio, Tybalt and Paris with all their accompanying language and histrionics, do not. More than once--but not invariably--a character will stop himself on the brink of violence, when we least expect him to. In this way the thickness of real experience is assimilated into a Christian vision. People are driven by passions, great ones and petty ones. No one knew this better than Lope. His characters are willful, foolish, self-blinded, choleric and fallible. And yet they make choices. And when Lope's characters in a crisis make choices, sometimes utterly unexpected ones, they can no longer be mistaken for walking humors or embodied passions. They seem suddenly to leap into recognizable, conscious humanity.

The central conflict of Lope's play is very clear and controlled. It is between young love, which represents life, and the feud, which represents death. Young love wins and heals the enmity. Were this all, of course, the play might be a bit of pleasant fluff, a simplistic little fable, better success at a much smaller endeavor than Shakespeare essayed. But Lope has

perceived deeper implications. Because the feud is predicated upon a perverse definition of family, it is a kind of travesty of Christian principles. It is in its nature un-holy and incestuous, and its consequence, therefore, is something worse than physical death. Its consequence is spiritual death. The Spanish play presents a much more sophisticated understanding of the relationship of the young love to the old feud, and it shows us why this love is the appropriate and only vehicle for the redemption of this evil.

Behind the sure and steady unmasking of this false idea of family is always implicit the family as a deeply-held Spanish value, rooted in part, no doubt, in very ancient Judaic influences, but more obviously in the family as an Old Christian paradigm. The Catholic godhead itself is described in these terms: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Church is Holy Mother Church. The Blessed Mother, the Madonna and Child, the Holy Family are the most familiar and beloved images in the iconography. A member of a religious order is called bride of Christ, father (a priest), brother (a monk), sister (a nun)--all terms declaring an ideal of the family as a sacramental bond defined not by formalized antagonism, which seals the center off; but by love which radiates from the center outward, ultimately embracing all who are willing to enter.

In the central act of Lope's three-act play, the antagonisms of the feud are ignited by a trivial confrontation which takes place inside a church. The stage represents the street outside the church and characters go in and out as the action proceeds. In the ensuing brawl, Otavio Castelvín provokes Roselo Montés, who is attempting to make peace, and is killed by him. But what is significant is that the violence between the Houses of Castelvín and Montés is provoked by a patently petty squabble over places in the House of God, where the mortal vanities of precedence have no place. The action that unfolds before us is swift, passionate, credible, as one thing leads to another, words fly, swords are drawn, mediation fails, attack, defense, death, flight, and terrible remorse. Yet the presence of the House of God is always implicit, even if we, like the characters, in the heat of the action forget. It is into the church that the dying Otavio is carried by his father as the scene closes. The House of God was there at the opening of the scene; it is there at the end. Its eternal values have been present, measuring each word and deed, and thus the outcome, we now realize, was not mere chance or natural consequence or poetic justice, but part of a wordless divine dialogue between an Almighty father, teaching, chastising, and the mortal fathers and sons who have failed to recognize that in the House of God Castelvines and Monteses are brothers.

It is the tragedy at the center of the play that ennobles and makes sense of the ending's redemptive character. It shows what it is that the houses of Castelvín and Montés are being saved from, not simply from death, but from mortality itself, from the physical extinction of childlessness and the moral extinction of lovelessness. Therefore, Lope has placed the death of Otavio at the center of a play sparkling with beautiful, irreverent, much-loved and much-loving young people. He has folded the tragic within the comedic as mortality is folded within the eternal. That is, although in contrasting the play with Shakespeare's we often call Castelvines y Monteses a comedy because it has a resolution that is both comedic (happy) and comic (funny), it is really not a true comedy at all, but crucially a tragicomedia. For it is not merely the random mixing of comic and tragic elements, but the relationship of those elements which can give the tragicomedia its singular resonance.

After the killing of Otavio, Roselo, like Romeo, is banished. And Julia must agree to marry Paris. But when she takes the sleeping potion sent to her by the friar, neither she nor the audience knows what it is. She falls to the ground crying out, and suddenly we also believe Julia to be dead. Now Teobaldo has lost his only son and Antonio his daughter and only child. The brothers face the annihilation of their house and

the passing of the family estate into the hands of an outsider. To preserve the estate and the family name, the brothers grimly request a papal dispensation so that Antonio, as the elder brother, may marry his young niece, Dorotea, Teobaldo's surviving child, and beget an heir. There is no suggestion that pantaloonian lust plays any part in this decision. It is an arrangement distasteful to everyone involved. Antonio is not even certain that at his age he can do what is required. The feelings of the young Dorotea, in love with Roselo's friend and kinsman Anselmo, and implicated in the squabble that ended with the death of her brother, do not need to be described.

Soon the terrified Julia, buried alive in the tomb of her ancestors, awakens, not knowing whether she is living or dead. The house of Castelvín has become a charnel for its children. Otavio, Julia, Dorotea, are all interred in the full bloom of their youth, their fathers reduced to an obscene, incestuous pact for the breeding of another heir to hold the estate within the ever constricting boundaries of "the family".

Into the blackness of the tomb comes the light of Roselo's lantern. Roselo and his nervous manservant Marín boldly enter the house of their enemy, who is dead, to rescue Julia, with the faithful Anselmo covering their escape. Again Lope opens out the allegorical dimension noiselessly, for this scene is a

perfect parallel of the ball scene at the beginning of the play, and both are symbolic of Roselo's role in the salvation of the house of Castelvíñ. He comes, it seems, as an interloper, to steal away their daughter, but his real function is to rescue her from the sterility of the closed house, and in rescuing her, he rescues the dying house of Castelvíñ itself. Love comes with a lamp and leads the soul out of its earthy sepulchre. In the courtly love tradition of the Middle Ages, religious imagery was transferred to sexual passion, which in turn became a kind of pseudo-religion, the religion of which Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet are devotees. But Lope inherits another medieval vision which is the reverse. In this vision human love--the love of parents and children as well as the love of men and women--is not a religion in itself, but is an earthly pattern of perfect divine love.

Therefore, it is fitting that the first place Lope makes us laugh aloud, the setting of the first scene played for pure, broad, low comic effect, is the tomb. Because Roselo is a Christian Orpheus, he will succeed in leading his bride out of the underworld, and the tomb itself is reduced to a funhouse for slapstick terrors where lovers sweetly grope to find one another in the dark.

What emerges from all this finally is that in this

play form and meaning are one. Furthermore, the tragicomedia form of Castelvines y Montesés, which Lope created and which he here perfects, represents a central and deep-rooted cultural way of seeing, a way that would have been impossible for the ancients and which was impossible for Shakespeare for different reasons. The separation of comedy and tragedy indicates in part a vision of experience in which sometimes things work out and sometimes they don't, the "problem comedy" a vision in which things work out imperfectly, impermanently and uneasily, the tragedy with low comic interjections a vision in which laughter relieves but does not redeem. But the tragicomedia form as Lope employs it in Castelvines y Montesés is a medium crafted to the redemptive vision of the Christian dispensation, predicated ultimately upon the Fortunate Fall and the idea, not that a few great souls may achieve enlightenment even through suffering, but that the purpose of suffering is enlightenment and ultimately joy, that death is transition and heaven is eternal, that love is where all things will finally come to rest. Comedy, or more particularly tragicomedia--is the meaning Lope saw in the story. "We are an Easter people," the current pope has said, "and Halleluia is our song."

But in fact Lope is perhaps the last great poet of such unshaken Easter-morning-mindedness. And all

modern drama, including Shakespeare, is implicitly in dialogue with that vision of which Lope is perhaps the purest dramatic exponent. We doubt. And what we doubt most explicitly is what Lope believed. Nowhere do we have a clearer example of what is at issue than in these two interpretations of a secular love story, having ostensibly nothing to do with theology but in fact everything to do with the promise of the Old Faith which Lope, the last medieval man, can give pure expression to but which Shakespeare can no longer without irony make use of.

Nowhere do we have a clearer contrast than between the radiant confidence, sureness, and miraculously effortless craft of Lope's perfectly reconciled tragicomedia and the confusions of Shakespeare's play, unable to be either comedy or real tragedy, deeply involving and yet not really credible, sad and yet frustratingly stupid, flinging back and forth between sentimentalism and brutality, great poetry and the worst fraudulence of language, as arbitrary as it is insistent in catastrophe, turgid, inexplicable, and full of words, the play itself a morbid and self-indulgent adolescent game which has yet to confront real death.

In sum, it is a mistake to approach the Catholicism of Lope's drama as if it were most importantly a doctrinal matter. It is not. Indeed,

its implications are probably most powerful when, as in Castelvines y Monteses, theology is invisible. The enduring power of Lope's faith resides, in this regard, in what it allowed him to see in human beings and what it enabled him to make us see long after history has unseated the once-hegemonic authority of his doctrine, how it allowed him to make sense of human relationships, what it allowed him credibly to present as possible for human love to achieve. This vision cannot be divorced in any simple way from the official, politicized institution of the Catholic Church in Spain, but it also cannot be reduced to it. What we have in Castelvines y Monteses is not simply Catholicism or even simple Spanish Catholicism. What we have is Lope's most Spanish and most Catholic human art distilled to a clear faith in the redemptive power of love whose reasons and purpose he demonstrates to us and whose wholeness as a moral principle he makes us understand.

Chapter III Notes

¹ Susan Snyder, "Romeo and Juliet: Comedy into Tragedy," in Essays in Criticism 15:4 (1970):391-402.

² Northrup Frye notably, but see also Harry Levin's Playboys and Killjoys: An Essay on the Theory and Practice of Comedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

Chapter IV
"Boy Actresses"

A woman's face, with nature's own hand painted,
 Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion--
 A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
 With shifting change, as is false women's fashion;
 An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
 Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
 A man in hue all hues in his controlling,
 Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth.
 And for a woman wert thou first created,
 Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
 And by addition me of thee defeated,
 By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.

But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,
 Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.
 (Sonnet 20)¹

In Such Is My Love, a recent study of Shakespeare's Sonnets, Joseph Pequigney has once again addressed the recurring and problematic issue of Shakespeare's sexual orientation. And this time, however one may challenge Pequigney's readings of

individual Sonnets, especially his somewhat extreme insistence that certain unclear or inconsistent passages have now been perfectly explained, the overall case emerges as convincing that the traditional order of the Sonnets is indeed Shakespeare's own and that the sequence documents, albeit guardedly and elusively as befits the still scandalous subject matter, a consummated homosexual affair with a fair-complexioned youth and a briefer affair with a brunette woman.

Sonnet sequences were traditionally amorous in content and the terms of endearment with which the poet addresses the youth are terms used by men towards their mistresses and used nowhere in the literature of male friendship to indicate the non-sexual affection of one male for another. Moreover, the Sonnets are thick with terms whose bawdy homosexual meanings have long been ignored. If these meanings are glossed as faithfully as bawdy heterosexual meanings normally are, the Sonnets take on not only another dimension of content but a sequential story line of attraction, courtship, consummation, bliss, betrayal, reconciliation, repeated transgressions and remorse, and finally fading passion and loss of attachment.

Pequigney argues further that there is no evidence in the Sonnets that the fair youth was ever unfaithful to the poet-lover save once. I cannot accept his

argument that Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee....") incontestably describes a single act of fellatio on the part of the youth with the rival poet. This seems to strain the imagery into narrow correspondances that deny centuries of traditional abstraction and turn the poem into a fairly simplistic coded message. But his more general argument that the poet-lover never couches his suspicions in terms of certainty, but only in terms of jealous speculation ("if" and "might") is more persuasive. The poet does not say he knows for a fact that the youth has been unfaithful--certainly not as unfaithful as the poet knows himself to have been. Pequigney even refers to the theme of obsessive male jealousy as recurrent in Shakespeare's plays, particularly Othello, Cymbeline, The Winter's Tale, and Much Ado about Nothing, where it is seen as an extremely destructive force directed against an innocent object. In particular, the poet-lover, according to Pequigney, never expresses the "corruption" of the youth by the brunette woman as a fact, but only as a danger or as something which he fears has occurred.

Although Pequigney's case for the youth's essential fidelity is based on disputable evidence, the point is still an interesting one, especially since the poet-lover's apologies for his own repeated transgressions allow for much less debate. There is no

question, furthermore, that the poet denigrates the lady--along with women in general--not only in Sonnets ostensibly addressed to her, to himself, to a depersonalized reader, but also in Sonnets addressed to the youth. While, as Pequigney points out, the first seventeen Sonnets do urge the youth to procreate, they never expressly mention marriage, and indeed the possibility of the youth's being attracted to women for themselves, either as worthy individuals or even as heterosexual love objects is consistently belittled, deplored, discouraged. Beyond his duty to breed more fair youths--a highly valued but extremely perishable commodity--the youth's heterosexual inclinations are actively discouraged.

Pequigney is at pains to distinguish the homosexual affair as involving more mutual admiration and tenderness than the affair with the woman. Indeed, he breaks no new ground in observing that the poet-voice confers the highest praise upon the youth while the cynicism, sexual disgust, and anti-encomia are directed towards the woman.

James Saslow, in Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society describes at some length the relationship between Renaissance theories of homosexuality and misogyny, and this relationship is clearly evident in the Sonnets. To this extent, Pequigney, Saslow, and other sympathetic and thorough

writers on the subject such as Alan Bray in Homosexuality in Renaissance England, have provided important and long-overdue insight into Shakespeare's attitudes towards women. The implication that none of these writers has been willing to explore, however, is that this paradigm of homosexuality--or rather one-sided bisexuality--being, as they readily concede, an expression of adult male dominance, even predation, towards young, dependent males, was a dominance that reflected and reinforced the social norm and precluded reciprocal, equitable, consensual and long-term sexual relations between men at the same time and in the same way that it precluded them between men and women.

In much of the misogynistic literature quoted by Saslow, for example, as in the Sonnets, women and boys are expressly told that they are adversaries and encouraged to vie with one another for the adult power-male's favor. Like his Italian predecessors who defined the paradigm for the Renaissance on classical models, what Shakespeare's poet-lover seems to fear and wish to prevent is a threatened alliance between the two manipulated love-objects. In the literature quoted by Saslow, the woman is told that she is inadequate because she does not have a penis and does not allow anal intercourse. In the Sonnets she is also told that she is morally and even physically repellent, unlike the fair boy. Her brunette complexion (like an

Italian's or a Spaniard's?) is made the object of particular opprobrium and further ostracizes her as "other," belonging to a generic category--in the one case brunettes, in the other case women--that in the natural course of things apparently ought to be excluded from admiration, trust, love not only by the poet but even more particularly by the youth. The scattered praises of her brunette attributes are ambiguous (associated with mourning, for example) and later withdrawn as lies anyway as if she were of a despised race as well as a despised sex. She is insulted and verbally degraded, and if there is, as Bray suggests, a continuum between Italian and English homosexual attitudes at least among the literati, she is encouraged to view the youth as a sexual rival and to vent her anger and sense of personal shame upon him, seeing him as the enemy of domestic tranquility and as the instrument for devaluing her in the eyes of the all-powerful bisexual male. The mythological Greek prototypes of Orpheus (dismembered by Maenads for his misogynistic homosexuality), Hercules (killed by his wife in a bungled attempt to insure his fidelity), and Hebe (whose displacement by Ganymede insults Hera, goddess of wives and marriage) emphasize this. Youth and lady are played off against one another.

What neither youth nor woman is encouraged to see is that the young male is also being manipulated, and

is in essence treated equally badly. Shakespeare's fair youth is told that his heterosexual attraction to a woman his own age is a foul weakness, whereas his willingness to be the love object of an aging, physically unattractive man makes him "good," commendable, and worthy of the older man's affection. The older male is entitled to be lustful, promiscuous, sophisticated, bisexual, and obsessed with the most transient physical beauty. But the youth is held to the classic double standard by which women have been oppressed. He must be "true", accomodating ("kind"), passive ("gentle") unmoved by other people's youthful flesh. Furthermore, he must use women if necessary (since pretty boys are perishable and must be continually replaced) but never allow himself to fall in love with them. He must allow himself to be owned exclusively by the adult male as long as his physical attractions last and then accept uncomplainingly that as his beauty fades so inevitably must his value, whatever the Platonic protestations of early courtship. Pequigney traces the decline in the Sonnets of the love that was supposed to last forever, and there is good reason to believe that the decline corresponds to the boy's passing beyond the optimal period of bloom. In "three years" the poet expects to see major signs of aging in the youth, surely a very brief period to pass from youth to age--unless those years are the ones in

which a boy's voice changes. Although he is urged to procreate, he does not seem to be doing so. It is at least possible that, with his smooth, girlish face, he is still too young, and his failures are being used to help convince him that he will never be adequate as an active male and was in fact "first created" to replace a woman in a sexually passive role. Every praise of the youth is likewise a warning, and "So long lives this and this gives life to thee" is a double-edged sword, since the Dark Lady has been immortalized as well. Let the youth fear to be immortalized in a similar way.

Saslow points out that the boy-lover in a typical homosexual relationship of the Renaissance was usually of a lower class than that of the adult suitor, often a dependent as well as a minor, like the small pages whose function as catamites, according to Saslow, was notorious, and, we may add, like the "boy-actresses" apprenticed to particular adult male actors in Shakespeare's company. Saslow does not point out, however, that the boy's brief bloom of attractiveness as a homosexual love object was a marketable--and consumable--commodity from which someone, either he, or more likely his family or his legal master, might hope for some tangible payment, if not in the form of crude cash then perhaps in the form of gifts or favors or entree into a circle in which economic opportunities

were greater. In any case, the sexual "consent" of a minor would not have been either free or informed, even if anyone had thought it was strictly necessary. Furthermore, what most of these writers downplay in their idealization of the Greek-Italian paradigm is that physical brutalization, damage, and the serious risk of infection are involved in the anal penetration of a young boy. "Ganymede" was the victim of dangerous as well as socially degrading sexual abuse.

In the Renaissance paradigm of homosexual love, the general outline of which Shakespeare's Sonnets illustrates, the pretty boy was exploited in ways comparable to the ways women were exploited, and was similarly enjoined to be "good" and enjoy it. Like women, many of the boys doubtless accepted the role forced upon them, internalized it, even learned in some cases to feel that they loved it and had always desired it. But we can hardly be sure of that. The voices of the "Ganymedes" of the Renaissance are as silent to us as the voices of the lower class servant women caught behind the stairs by male employers. Our traditional assumption that Shakespeare's "fair youth" was an aristocratic patron, furthermore, is called into question by Pequigney, who argues that there is no real evidence in the Sonnets that the youth is of higher social stature than the poet and even some evidence that he is not. Pequigney thinks he might well have

been a "boy actress." If recent scholarship is correct and the "W.H." called on the dedication page the "onlie begetter" of the Sonnets is really "W.S" in misprint, the author and not the patron, the way is further cleared for this hypothesis.²

As Saslow points out, the role of the boy in the traditional homosexual encounter was even physically comparable to the role of a woman. The boy was expected to be the passive partner and to allow anal penetration, considered shameful for an adult male; he quotes here a sixteenth-century Italian title, "The Tale of the Youth Who Was Caught in the Act of Adultery and Was Sodomized and Flogged by the Husband" (82). A degraded role was "natural" for women and boys, "unnatural" for dominant males, and the role of sex as violence and domination was never far from the paradigm, as the rape of Ganymede by Jove's eagle, a carnivorous bird, reminds us. However the bribe of tenderness and flattery was employed, the emphasis is still on the gratification of the dominant partner at the expense of the passive one. The supposed ecstasy of the submissive partner is more often recorded by the dominant partner as an implicit instruction to cooperate than by the passive partner as a real experience.

In these ways the exploitation of boys paralleled the exploitation of women, but in certain ways it was

inevitably different, although always intimately related. The fact that, unlike a woman, a boy carried no dynastic potential was both an advantage and a disadvantage to him. It was an advantage because his rape or coerced seduction would never result in the public shame, ostracism, and often crippling responsibility of an unwanted pregnancy or in the mortal consequences of a difficult or badly managed childbirth. It was a disadvantage, on the other hand, because he could not barter an heir, or the potential of an heir, for legal or economic status and security. Furthermore, English society largely ignored the possibility of his sexual abuse and exploitation (See Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage) and, therefore, did not protect him as it protected girls or acknowledge his victimization as readily after the fact. Even today professionals are aware that however appalling post-rape traumatizations are for females, they appear to be even worse for males, and raped males, whatever their physical and psychological suffering, are even less likely to seek help or legal redress. It may be argued that some of the adolescent boy actresses whose situation we are about to discuss may well have been homosexual in their inclinations and would have been no matter what their training; for these the circumstances of their enforced profession may have been, at least at some point, quite congenial.

And some may have been able to manipulate their fleeting attraction to very satisfactory personal advantage. But their exploitation, and that of their fellows who were not so inclined, would have begun long before the age of consent, definitively before puberty when their voices changed.

Again, the exploitation of the boy is inseparable from the degradation of the woman, for to alienate the boy-child from the woman and abuse the boy "as if he were a woman" is to degrade the woman not only as sexual object but as mother. The Marian concept of the mother as loving intercessor and powerful protector is deracinated and we are again in an ancient Greek mythology of identification not only with Zeus the raptor but with the father-predators Cronos and Saturn, the woman negligible and helpless, and suppressed as potentially subversive and vindictive, to be kept at all costs from allying with her children against the violently maintained authority of the father.

It must be made clear before we proceed that this discussion does not postulate homophobia, any more than a discussion of the sexual abuse of female children by adult men would postulate heterophobia. What it does point out is that what some have perceived as the cherished Golden Ages of relative homosexual freedom were not, alas, free from the pernicious patterns that affected heterosexual relations during the same

periods, and that the paradigm of so-called boy-love resurrected by the Renaissance from classical Greek models has polarized and alienated mainstream heterosexual society unavoidably and because that was precisely its purpose as a social form. Although in recent years feminists and gays have seen themselves to be allies against a common oppressor, historically this has not been so. In Renaissance England as in classical Greece--and indeed the fundamentalist Near East--homosexuality has been part of a cultural rejection, even quarantine of the female. In the same way that women were dichotomized into virgins/whores, the homosexual experience was dichotomized into ideal/perversion, either transcending heterosexuality or subverting it, the love object either exalted or punitively degraded. While claiming to be a radical break with traditional sexual norms, the boy-love paradigm in fact carried over those norms virtually unchanged and even reinforced them.

It is impossible, then, to compare the role of Juliet in Romeo and Juliet with the role of Julia in Castelvines y Monteses, as we shall try to do in the next chapter, without first confronting the fact that the former was a role written for a pre-pubescent boy while the latter was a role written for a young woman. Lisa Jardine, in her ground-breaking Still Harping on Daughters, has admirably made the case for the

homoerotic potential of what Granville-Barker called the "boy actress," but her argument is carefully restricted by her assertion "that the eroticism of the boy player is invoked in the drama whenever it is openly alluded to: on the whole this means in comedy, where role-playing and disguise is part of the genre. In tragedy the willing suspension of disbelief does customarily extend, I think, to the taking of female parts by boy players; taken for granted, it is not alluded to" (23). Professor Jardine is forced to accept Cleopatra's famous "I shall see/ Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness/I' the posture of a whore" (V,ii,219-221) as an "allusion", but still she does not go far enough. The fact of the boy actress's maleness, although certainly something the dramatist and actors could emphasize, was not concomitantly something they could also simply turn off. The "chemistry" of sexual scenes, the spin of erotic innuendo, the fact of the substitution, the reality of the boy's own perceivable experience on the stage, of which an audience is always at least secondarily aware, in tragedy as well as in comedy, were things Shakespeare would have had to understand and manipulate when he directed two boys (or in the case of Romeo and Juliet, probably Richard Burbage, then about twenty-seven, and a boy about Juliet's age, fourteen) to act the roles of lovers in front of an audience. However "boy actresses" might

have signified women semiotically, there are certain statements they were incapable of phenomenologically.

They were boys, trained from an early age to conduct themselves like desirable women on stage and to kiss and caress men as if in passionate lovemaking. Whenever and wherever women have played love-objects on stage they have always been subject--willingly or no--to the attentions of amorous playgoers. On what grounds is it assumed that the "ravishing boys" of Shakespeare's theater were not, and that the passionate address to the fair youth in the Sonnets has nothing whatever to do with the mores of Shakespeare's theatrical world? Lawrence Stone claims in The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800 that English families in general displayed very low affectional ties to children at this time, and singularly ignored the possibility for homosexual harrassment of children inherent in many of their institutions. Furthermore, he points out, English children did not live with their parents for very long.

Not only were the infants of the landed, upper bourgeois and professional classes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries sent out to hired wet-nurses for the first twelve to eighteen months, but thereafter they were brought up mainly by nurses, governesses

and tutors. Moreover they seem normally to have left home very young, sometime between the ages of seven and thirteen, with about ten as the commonest age, in order to go to boarding school. Lower down the social scale they also left home at between seven and fourteen to begin work as domestic servants, labourers or apprentices, but in all cases living in their masters' houses rather than at home or in lodgings. . . . The reason for this mass exchange of children, which seems to have been peculiar to England, is far from clear. (107)

Stone assumes that this custom "greatly reduced the oedipal and other tensions which inevitably arise between parents and their adolescent children struggling to assert their independence and master the problems of their budding sexuality" (108). But, of course, those tensions could readily be transferred to a new set of authority figures. And if, as Stone also cheerfully suggests, incest was reduced, Bray reminds us that masters often had few inhibitions against using underage dependents sexually.

Pursuing the circumstances of the boy actress, if we ask whether the same circle of gallants that passed the sugared Sonnets hand to hand, savored the misogynistic titillations of Lucrece's rape and the

gratifications of pouting Adonis' rejection of an overbearing Venus, would have formed an influential segment of the audience of Shakespeare's plays, the answer--as Jardine points out--must be in all probability affirmative, especially when Christopher Marlowe, generally accepted as the "rival poet" and perhaps rival lover of the Sonnets (and an avowed pederast) was also Shakespeare's great rival as a dramatist.

Marlowe, of course, is as good a place as any to look for a link between homosexuality in the Sonnets and homosexuality in the theater. And the link--as not even Professor Jardine has been willing to acknowledge fully--is a distinctly unpleasant one. Marlowe was a major supplier of plays for the children's companies--where some of Shakespeare's boy actresses may well have been trained--and the children's companies were widely accused of encouraging, if not actually institutionalizing, pederasty. Again, scholars, while acknowledging the reputation, have persistently begged the question of whether or not the reputation might have been deserved. But disinterested inquiry suggests that the circumstances of the children's acting companies in England at the time of Shakespeare present a uniquely disagreeable and problematic profile. No modern transvestite performance can duplicate the climate and the coercion under which those children plied their trade.

The Children of the Queen's Revels, to begin with, like their great rival company the Children of St. Paul's, were nominally, or originally, a boys choir, and following an already ancient tradition, the masters of the company had royal patents to "impress" children from anywhere in the realm.³ Boys as young as ten (or perhaps even eight or nine) were taken, by force if necessary, and without parental consent if necessary, to London, the unfortunate parents being required to foot the bill. The children were then subject to virtual incarceration (they did not go out without a "guardian") and to an extremely arduous regime of training and performance, virtually without holidays, since holidays were likely to be performance days. Again, scholars have tended to romanticize this regime for the high quality of the art it must have produced, without considering that, unlike modern students of ballet or Olympic gymnasts, for example, the children impressed by the masters of the Revels had not necessarily manifested either the psychological or even the physical capacity for such a regimen. They could sing and they were pretty; that was all. In earlier times the children had had their futures provided for--university education and promotion to posts more lucrative in most cases than anything their parents could have hoped to provide unassisted. At the same time, clearly, a brutal age did not always demonstrate

the degree of sensitivity in child rearing that modern psychologists would recommend, and to maintain our historical perspective we need only to remember that elsewhere some of these boys might have been candidates for castration in the interests of their art. Yet even so, the enthusiasm of such a distinguished advocate as H.N. Hillebrand in his crucial study The Child Actors is difficult to understand. Envisioning the undisguised envy of peers and the unadulterated delight of a ten-year-old leaving his parents, Hillebrand positively burbles: "What luck!" (43) But unless the parents were exceptionally distant and abusive, it seems highly unlikely that any ten-year-old, even an English one turned over to strangers by custom at the end of the sixteenth century, left home without fears and without a stifled tear. But there would be no need to emphasize this if visions such as Professor Hillebrand's had not been so peculiarly euphoric on the subject. Why does he feel it so important to recommend this dubious obsolete institution to our warmest regard, even by means of so hollow and simplistic a parody of child psychology? Elsewhere he goes so far as to compare the impressment of choir boys to the standard contemporary practice of impressing artisans for royal service--without so much as a nod to the radical difference between impressing adults and impressing nine- or ten-year-olds (42). There has been

an extraordinary need to cover up, to romanticize, even to glorify a system which can never have done better than supply the children with advantages at a cost, clearly a greater cost to some children than to others. Castrati often went on to great careers also, let it be remembered, and many music historians have admitted that modern countertenors cannot hope to duplicate the purity and beauty of their voices, but few now would cry, "What luck!" in describing their circumstances.

By the time of penurious Elizabeth, furthermore, the advantages had been considerably shaved (education and adult employment were no longer guaranteed) and the cost had acquired those unusual increments which brought the children's companies under their most serious attack to date. One well-connected father brought charges for the kidnapping of his son and the violence with which the boy and others impressed at the same time had been used. He and others accused the masters of procuring the children for "vice." Certain Puritans, of course, deplored the theater categorically as vice, but it may well be asked whether the category of theater they were familiar with did not in fact present particular cause for their objections. The children had long been used as performers in pageants and other semi-dramatic theatrical presentations, but now they began to be used as actors in full-length plays, first for royal amusement and later, under the

guise of rehearsal, for paying private audiences. It was under these latter conditions that Marlowe, Lyly, and other dramatists began to write plays to be performed by them. These plays were performed by children, but they were by no means for children; indeed, much modern discussion has concerned the question of whether children could ever have adequately conveyed so much material they were presumably too young to understand. Some of that material was grisly tragic or heroic; a great deal of it was explicitly lewd, and certainly after doing a great deal of it the children could not have been as innocent as such scholars would prefer them.

It is presumed that the youngest boys played the children and women and the older ones played all or most of the adult male roles. The ages of the oldest boys are uncertain, but the normal age for termination of apprenticeship seems to have been between twenty-one and twenty-four. Younger boys could play women, it is assumed, only until their voices cracked. Indeed, there are a number of contemporary references, including Hamlet's, to the problem of cracking voices, although modern female impersonators seem to do very well with cultivated falsettos, or even without. (Some real women have husky voices, after all.) But the "childish treble" seems to have been considered essential for heroines and therefore extreme youth was

essential in the boys who played them. Scholars suggest that training could have postponed the onslaught of the undesired secondary sex trait: Lord Olivier refers to a solo-boy's voice in 1927 as "well and truly on the way out as he was close on sixteen."⁴ But for most boys the age of transition is much nearer twelve, sometimes even eleven, and it is entirely possible that the boys who played sixteen-year-old Perdita, fifteen-year-old Miranda, and not-quite-fourteen-year-old Juliet were even younger than the characters they were assigned. Although one might expect the transition itself, with its unexpected and uncontrollable fluctuations, to be more of a problem than the stabilized results, the consensus of opinion appears to be that after his voice cracked, a boy permanently graduated from playing heroines. Gerald Bentley insists that all female roles, even in the adult companies and including Lady Macbeth, Volumnia, and Juliet's Nurse, were played by boys, but I assume this to mean that older women were played by boys between change-of-voice and the termination of apprenticeship. Desirable boy actresses were pre-pubescent. And in the children's companies boys could be kidnapped as young as eight and forced to play the roles of sexual objects to older boys. By the time they were old enough to play Volumnia, their assumptions about human sexuality must have been firmly

in place. And although we have been assured that such an apprenticeship was nothing but a lark and a privilege for the boys, nothing but an ennobling and illuminating experience for surrounding adults and playgoers, in the light of what we are coming to understand about the sexual exploitation of children these assurances must appear increasingly disingenuous.

Over and above the curious reading that a boy's developing psyche might give this sequence--that femaleness is a transitional stage between childhood and manhood--it is important to remember that the boys of the children's companies were not being trained in an ordinary context. Many children, after all, from Shakespeare's time to this, have played transvestite roles in school productions without feeling erotically exploited or having their expected sexual orientation noticeably diverted. It can be fun; it can be liberating and illuminating; it can be merely stupid. Yet there are many variables to this kind of adult-instigated role-playing. And in the best of cases it still carries with it, given the context of our culture's attitudes towards effeminacy and sexuality, the potential for negative experiences ranging from the passingly embarrassing to the permanently traumatic. The future Lord Olivier, initially a choir boy, played Maria in excerpts from Twelfth Night at twelve, and at various times, ages thirteen to fifteen, played Kate to

his adult director's Petruchio, with great success. "Father Heald's direction was brilliant, and he injected into my consciousness a conviction that I was, in fact being a woman" (30). An odd statement, which Lord Olivier does not explain further. But he goes on to say:

With hindsight, I suppose that the allowable feeling of superiority conferred by solo-singing, plus my giddily successful acting opportunities, had lent my exterior a hint of showoff; and the female roles had varnished it with an extra coat of girlishness. All of which is a polite way of explaining away the fact that I was universally known as "that sidey little shit Olivier." I very soon caught the attention, rapidly followed by the attentions, of a few of the older boys. The prefects themselves, in the dignity of their exalted positions, were above such things.

I did not in any way welcome such attentions, I knew well enough what they spelt. My first experience of that had been a rather frightening one. (31)

He goes on to narrate a homosexual attack by an older choirboy in the Church House, interrupted when the boy thought he heard someone coming up the stairs. (Young Larry was wearing a kilt.)

I rushed down, tearful and trembling, in desperate search of my mother, into whose arms I gratefully flung myself. On the way home she asked me the lad's name, which she recognized. . . . She made me promise to tell her if anything of the kind should ever happen again.

The Children of the Revels, of course, had no mothers available to rush to. Yet under much more protected circumstances in a much more enlightened age a boy could still fall prey to attacks strongly fostered by practices that were even more fully developed and even more thoroughly institutionalized in the English theater practice of Shakespeare's time. Olivier describes his experiences with a sadistic schoolmaster:

He had soon fastened his prime interest on me (I reportedly sang like an angel and was as pretty as was needed to attract the worst in certain males).

He arrived at the school armed with a specially fashioned strap. The object of his strapping exploits was of course me. With my trousers down I was made to bend over--"Bend more tight, more tight," he always said.

From this tormentor young Larry was eventually

saved by his older brother, who protested to the vicar, the vicar having finally tuned in to the screams which apparently had by then been coming across the courtyard for some time. The Children of the Revels, who also sang "like angels" and were "as pretty as was needed to attract the worst in certain males," who also must have had early on "a varnish of girlishness" and indeed were trained to perform lewd plays and behave like seductive girls, were unlikely to have had older brothers available either. What they did have was Christopher Marlowe ("[A]ll they that love not tobacco & Boyes [are] fooles."),⁵ a man very interested in dominance, if his plays are any index, writing lascivious roles for them; and masters rigorously training them to play "ravishingly" for the pleasure of court gallants and their friends.

Sociologists have looked for and expected high instances of homosexual activity in any closed, single-sex community, in prisons, in monasteries, in ships at sea, even in the hallowed public school system of Great Britain. But scholars have been almost bizarre in their refusal to entertain the possibility of homosexual exploitation in the practices of Shakespeare's theatrical community or its implications for his work. Describing the additions made by Marlowe to the Vergilian narrative of Dido and Aeneas, Jackson Cope writes:

All of these additions are interpolated to

exploit the self-conscious theatrical situation vectored by sexually romantic love matter, a literate adult audience, and the little boy players.

The first addition is an induction in which Jupiter is revealed dandling Ganymede upon his knee. This Ganymede is Plato's (Laws, I 636c) and Lactantius' glorified catamite. "Hold here, my little love!/. . . I'll hug with you an hundred times." (I,i,42-48), Jupiter cajoles, and Venus, entering upon the scene, is disgusted: "Ay, this is it! You can sit toying there/ And playing with that female wanton boy,/ Whiles my Aeneas wanders on the seas" (50-52). This unexpected and broadly homosexual opening would not have failed, of course, as a joke for those friends and scandal-seekers who knew Marlowe's (at least alleged) personal predilections. . . . But this was only a private joke at best, riding upon the inevitable recognition that the boys and their masters were mirroring and mocking their own public reputations. (317)

And later Cope goes on to say:

The potential for private as well as public abuse of the boys in a context which made

them chattel became part of their public image. Gabriel Harvey taunted Lyly as "the Vice master of Poules" when he was associated with the boys, and Middleton ironically informed would-be gallants later that they could "see a nest of boys able to ravish a man" at Blackfriars. Stephen Gosson worried about boys who put on "the attyre, the gesture, the passions of a woman," and Philip Stubbes found the theaters bringing mate to mate where "in their secret conclaues (covertly) they play the Sodomits or worse." Cocke's character of an actor asserted that "if he marries, hee mistakes the Woman for the Boy in Woman's attire, . . . But so long as he lives unmarried, hee mistakes the Boy . . . for the Woman."

Before the Englishing of Vergil's poem begins, then, the metamorphosis of the boys and their Master into the luxurious pagan gods provides self-conscious satire.

That is, after all this evidence--and more--which he himself lays out, Cope's position seems to be that the delicious humor of Marlowe's play in performance came from mocking the erroneous belief that the little boy performers were sexually used, not simply held out to invite sexual desire. Since he provides us with no

grounds whatsoever for assuming the belief erroneous, we are left with a peculiar secondary possibility, that the mockery was considered funny because the belief was true. Surely Professor Cope's is not a mainstream sense of humor either way, but it is probably closer to the sense of humor of the audience at Blackfriars than we have liked to think.

If homosexuality was, as Harbage, Davies, and most vividly Jardine have pointed out, "a staple topic in plays for the boys' private theater" (9), how did consciousness of the homoerotic potential in the convention of boy actresses suddenly vanish from the minds and glands of playgoing gallants when they went to a play at the Globe rather than Blackfriars, with adults in the male roles but boys, maybe even some of the same boys, still playing the roles of love objects, or when the bill changed from comedy to tragedy? Clearly it didn't. And clearly it didn't vanish from the minds of the boys, or from the minds of their masters, the adults who might play their fathers offstage and their lovers onstage, or from the minds of the playwrights who wrote for such conditions of performance. If a boy was homoerotically stimulating as Ganymede or as Venus, a boy was homoerotically stimulating as Juliet.

"I am arguing," declares Professor Jardine straightforwardly, "that in the drama the dependent

role of the boy player doubles for the dependency which is women's lot, creating a sensuality which is independent of the sex of the desired figure, and which is particularly erotic where sex is confused (when boy player represents woman, disguised as dependent boy)" (24).

Even Professor Jardine has not considered how pervasive the eroticization not only of dominance, but also of brutality towards the helpless must have been in the pedophilic, pederastic world of the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater. The appeal of what she refers to as "the potentially rapeable boy" (18) could not be sealed off in the comedies of cross-dressing. Indeed, it would have been not at all unreasonable for Shakespeare's playgoers to fantasize that at least some of the boy actresses who fascinated them actually had been raped at some point in their peculiar apprenticeship. The frisson of pederastic violence was part of a subtext which the medium itself fed into the complexity of the audience's response. Indeed, Shakespeare virtually never introduces a speaking child upon the stage unless that child is to die violently. We remember Rutland and young Macduff run through with swords, and the princes in the Tower smothered in bed. And then there is young Arthur in King John, who although he dies by flinging himself from a wall, treats us first to an extremely pathetic scene in which

he pleads with a man he has trusted to be his guardian not to put out his eyes with a red-hot poker. One can only wonder what kind of gloss Cope's "scandal-seekers" would have put on burly Hubert's hot poker.

The determination to save Shakespeare and his theater for the mainstream has caused scholars not only to deny the strong pederastic element in his creative community and its art, but even to insist that the substitution of boys for women did not impede the "universality" of Shakespeare's dramatic statements in any way, but probably enhanced it. That is, his work may well have profited, we are told, from the absence of those negative effects which inevitably accompany the female presence. The arguments generally take one of four roundly misogynistic and mutually contradictory forms:

1. Boys are simple, noble, and chaste. Women are lurid, affected, and lascivious. The introduction of women actresses (redundancy intended) essentially vulgarized Shakespeare's supreme art.

2. Boys, innocent of the base, meaty femaleness of real women, are able to present a kind of transcendent, hyper-femininity. Boys are actually more feminine than women--by virtue of being less female.

3. Boys in women's roles enhance the complexity of the role, because they allow us to see a sophisticated dimension of ambiguity in all sexual relations. That

is, besides being 1. neither masculine nor feminine and 2. hyperfeminine, they are also 3. both masculine and feminine, showing us that gender is not an either/or affair, but that men, in loving a woman, really love in part the "boy" in her, and that women are often most interesting when they are something besides female--that is, when they are male.

4. A convention is invisible. Watching a skilled performance, one soon "forgets" the gender of the performer and accepts the illusion. Cancel all of the above.

Some recent "feminist" critics have even added a fifth argument, perhaps the most peculiar of all: that since women's options were limited in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, boys playing roles like Rosalind/ Ganymede, Viola/Cesario, Julia/Sebastian, Imogen/Fidelio or Portia/Balthasar actually acted out liberating options for women by a kind of theatrical proxy.

Position number 1., that claims boys to be simpler, nobler, and chaster than women, can begin with a kind of willed naivete. In this regard we must again return to Professor Jardine's contention that the homoerotic element simply disappears when it is not specifically invoked. In part it seems that just because her thesis is so radical she has felt the need to make it less threatening by sealing it off, by

restricting it. Other critics have allowed themselves to express broader suspicions, but maintain an essentially conservative position by declining to follow through the implications.

"If physical embraces were embarrassing," Michael Jamieson writes in "Shakespeare's Celibate Stage," having assumed that they were, "--though it is impossible now to know what Burbage did on the words, 'The Nobleness of life/Is to do thus. . . . '--how was a boy-actress expected to bring off the scene in which Cleopatra seems to smother the dying Antony in kisses:

Dye when thou hast liu'd,
 Quicken with kissing: had my lippes that power,
 Thus would I weare them out." (12)

Vis à vis this question the headmaster of Sloane's has assured us that the boy need only maintain his simple, chaste, sincerity and do nothing. Since kisses will not bring back Antony, no kisses need be applied (13). But we scour Professor Jamieson's article in vain for an answer to his own rhetorical question. He simply changes the subject at this point, circling back later to assert: "Shakespeare used devices of imagery and rhetoric in an essentially dramatic way, seizing on every suggestion he found in Plutarch, to make Cleopatra playable on the Jacobean stage, but in

accomodating himself to the boy-actress, he did not sacrifice a single emotional effect" (91). Not a one.

Even though Professor Jamieson may have meant merely to assert that, although we can't imagine how boys fulfilled the erotic instructions given in the text, the fact remains that they must have, and that Shakespeare did not demur to give such instructions, yet Jamieson has absurdly avoided confronting the fact that we can imagine very well how they fulfilled such instructions--by acting upon them. And upon Othello's "One more, one more," and "I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this,/Killing myself, to die upon a kiss." And Coriolanus' "O, a kiss, long as my exile, sweet as my revenge!" And Benedick's "I will stop your mouth." And Romeo's "Thus with a kiss I die," and all the rest. It might well embarrass the learned heterosexual scholar, even in so sexually liberated a moment as 1968, to imagine two boys, or a boy and a man, caressing one another and kissing on a public stage, but it might embarrass him as well to receive a sonnet from another man beginning, "A woman's face with nature's own hand painted,/ Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion." We cannot for that reason assume that it would have embarrassed Shakespeare's gallants or that the actors merely turned their backs to the audience (a tricky business on a thrust stage) and faked something when the lines called

for a passionate kiss. Such willed naivete recalls Queen Victoria's famous position on Lesbianism: no laws against the practice were needed because no one would ever engage in it.

The most extreme exponent of position 1., which claims that boys are chaster, finer presences than women, however, must be Guy Boas, headmaster of the Sloane School in Chelsea between the wars, who, to prove his point, defiantly produced not only Troilus and Cressida, but even Antony and Cleopatra with schoolboy casts. Both productions were well received. It is important to note that the argument is not simply that boys are chaster because of their immature age--in which case girls would do as well--but also and significantly because of their gender. "The intensity of the pathos," writes Boas of Othello, therefore, "is Desdemona's sexless innocence: one spark of selfish feminine intuition would have restrained her from pleading intemperately for Cassio, one stroke of feminine guile would have extricated her from the predicament of the handkerchief. As it is, she puzzles over her situation with childlike ignorance and childlike purity, and the boy actor has to interpret nothing beyond his ken" (10). Boas goes on to demand rhetorically: How can actors hope to accomplish the enormous task of rendering Shakespeare's art "if in the portrayal of his female roles the subjective qualities

of actresses take the place of the simple objectivity of boys?"(4) Women are subjective; boys are objective.

The more sinister side of this fondness for the boy actor, however, is neatly alluded to by Martin Holmes in Shakespeare's Public, during a discussion of what is in his eyes the sad distortion of Measure for Measure caused by the introduction of actresses:

The precocious little boy, who could be beaten, if necessary, when he got above himself, had given place to the Leading Lady, and the whole presentation of the play had to undergo a change in consequence. Instead of a virginal figure with a simple set of values, who refuses compliance with Angelo not because it is degrading or distasteful but because it is wrong, and no amount of temptation or argument will make it otherwise, we are faced with a Leading Lady indignantly defending her virtue. . . .(175)

One would think this essentially Victorian position-- with its emphasis on the desirability of brainless and egoless sexlessness in women and on children with the willfulness beaten out of them; and its pre-Freudian conviction that adolescent boys never think about sex, preoccupied as they are with truth and beauty; and its assumption that selfishness, "subjectivity," and guile are secondary sex

characteristics of the female--would be totally out of favor by now. But this distaste, bordering on disgust, for the female presence is not confined to British public school headmasters and others of the Victorian kidney. It turns up recurrently, sometimes disguised, sometimes not, and we find it in as startling a context as Juliet Dusinberre's Shakespeare and the Nature of Women, in which the imperative to preserve the myth of Shakespeare's absolute supremacy, even in areas over which he had no control, overrides feminist consciousness.

"Shakespeare's actors gave him none of the actress' short-cuts to femininity--" declares Professor Dusinberre, "pre-packaged sex appeal, bosoms, hair, the tricks of the feminine trade which the female child may learn as soon as she sees she is admired. . . . Actresses tend to play Shakespeare's heroines too feminine; like elaborate scenery, too much archness has the effect of tautology" (252-3). And later: "Boys make bewitching girls, where women make lumbering youths" (253). This preposterous generalization goes by without a blink, without even qualifiers, without any explanation of age asymmetry in the comparison. As if all boys were inherently bewitching when playing girls, as if girls ought always to be played bewitchingly and not in other ways, as if girls--poor things--could not themselves play girls bewitchingly to save their lives

and did not exist as an option, as if women (at what point Professor Dusingberre begins to designate post-pubescent girls as women we do not know) were all a bunch of gross, bosomy, ungainly cows, as if there were no "tricks" of male demeanor and if there were adolescent boys wouldn't be guilty of them, as if femaleness were something that boys can instinctively embody but maleness were beyond imitation by a female, as if even in the present tense the importance of these plays lies in a boy's being utterly convincing as a girl and not in that silly parody of a girl's pretending to be a boy which no one could possibly believe anyway. We are back again with the fastidious distaste of Shakespeare's pouting Adonis for big, naked, lumberingly female Venus. And again we hear the assertion that the boyish presence is fairer, finer, more honest than a woman's--with her short-cuts=bosoms =tricks. Again we are informed that repugnant qualities like "archness" and vanity are natural to the female but quite alien to the female impersonator. Again we are invited to admit that the boyish presence represents something universal, while the woman is merely female. Professor Dusingberre is more scathing in her contempt for the female phenomena than most male critics would currently dare to be. "[T]he dramatists concentrated their attention on suggesting the real nature of women. The fact that the boy actor gave them

no help freed them to look beyond the acquired manners of femininity." (Professor Dusingberre seems, curiously, to assume that boys traditionally play women without "hair," "bosoms," or "tricks," as well as without archness.) And what exactly is "the real nature of women" which goes "beyond the acquired manners of femininity"?

"To fight other women they enlist a man. If the four lovers in the wood all wore breeches there would still be no mistaking the women" (260). And "A woman's love is not complete without a listener" (262). And "Women treat a man alone in their company with a tantalizing mixture of flirtation and exclusion" (263).

And quoting from a Victorian (sic!) authority: "Mrs. Jameson wrote in 1832 that 'the preservation of (Imogen's) feminine character under her masculine attire, her delicacy, her modesty, and her timidity, are managed with the same perfect consistency and unconscious grace as Viola.'" (200)" (264) These are the real characteristics of women that go beyond the inculcations of social conditioning. They are weak, arch, chattery, catty, timid and ashamed of their bodies. Nothing here with which Headmaster Boas, Professor Holmes, and Shakespeare's pederastic gallants would not have heartily agreed. Defense of the boy actress as an artistic institution is so intimately concomitant upon contempt for the female presence that

whoever takes up such a defense is inevitably betrayed into expression of that contempt.

As we can see, position 1., which argues for the lofty, asexual quality of boys, soon slips into position 2., which declares that boys in women's roles are not only finer and more appealing as stage presences than women, but in the final analysis are actually "more feminine." Real women, then, are both "too female" and "not as feminine." Voque magazine's description of the current Grand Kabuki's famed female impersonator performing in New York City in 1985 expresses something of this contradiction straining to pass itself off as a paradox: "An eerie beauty with painted bow mouth and lolling head, Bando Tamasaburo V glides over the stage as though held aloft by tiny currents of air. . . . Whether portraying the young, awkward acolyte or transforming himself into the virgin princess turned wanton woman in the sexually charged Scarlet Princess of Edo. . . , tall and feathery Tamasaburo exudes an aesthetic hyperfemininity that goes beyond female" (11). Here we are beyond female again. But of course the stock in trade of all female impersonators, be they Tamasaburo, Nathaniel Field, or the late Lady Divine, is pure, distilled, cultural convention. The lolling head, painted bow mouth and strideless, hovercraft walk of Tamasaburo are in no way natural female characteristics; they are in fact just

those learned "tricks of the trade" which Professor Dusinger deplures and Vogue sells at upscale prices. They are about how a woman is supposed to look and act and what she is supposed to represent to a male observer, not about her experience. The impression of "hyperfemininity" is given by the artist who has learned the tricks with consummate skill--perhaps better than some of the reluctant women for whom they were intended--and endowed them with some human electricity as if the creature he portrayed could live. But this "hyperfemininity" is not a distillation of what it is to be female; it is the quintessence of a cultural instruction with all the rebellion of reality culled away. "As you like it." Furthermore, as in the Saturday morning cartoon where ninety-nine Smurfs are identified and named by their jobs, skills, or personal characteristics and one "Smurfette" is identified solely by her femaleness, the idea of "hyperfemininity" homogenizes females and deprives them of the right to other forms of definition. When is the word "hypermasculine" used for a character in serious drama? It smacks of parody and ads for designer aftershave.

A useful comparison might be made here with Laurence Olivier's vivid and controversial impersonation of a West African Black in Othello, an impersonation that might well be described as "hyperBlack." Neither Paul Robeson nor James Earl

Jones needed to be that Black, and indeed would probably have shrunk from the parodic implications of such mannerisms as Lord Olivier employed with aggressive virtuosity. In viewing such a performance, the audience is so caught up in admiration of a white Englishman's command of conventional generic Blackness that it easily loses the sense of a particular Black, very much as in the performance of a highly trained impersonator such as Tamasaburo (or one of Shakespeare's apprentices) any sense of a particular woman may be subsumed by the sense of the concentrated "hypefeminine."

Emblematic or highly conventionalized performances may be extremely powerful, of course, but conventions and emblems have meaning, and it is legitimate to ask what they mean, whether they convey abiding truths or simply perpetuate stereotypes. There is every reason to infer that the conventions of Shakespeare's stage, creative community, and taste-making patrons, reinforced by the personal and artistic influence of dramatists like Marlowe and Lyly, by Shakespeare's own preoccupations as expressed in his non-dramatic output, and by mores of the larger society of his nation and age, all supported the stereotyping of women that many have seen and objected to in Shakespeare's work.

Position number 3, suggesting that boy actresses enhance the sense of sexual ambiguity in a female

character is by far the most interesting and potentially illuminating of the standard arguments. Certainly it is an argument that might open up real exploration into the effects possible in transvestite performance. It might examine the uses to which dramatist Caryl Churchill puts the device in Cloud Nine, for example, or the astounding power of the duality in Vanessa Redgrave's flawlessly controlled portrayal of the transsexual Renee Richards, or the curious effect of the casting of actress Linda Hunt as a man in the film The Year of Living Dangerously. Or it might even-handedly compare and contrast the effects available in a transvestite character such as Rosaura (played by a woman) in Calderón's La vida es sueño with a comparable scorned woman (played by a boy), Julia in Two Gentlemen of Verona, all this discussion to be counterpointed by the cheerful camp of La Cage aux Folles or the Ballet Trokadero, and by the aggressive and even hostile use of androgyny by modern performers such as David Bowie (who named himself after "a knife that cuts both ways"), Boy George and Prince. The problem here is that selectively extolling the claimed effects of a particular moment in a particular role fails to confront the implications of every female role in every play in the canon being taken by a male, and every line spoken by such a character being thus sexually equivocal. A statement made so consistently

and unvaryingly ceases to convey ambiguity and locks into a cliché. Furthermore, no counter or balancing statement is allowable in such a context, and as the only observation allowable, "Women are replaceable by boys" is a seriously disputable one..

To avoid the uncomfortable conclusions that all this might lead to, many simply retreat to the fourth argument, the great "know nothing" argument which simply declares that a convention is invisible, period. To some extent, of course, it is, and it is not to be denied that a great many heterosexuals in Shakespeare's time, as now, probably watched boy actresses without "tuning in" to the homosexual implications at all. At the same time in a larger cultural context a convention is itself a sign. It says something both to and about the people who accept it. And, of course, like bawdy puns, the implications are available whether you "get" them or not (indeed the knowledge that some people don't get them makes them all the more delicious to people who do), and an author is responsible for controlling them.

The fifth argument, that boy actresses enacted liberating roles for women on the stage by a kind of proxy, is perhaps the most pernicious. The boy proxy was part and parcel of a system which precluded women from acting out their own liberating roles, on stage or off. Furthermore, as Professor DusiBerre would again

most shamelessly declare, the works of Shakespeare repeatedly assure us that this boy is more convincing playing a girl than a girl could possibly be playing a boy or attempting to do what boys do. Girls inevitably betray themselves by fits of nerves, queasiness at the sight of blood (despite woman's traditional role as midwife and as nurse to the sick and injured), and a biological inability to wield weapons (despite laws that acknowledged the fact that some women beat their husbands). The malleable skirted boy-child, continually replaceable, when he becomes too strong and too canny, by a younger and more helpless child, becomes a fantasy substitute for the difficult and dynastically powerful woman, with her terrible hold over male honor and heredity, her legal right to endure in a man's bed and household long after she has grown stringy and rebellious and sensually undesirable, her fearful evocation of the once-powerful mother or her sinister alien shape. The idea of the female is both infantilized and neutered by the boy-as-actress, perpetually an apprentice and never a sharer, a sexual object without sexual consequences; and the boy passes through both "femininity" and childhood as stages of victimization, to emerge--we may well imagine--where abused children usually emerge, as abusers in their turn.

Shakespeare's theater may be called proto-feminist

only in the sense that, like the fashions in homosexuality and impudent effeminate style which appeared in the Elizabethan and even more in the Jacobean court, it presented to observers, particularly to the influential Puritans, a prototype of sexuality so shocking and potentially destabilizing to society as to cause a backlash. The neoclassical artistic paradigm of selfish and devouring paternity presented by the pagan gods, by Cronos, Saturn, and even by Zeus in many of his roles, was replaced by a Biblical paradigm of the just, protective, didactic father presented by the God of Judeo-Christian tradition, and by a self-consciously Biblical model of the family and sexual relationships. The Puritans did not find it necessary to make distinctions between forms of homosexuality, feeling all forms to be categorically forbidden by their faith. But for our purposes it must be made clear that the manipulation of James I by ambitious young men to whom he was sexually vulnerable was not in its essence more socially destabilizing than similar manipulation of Elizabeth by the Earl of Essex, or Henry VIII by the Bolyns, or Edward IV by the Woodvilles. This form of homosexuality was between consenting adults and did not cleave to the Greek-Italian boy-love model. As one among many options for sexual activity it was not particularly subversive. Yet without the outrage it aroused there

is little reason to believe that the abuses against children institutionalized in the theater--which would have been equally abuses if they had been heterosexual--would at this time have been cause enough to change the institution as profoundly as it was changed first by the closing of the theaters for almost a generation and then by the introduction of women. It was the political rather than the moral dangers with which homosexuality was associated at this time that drove it back underground, even among the upper classes and instituted the willed suppression by our culture of the implications of Shakespearean all-male theatrical practices.

Although the general climate of opinion in Spain could hardly be called pro-feminist, on the other hand, this particular form of pederastic misogyny institutionalized by the English Elizabethan and Jacobean theater was not operative. Laws were passed to prohibit boys from taking the roles of women and also to prohibit women from cross-dressing on stage--particularly from the waist down, where the difference would be most radical and revealing. Actresses were required to be under the protection of father or husband; gallants were supposed to stay out of the tiring room and refrain from sexual pursuit of the performers. However primitive and paternalistic these expedients might seem, they do nevertheless

reflect an effort to protect both children and women from sexual exploitation by the circumstances of their profession, not simply to protect the public from scandal and the occasion of sin. In practice, of course, the regulations were frequently violated. Small companies short of women were known to make do with boys; and some actresses, preferring not to be protected, very much enjoyed displaying their charms in breeches, and actively aspired to be pursued.

Furthermore, from the ample records of Lope's affairs with actresses, we know how ambiguous a thing the "protection" of a husband or father might be for a worldly young woman with a mind of her own and a great many admirers. On the whole neither women nor children appear to have been oppressed exceptionally by the profession itself. And despite the potential for abuse when a husband or father thought he had something to gain from the sale of a female relative's favors, women enjoyed unusual autonomy in the world of the Golden Age theater. Like the convent system, the theater provided a way in which a woman could assert some control over the uses of her sexuality and could in some cases actually circumvent the economic necessity for a husband. Even when she had a husband, an actress, singer, or dancer was clearly a wage-earner in her own right, not merely an invisible support worker in a trade that was officially only her husband's; sometimes

husband and wife were both on the stage, and sometimes a woman would take over or inherit the management of a company or a theater. In contrast to those in contemporary England, then, the circumstances of the theatrical profession in Spain privileged women exceptionally, much more than the society as a whole.⁶

Furthermore, because both women and men participated in a creative community that was contiguous with their private lives, their own children were also part of that community. The sharers of Shakespeare's company led oddly double lives, their professional lives were lived in the company of brothel keepers, gamesters and gallants, and yet virtually all had impeccably bourgeois credentials, freemen of guilds like the joiners or the goldsmiths. They were married to women who were largely sequestered on the bourgeois side--Anne Hathaway Shakespeare, as lonely as a sailor's wife in Stratford, being an extreme but not aberrant example. And curiously enough the boy actresses were probably officially apprenticed to Shakespeare's fellows in their capacities as guildsmen, not in their capacities as actors since there was no guild for actors and no legal form for an acting apprenticeship, which remained legally a very shadowy institution. This kind of double-think and compartmentalization was not possible in the Spanish

theater. Women, infants, and children with one's own face and passions could not be left at home by the respectable domestic fireside while one went off to explore the wilder regions of human experience in all-male company. And the denials and falsifications that such a split has traditionally fostered were, if not overthrown, at least constantly challenged by the domestic and professional arrangements backstage of the Spanish corrales. In a positive sense, this nexus of circumstances, in a culture with in general an exceptional tenderness towards its children, provided an understanding between artists and audience that was particularly conducive to vivid portraits of women who may be denied their freedom but cannot be denied their minds and their free will, and to extraordinarily sensitive studies of parental love.

Lawrence Stone, as we have seen, has pointed out the exceptional lack of affect between parents and children in English society at this time, attributing it to short life expectancy, especially for young children, and to the ancient practice of fosterage peculiar to English culture. But although life expectancy was certainly no longer in Spain, a system such as fosterage, which ordained that children be sent away from their parents at about the age of seven to be raised by others, would have been anathema to traditional Spanish values. If Professor Stone's

assertion is true, it provides an even broader cultural base for the contrasts we have perceived in the theatrical communities of England and Spain. When we compare Castelvines y Monteses with Romeo and Juliet, we must bear in mind that the Spanish play was written to be the enactment of a vision which in crucial ways was phenomenologically supported by what the audience knew about the actors as people and the values actors and audience shared, while the English play was performed under conventions which phenomenologically undermined both a heterosexual love story and the idea of deep protective involvement with children either by the characters in the story or by the actors as the audience believed them to be, or even by powerful segments of the audience as Stone and others have described them to us.

In addition, we know that Lope himself was extremely attracted to intelligent, willful, creative women, and that his daughters were themselves intelligent, willful and artistically gifted. Although Lope certainly did not always treat women well, in his work as in his life, he acknowledged them, fought with them, adored them, admired them, needed them, and the consequences of his powerful engagement with them, both personally and professionally, are vividly apparent in his work. In contrast, both Shakespeare's biography (as much as we know of it) and the denatured conditions

of his stage encouraged the falsification of women--as well as children--at every level. It is not the intention of this study to argue "out of" biography into the text, but it is appropriate to point out that certain objections which have persistently been raised against Romeo and Juliet are consistent with the conditions under which it was produced, and certain claims that can be made about Castelvines y Monteses are supported by the very different circumstances under which it was produced.

Chapter IV Notes

¹ Quoted from Shakespeare's Sonnets, ed. with analytic commentary by Stephen Booth (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977).

² Foster, Donald W. "Master W.H., R.I.P." PMLA 102 (1987): 42-54.

³ Information on the history and organization of the children's companies and on boy actors in Shakespeare's company comes primarily from H.N. Hillebrand's The Child Actors: A Chapter in Elizabethan Stage History (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1926); T.W. Baldwin's The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984); Michael Shapiro's The Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1977); and G.E. Bentley's more recent The Profession of Player in Shakespeare's Time 1590-1642 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984).

⁴ Although inferior nutrition may have postponed the average age of puberty in Shakespeare's time, chronological age does not affect the nature of the basic criterion. A beardless boy whose voice was still "effeminate," whatever his age, was a boy who had not yet achieved secondary sex characteristics, including, presumably, the power of sexual initiative. Playing love object, or even merely fantasy object, to an adult male was unlikely to have been the boy's idea. Nor was he in any position to decline a role, on stage or likely even offstage, that he found distasteful.

⁵ Marlowe was thus quoted by the informer Richard Baines, a quote cited in numerous sources, including A.L. Rowse's Christopher Marlowe: His Life and Work (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1966), 195; and Jackson Cope's "Marlowe's Dido and the Titillating Children," English Literary Renaissance 4 (1974), 317.

⁶ Cf. Angel Valbuena Prat, Historia del teatro español (Barcelona: Noguer, 1956) and Hugo Rennert, The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega. But particularly useful in regard to the treatment of women are Malveena McKendrick's "The 'mujer esquivada': A Measure of the Feminist Sympathies of Seventeenth-Century Spanish Dramatists," Hispanic Review 40:162-97, and Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974).

Chapter V

The Lovers and Their Love

Neither Shakespeare's Juliet nor Lope's Julia is a strikingly original creation. This must be clear from the outset. What is involved in each case is a standard type vivified. And what is also involved is the inherent potential and limitations of each type; Shakespeare's pathetic heroine with a greater potential for lyricism, for example, and a limited capacity for self-reliance or self-definition; Lope's comedic heroine with a greater capacity for creative initiative, less for cosmic metaphors. In each case an exceptional dramatist has pushed the boundaries of his type outward, but also in each case a practical dramatist is working with what he has.

In the light of the discussion of the previous chapter, we come to see that one of the elements Shakespeare was working with was a strong pederastic component built into his medium. Therefore, although Romeo and Juliet is certainly a heterosexual love story, it is written to double as a particular kind of homosexual love story also, the kind in which the ideal love object is a dependent pre-pubescent boy. Pathetic heroines were a staple of the children's companies, in which the fear, helplessness, and suffering of

feminized little boys generated a form of erotic stimulation which we would now call distinctly sadistic, but which a more brutal age might be somewhat less likely to segregate from ordinary and accepted patterns of sexual dominance. It may be pointed out further that the character of Romeo, infantile as he is in numerous respects, was probably originally written to be played by the sharer Richard Burbage, at twenty-eight or so about twice the age of the apprentice who would have been assigned the role of Juliet (see Blakemore Evans, ed. Introduction 28) and a full-fledged power male. Burbage was the son of the man who had built, and who owned, the first permanent theater in London. He and his brother Cuthbert held half the housekeepers' interest in the Globe (built from the lumber of the Theatre shortly after the probable date of Romeo and Juliet) and probably later the whole freehold of the Blackfriars. He married and sired eight children, and the first historical mention of him is some half dozen years before the writing of Romeo and Juliet, in 1590, when he "supported his father in resisting a Chancery Order granting half the profits of the Theatre to the widow of John Brayne" (who had put up the capital for its construction). He is described by a witness as boasting of having beaten off the widow's petitioners with a broom handle. (Halliday, Shakespeare Companion 77) By virtue of his

art and the gifts of nature he may well have been able to pass for an apprentice-aged youth on stage when he chose, but many in the audience would have been in a position to appreciate that his real-life relationship to the boy playing opposite him paralleled nicely the power asymmetry requirements of the classical boy-love paradigm. It is not at all necessary to declare that Burbage was in fact a part-time pederast or young Robert Goffe his particular dependent catamite (it is possible, but we cannot know it) to observe that the conditions of the theater world they were performing in made that subtext available to a playgoer's imagination, and that the erotic ideology of the Sonnets suggests both an influential segment of the audience positively disposed to imagine it and a dramatist willing and able to accommodate such a fancy into his text.

If we posit that such a subtext would have required at least a few visible adjustments in the text proper, we find that many such adjustments are indeed visible and that a number of them have caused critics some discontent. Such adjustments would have been particularly necessary in Romeo and Juliet because there were so few distractions to the central, explicit, contemporary foregrounding of romantic passion, no fairies or foursomes or falls from power, the wit pushed out into framing position and the warfare scaled down.

Instances of extremely immature behavior in Romeo, for example, as when he throws himself on the ground in hysterics at the news of his banishment (in the Second Quarto stage directions he is disarmed by the Nurse, which makes him look even more of a baby) may be seen as an attempt to make Romeo seem as near a child as Juliet, that is, to cover the age and power discrepancy obtruding from the subtext. At the same time, infantile behavior and motivations are not inherently alien to the power-male, only infantile dependence, vulnerability and susceptibility to imprint by another will. To moon over Rosaline is part of a self-conscious pose, but once he feels he has been promised Juliet, Romeo responds to frustration of his will, as in the duel, after the banishment, and upon the news of Juliet's death, by flying into a passion and abandoning whatever minimal judgment he normally employs. To the sight of the sharp misery of the apothecary, Romeo's purely egotistical reaction is, "An if a man did need a poison now,/ Whose sale is present death in Mantua,/ Here lives a caitiff wretch would sell it him." (5.1.50-53) In bribing the miserable man, who even in his extremity clutches some moral scruples, to choose between starvation and moral corruption with the risk of the gallows, Romeo does not hesitate to augment the fellow's suffering by tossing off the most pompous and insensitive cliché imaginable:

"There is thy gold, worse poison to men's souls,/ Doing more murder in this loathsome world/ Than these poor compounds that thou mayst not sell" (80-82). Just so the wretch may gag on whatever food the gold may buy him. . . or just so the wretch may heartily hope that Romeo means to use the poison on himself.

Romeo readily accepts suggestions that will further his purpose, but will not brook another will at cross purposes. The unfortunate Paris, a perfectly innocent man whose conduct throughout is irreproachable, who is neither a Capulet nor a Montague and has never wittingly done Romeo any harm, learns to his sorrow what a dangerous animal a petulant child with a sword is. The power-male does not kiss the rod. For reasons such as these, perhaps, the youth of Juliet has always been both more convincing and more pleasing to observers than the peculiar intermittant puerilities of Romeo. While one may readily sympathize with his passion and his despair, his character borders intimately on the repellent. Perhaps the difficulty may lie in the fact that text and subtext work together in Juliet, but against each other in Romeo. Juliet is a pure, crafted stereotype, a stereotype of the "hyperfeminine," in which boy and woman are interchangeable, but Romeo is an uneasy composite between the unwordly, impulsive, heterosexual boy of the text proper's paradigm (a boy like Daphnis,

Aucassin, or Pyramis) and the self-conscious, aggressive, bisexual man of the subtext's paradigm (a man like Orpheus, Hercules, or the divinely mantled Apollo, who, finding woman willful, turns to an ego-mirroring boy). Shakespeare becomes much more sophisticated about handling such elements later in his career (although Ferdinand and Florizel are silly, they are not leading-man roles; Cf. Troilus), but at this stage his devices are still somewhat primitive.

Juliet is, after all, a completely reactive character. While her extreme youth (indeed the boy playing her might conceivably have been even younger than almost-fourteen), her extreme eagerness, her extreme dependence, her extreme anguish are all patterned for pathos, she has only such firmness as is necessary to move steadily towards destruction, only such imagination as will enhance her suffering. She has no firmness or imagination for anything else, no firmness to follow her husband to Mantua, for example, or imagination to muse on her future. Indeed, she has no inclinations or tastes or ideas or resentments, no strengths or weaknesses, no passions, no plans, no personhood of her own whatsoever. When we first see her she is the complete functionary of her parents' wishes, an empty virgin vessel waiting to be filled. Asked if she is inclined to be married she replies, "It is an honor that I dream not of." When it becomes

clear that her parents and Nurse wish her to "like of Paris' love," she answers:

I'll look to like, if looking liking move.
 But no more deep will I endart mine eye
 Than your consent gives strength to make it fly.
 (1.3.97-99)

Alfred Harbage has called her "one of the most accomplished liars in literature," (Conceptions 130), but this is very like the Puritan habit of imputing highly sinister motives to small children. Juliet lives--and dies--to please, not to deal with truth on any level (as Profesor Harbage goes on to, perhaps, imply). And, like a small child, she often reveals the buried contradictions in the demands that are being made upon her, and betrays one dominant adult in a desperate attempt to be perfect to another. There are no lines in the text to indicate her first catching sight of Romeo or spontaneously taking an interest in him. Characteristically, her opening words to him are a reply. He has touched her hand and then ardently offered to kiss it, and she responds with exactly the desired balance of modesty and reciprocity. She is perfect. Having first been the factotum of her parents' wishes, she now becomes wholly the factotum of his, and we see that her first service was merely the holding pattern in which she awaited this one.

There is scarcely a thing we see her doing or a word we hear her say that might not have been scripted by Romeo himself, lying under a willow and blissfully fantasizing: "Now she leans from her window in the moonlight and sighs for me." "Now she wrings her white hands and stamps her little foot with impatience as she begs her Nurse for news of me." "Now, poor girl, she dissolves helplessly before her father's cruel order to marry someone else." "Now, although a timid, fearful girl, and nigh hysterical, she drinks the dreadful potion for love of me." "Now, unable to live without me, she stabs herself with my dagger." We see how one-sided this is when we attempt to reverse it. It would require considerably more complexity of literary imagination for Juliet to think, "Now he pines away for love of my cousin, who rejects him," "Now he throws himself on the ground and wildly offers to cut from his body the part where his name resides," or "Now he goes to the shop of a starving apothecary and purchases forbidden poison," or "Now he murders Paris outside my tomb and then dimly remembers his servant having told him that Paris was to marry me." Romeo's obsession with dying for love predates his meeting Juliet. Juliet has no passions that predate her meeting Romeo; she is the pure projection of his highly conventionalized desires, pure female impersonation.

I am not suggesting that the text shows us a Romeo

who is a predator upon a helpless Juliet, but rather that the text deliberately carves out a Juliet who consists of nothing whatever except her compliance to Romeo's fantasies. She demands nothing of him except the formality of marriage, but this is nicely consistent with his fantasy of a "virtuous" love object--a Dark Lady might have dispensed with it. Juliet is an eternal bride, deflowered and then disposed of, or rather endlessly deflowered and re-virginated in the male cultural imagination: "extra virgin" like olive oil, as well as hyperfeminine. She is perfect. Romeo isn't. Women like the story, with its echoes of courtly love, its aesthetic sensuality, and its celebration of desire for a woman. But women do not rhapsodize about the character of Romeo independent of the attributes of a particular actor whose personal charms may yield fodder for fantasy. Nothing Romeo does outside of desiring Juliet is--in general--particularly satisfying to a woman. The dueling, the tantrum, the apothecary, the murder of Paris, the "guy-stuff," smell of self-indulgence on somebody's part to a female fantasizer impatient to get back to the good part.

There has been much discussion of the influence of the Petrarchan sonnet tradition and also of Shakespeare's own Sonnet sequence on Romeo and Juliet and there is no need to recapitulate here all the love

conventions that it illustrates. But in recalling Shakespeare's own sonnets we may observe that Rosaline plays a role similar to that of the Dark Lady. When Benvolio first asks the pining Romeo who it is that he loves, Romeo replies--referring to Rosaline--"Cousin, I do love a woman." This does not seem a particularly remarkable thing for him to say unless one notices that woman is not a word Romeo ever uses in reference to Juliet. Lady, yes, and frequently, but never woman. Indeed, there is only one other place in the play where a man uses the word woman, and that is where Friar Lawrence tells Romeo not to act like one. The Nurse calls Juliet a woman once, but the Nurse, that "ancient damnation," is no lady herself. The difference between woman and lady, like the difference we have already seen between female and feminine, is that the second terms represent the conventional ideal and the first the meaty and deeply distrusted reality. Although Rosaline is a virgin and the somewhat misleadingly designated Dark Lady is a whore, both are women in that they are willful, selfish, inexplicable and problematic. Juliet is more a lady because less a woman, and being less "female," is more "feminine."

This passive, reflective, reactive quality in Shakespeare's Juliet is thrown into particular relief by Lope's very different rendering of Julia. Before she even meets Roselo, Julia has decided against the

be perverted, Julia's ebullience, like Natasha Rostov's in War and Peace, represents something essentially attractive in the family that raised her. She has the shining confidence, the free, impulsive warmth, of a child who has always been treasured, who has lived all her life among open arms. Here is Shakespeare's Juliet with her father:

CAPULET

How, how, how, how, chopp'd logic! What is this?
 "Proud," and "I thank you," and "I thank you not."
 And "not proud," mistress minion you?
 Thank me no thankings, nor proud me no prouds,
 But fettle your fine joints 'gainst Thursday next
 To go with Paris to Saint Peter's Church
 Or I will drag you on a hurdle thither.
 Out, you green-sickness carrion! Out, you baggage!
 You tallow face!

. . . .

JULIET

Good father, I beseech you on my knees,
 Hear me with patience but to speak a word.
 (3.5.149-56)

Here is Lope's Julia with her father:

ANTONIO

Quitaréte yo la vida.

JULIA

¡Ojala que la quitases!

(3.1.p.15)

This sharp riposte is positively shocking to anyone whose norm is Shakespearean daughters. One trembles to imagine the response had young Juliet Capulet dared to reply to her father's offer to kill her with this terse, "I wish you would." Romeo and Juliet has often been called a story of love versus hate. But it should more accurately be called a story of romantic passion versus wrathful passion. These two children want to sleep together. They want very, very much to sleep together and if they can't they will die. But the type of love represented by this obsession is as narrow as it is intense. And again, consistent with the explicitly anti-familial boy-love paradigm, family is wholly negligible or negative. Fulfillment of the power male's passion is the be-all and end-all of imagination. It owes nothing to the love of parents. It yields nothing to the love to come. The family represented by parents is either tyrannous, as Juliet's, or a disposable prop, as Romeo's. The Montagues express great concern for their son in the opening scenes of the play, and in the end his mother has died of grief at his banishment with extraordinary promptness (he has been gone some two days), but both these devices serve fairly obvious stage purposes, the

one for exposition and the other for deleting a character from a crowded scene in a heavily doubled play. Romeo reciprocates in no perceivable way. Except for their having given him an inconvenient name he thinks about them as little as he thinks of Rosaline after she has been replaced, and for all his lines and indicated actions reveal to us, bears them neither affect nor animosity, no concern at all. One cannot argue that Romeo gives up all other allegiances for the love of Juliet, because he scarcely seems to have any. He has bonds; the world thinks of him as a Montague, but he does not willingly think of himself as one. Characteristically, his reflex is to discard his family, not to reconcile it. Even Tristan is more conflicted than this.

And as for any love that will be generated by the passion itself, as Nicholas Brooks, who basically admires the play, has pointed out "the complete absence of fertility in the concept of love is as remarkable as it is apt: it leaves the love-death conjunction without division or alternative." (Shakespeare's Early Tragedies 101) But as he himself reveals in his quotes from the text, the death these lovers aspire to is not a spiritual transcendence of the flesh, it is luridly physical, from Juliet's "death, not Romeo, take my maidenhead!" (137) to what he calls her "full-scale necrophilia:"

Or hide me nightly in a charnel house,

O'er-covered quite with dead men's rattling bones,
 With reeky shanks and yellow chapless skulls;
 Or bid me go into a new-made grave,
 And hide me with a dead man in his shroud. . .
 (4.1.81-85)

Professor Brooks might have noted also the orgasmic mounting terror of the speech with which Juliet works herself up to the drinking of the potion, or Romeo's

Shall I believe
 That unsubstantial death is amorous,
 And that the lean, abhorred monster keeps
 Thee here to be his paramour?
 (5.3.102-105)

His joining her in bed with death, of course, can hardly keep her from ravishment; it can only augment death's amorous options. But in any case, it is particularly Juliet, rather than Romeo, who is imagined as the object of violation by a decayed carnality, and this again is perfectly consistent with the classical boy-love paradigm in which a very young and blooming love object may be instructed to internalize as desirable a painful and damaging intercourse with an aging lover. It is, of course, equally consistent with heterosexual dominance in a similar pattern. Even to the degree that death is abstracted it is suspect in this play. Juliet earlier has projected a much

prettier and non-physical death for Romeo: "when he shall die" (or, as the First Folio has it more selfishly "when I shall die") "/Take him and cut him out in little stars." (3.2.21-22). But as Roy Battenhouse has observed, "the immortality of stellification, obviously, is paganism's substitute for Christian transcendence."

What it transcends is not sin and sorrow, which it secretly loves, but instead human community and life itself. True, Juliet's and Romeo's love is no crude sensualism; it is an idealistic eroticism.

Yet it truncates both Platonic and Christian mysticism by lacking the final goal of Plato's eros, union with an invisible beauty; and it is notably devoid of the gift of Christian agape which finds fulfillment in actions of caretaking and husbandry.

(109)

The sentiment that said the ending should always be tragic does not come from the inevitability of the plot, which has often been criticized, but from the fact that the characters have no potential to do anything but die. Neither fantasizes any future for their relationship and neither do we. "To die" was, of course, a common metaphor for orgasm in the literature of the time, but it was, after all, a hyperbolic

metaphor. And in inflating the importance of orgasmic consummation it deflates the importance of death. It should hardly be necessary to mention that orgasm may occur a number of times. Death happens once. And the only consequence imagined to Romeo and Juliet's love-death climax is something very close in imagery to a nasty case of venereal disease.

When Romeo offers to cut out that part of himself in which his name resides, we may think that the most likely part should be the genitals, but that would be true only if he meant the part that would pass on the name of Montague, and passing on a name is nowhere in the imagination of these lovers. Indeed, since they insist that family is no more than a word, and that word a curse, Romeo never does succeed in locating the site of Montague-ness in either his corporal or his incorporal self. However one may decry the insensitivity of Juliet's parents towards their daughter, one must yet concede that Romeo's parents, to the extent that we see them at all, are considerably more sensitive to him than he to them. Romeo's will to erotic self-destruction brings down not only Mercutio, Tybalt, Paris, Juliet, and in all likelihood the apothecary, but his mother as well, who has died for love of him when we have not even see him take leave of her or express a word of concern or reciprocal affection. It has often been noted that the passion of

the lovers is selfish, but what must be noted further is that the selfishness is very asymmetrical. Juliet cannot be called equally selfish because she is not equally a self. What our recognition of the pederastic subtext allows us to recognize at last is the degree to which Shakespeare has generated his story from the unchallenged egotism of Romeo, that character with which his most powerful playgoers could with greatest ease identify.

But wholly unlike Shakespeare's Romeo, Lope's Roselo Montés grows stronger in our regard with every difficulty he encounters. We watch him grow in the course of the play from a likable scapegrace into a man others man turn to and respect, a man worthy to be the head of a house. Although the play is inevitably male-centered, it does not betray the deeper levels of misogyny that leach into Shakespeare's play from the subtext. Roselo earns his family, as it were, because his passionate feeling for Julia is not merely passion; it is truly love. Passion is selfish; love is kind. Passion isolates; love binds. Passion consumes; love engenders. Passion preys upon; love nurtures and protects. The passionate love of Julia and Roselo, therefore, resolves the power of great opposites into a creative union, with love the guiding, governing principle that turns all things to good. Lope's play, furthermore, is about love in many aspects-- between

youthful men and women, between parents and children, between uncles and nieces, between servants and masters, between honorable rivals, between brothers, between cousins, between kinsmen, between friends, between men and other men's sons, between people and life itself, between human beings and a loving God. Thus the sexual dimension of Roselo's feeling is life-giving on the spiritual as well as the physical level, and the arousal and consummation of physical love seem to liberate courage, generosity, strength, even speed and clarity of mind in him. The pure, joyous physical exhilaration of his liberated energy floods the play, brings hope to the weary old men, and touches hands with an audience

Roselo's first foray with his friends into enemy territory is an act of youthful daring, the kind of escapade that is causing his father to consider the advantages of having him married off and restrained. And at the ball, surrounded by Castelvines, he drops his mask in awe at Julia's beauty, to the horror of his comrade Anselmo. The error having been made, however, he conducts himself with what that noted Hispanophile Ernest Hemingway has called "grace under pressure," never losing his nerve under hostile scrutiny. His courage is as exciting to watch as his courtship, because he is aware he is in danger in a way that Shakespeare's Romeo never seems to be. Yet at this

stage his courage is still something very close to boyish cheek, or at least to a simple physical courage.

However, when the feud breaks out into open aggression in the second act and the two families square off in the street, Roselo faces a much more complex challenge, requiring courage of a much more complex sort. On one side are his father, his best friend Anselmo, and all the men of his house. On the other side are all the men of his bride's family. Lope, typically, has made Roselo's bond to Julia's family much clearer to us than Shakespeare has made Romeo's relationship to Tybalt. Tybalt is, after all, only a cousin of the Capulet's by marriage, related to Juliet's mother, and we have never seen him treated with much respect or affection by anyone in the family he is so warm to defend. As is typical of Shakespeare, the family partisanship here is essentially political. In contrast, Lope has actually shown us Antonio, Teobaldo, and Otavio Castelvín in situations of familial intimacy and trust, their strengths and their weaknesses exposed to one another and accepted. We are made to understand how one might feel a powerful affective loyalty to these people and what the rewards of such loyalty might be, where we have really no adequate demonstration of what the rewards of Capulet allegiance might be to the definitively fiery Tybalt. Even more strongly, we can imagine from what we know of

Roselo how readily he might be assimilated into a family like the Castelvines. We understand in positive, not simply in negative terms, the lure of partisanship, and so does he. Romeo bungles as a peacemaker at least in part because he does not understand what the fighting is about. He assumes it is about family loyalty, which is meaningless to him, indeed fairly meaningless in the play as a whole. In fact Mercutio is not a Montague at all and Tybalt is only marginally a Capulet. Their deaths occur, like the deaths at the end of the play, because in some way they are perversely sought out. Mercutio and Tybalt fight because they insist on fighting, as Romeo and Juliet die because they insist on dying. Despite the fact that both Mercutio and Romeo himself are deeply implicated in Mercutio's death, Romeo instantly adopts the feud's vindictive and irrational value system upon seeing his friend killed. And yet a few moments before he had been unable to understand it at all. Romeo never reflects, never checks himself, and understands his own motivations as little as he understands those of other people.

The peculiar mindlessness of the action in Romeo and Juliet is thrown into sharp relief by the conduct of Lope's characters in the brawl scene of Castelvines y Monteses. The violence is petty and irrational, but the characters are not exclusively and by nature petty

and irrational. They are capable of good and evil, thinking and not thinking, nobility and nastiness. Their lapses are especially painful to us because they are so terribly plausible, because the most evil folly is committed by the best man, and because we recognize it as a folly we could ourselves have committed--as easily, as thoughtlessly, as irredeemably.

Roselo keeps his nerve and his wits. He places himself physically between the warring factions and pleads for peace, so shrewdly and with such good will, that he actually wins over both the old Castelvines--everyone, in fact, except the jealous Otavio, who indignantly rejects Roselo's suggestion that marriages should heal the old enmity between their houses. One of the marriages, of course, would be between Roselo himself and Julia, and Otavio will have none of it. Even the bribe of Roselo's pretty cousin will not buy him. When Otavio offers to kill him whether he defends himself or not, Roselo turns to both sides to witness that he has been provoked beyond endurance, then, in self defense, kills Otavio. In the uproar that follows, Roselo's first thought it to get his father away. This is the madcap boy that Arnaldo Montés worried over in Act I. The moment is quick, uncloying, and deft: a moment for every old man in the audience to say to himself that he would not be ashamed to have a son like that.

At the same time, it is Roselo's secret bond to the hostile family, his seeming betrayal of loyalty, which has brought out the best in him. Not only has it prompted him to act decisively and courageously, to the credit of his family, but it has also pointed him towards a reconciliation which is in the best interest of his family. It has made him not a worse Montés, but a better one. Lope makes his case clearly, cleanly, without a tedious word preached, without an elbow of palpable design obtruding upon our pleasure. And yet there is not a moment in the play which does not serve the wholeness of its moral vision.

At the same time, the prejudice against it is so deeply lodged that a comparison such as Donald R. Wadley's will betray a climactic accumulation of distortions. It is worth quoting at length from Professor Wadley's study to make this clear, and I will record with some care the various lapses in the Spanish punctuation when Wadley comes to quote from Castelvines y Monteses, as well as the curious layout which forces the Spanish text, a rapid dialogue, to be set out on the page so that it looks like the English text, which is a long monologue:

In Juliet's tense, imaginative speech in which she reaches for the potion prepared for her by Friar Laurence, it is evident that she is no longer the green, entirely inexperienced

girl of fourteen as depicted in the earlier scenes, but a person who visibly matures into a grown woman as she summons the courage to drink the fearful potion for the sake of her lover.

She says:

What if it be a poison, which the friar
 Subtly hath minister'd to have me dead,
 Lest in this marriage he should be dishonour'd
 Because he married me before to Romeo?
 I fear it is: and yet, me thinks, it should
 For he hath still been tried a holy man.
 I will not entertain so bad a thought.
 How if, when I am laid into the tomb,
 I wake before the time that Romeo
 Come to redeem me? there's a fearful point!
 Shall I not then be stifled in the vault,
 To whose foul mouth no healthsome air breaths in,
 And there die strangled ere my Romeo comes?
 Or, if I live, it is not very like,
 The horrible conceit of death and night,
 Together with the terror of the place,
 As in a vault, an ancient receptacle,
 Where for these many hundred years, the bones
 Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd
 Where bloody Tybalt, yet but green in earth,
 Lies festering in his shroud. . . .

Professor Wadley cuts off his Shakespearean quotation at this point and goes on to comment on Castelvines y Montesés, including what he believes to be a comparable stretch of quotation:

Lope's comedia provides us with a similar episode, but his Julia takes the potion accidentally; and when she does so, he makes her believe that it is a deadly poison which she had procured from the apothecary Aurelio:

Julia: Ay! De las entrañas mías,

Celia, el alma se me parte.

Jesus Qué es lo que me has dado?

Celia: Señora, lo que me dió Aurelio.

Julia: Pues pienso yo

Que habrá las aguas errado,

Y que ésta debió de ser

De algún vaso de veneno.

Celia: ¿Y bebiste?

Julia: El pomo lleno

Triste! Qué tengo de hacer?

Celia: Qué sientes?

Julia: Que me han rompido

Del cuerpo todas las venas,

Y que tengo aliento apenas,

Acabado y oprimido.

Siento sobre el corazón

Ay Jesús! un grave peso.

Celia! . . .

Act III, p. 340¹⁴ (16)

Here Wadley cuts off the Spanish quotation.¹ The layout which forces the Spanish text to ape the English one makes it very difficult to follow what is going on in the Spanish text. The name Celia at the beginning of the second line, for example, is spoken by Julia, but the name Celia at the beginning of the fourth line, from which it is almost indistinguishable, indicates the character who is to speak the rest of that line. The confusions this raises in the reading of the Spanish excerpt, notable as they are, are not as significant as the simple fact of the overtly Procrustean treatment and what it reveals about the unspoken attitudes of both the writer and his editors at The American Hispanist.

Over and above these lapses, Professor Wadley has, although quoting extensively, truncated both speeches in ways that save the Shakespearean speech for his claim and prejudice the Lopean one. As most people familiar with Romeo and Juliet will remember, Juliet's monologue goes on for another twenty lines after Professor Wadley's four dots. In this omitted section she imagines further how she might run mad from awakening in the tomb:

And madly play with my forefathers' joints
 And pluck the mangled Tybalt from his shroud,
 And in this rage, with some great kinsman's bone,
 As with a club, dash out my desperate brains?
 Oh, look! Methinks I see my cousin's ghost
 Seeking out Romeo, that did spit his body
 Upon a rapier's point. Stay, Tybalt, stay!
 Romeo, I come! This do I drink to thee.

Despite the traditional insistence--not original to Professor Wadley--that Juliet matures in the course of the play, this is scarcely the depiction of someone who "visibly matures into a grown woman as she summons the courage to drink the fearful potion for the sake of her lover" (16). This is the speech of someone working herself up into such a frenzy of terror that she hallucinates. And it is under the influence of this climactic hallucination not mature resolve, that Juliet tosses off the potion and passes out.

What Professor Wadley has left out of his Spanish quote is equally telling. Julia has sent Celia to Aurelio with a desperate message:

Pues escríbole que estoy
 Determinada a matarme
 Antes, Celia, que casarme;
 Y asegúrole que voy
 Derecha a un hierro or cordel;
 Conoce mi amor, y sabe

Que ántes que el papel acabe,
 Mi vida acaba con él;
 Y ¡envíame confecciones!

[But I wrote him that I am
 Determined, Celia, to kill myself
 Before I shall marry Paris;
 And I assured him I will procure a knife or cord;
 He knows my love and he knows
 That before his letter is concluded
 My life will have concluded with it.
 And he sends me a bit of cordial!]

That is, she first insists that she is resolved to kill herself. But when she drinks what she believes to be a sleeping potion (there are a few lines missing from the text that would explain the transition from her indignation at his sending a sweet to her bidding farewell to Celia before drinking it) and feels its effects, in a panic she suddenly believes it is really poison. Suddenly her half-playacting adolescent determination to die for love is confronted with the idea of real death. Confused and frightened, she must come to terms, not with a wild fantasy of charnel accoutrements, but with her young life being over:

JULIA: No puedo tenerme en pié.

CELIA: ¿Quiéreste acostar?

JULIA: No sé.
 ¡Qué triste fin de mi amor!
 Pero ya voy consolada
 Con que mi Roselo vive.
 Celia, mi muerte le escribe.

CELIA: ¿Qué dices?

JULIA: No digo nada.
 ¡Ay, ay, ay de mi, que muere!

CELIA: Ven á tu cama.

JULIA: Ya voy.
 ¡Padre! de Roselo soy.

CELIA: Calla.

JULIA: Ni puedo, ni quiero.

[JULIA: I cannot stand.

CELIA: Do you want to lie down?

JULIA: I don't know.

What a sorry end to my love!

But I will be consoled

In knowing my Roselo lives.

Celia, he wrote you a prescription for my
 death

CELIA: What are you saying?

JULIA: Nothing, nothing

Ah, ah, ay me, I'm dying!

CELIA: Come to bed.

JULIA: I'm coming.

Father, I belong to Roselo!

CELIA: Hush.

JULIA: I neither can, nor care to.]

The shock, the confusion, the haste, the anguish, and still her love for Roselo paramount are all in the very rhythms of this passage, as Julia and her servant deal desperately with the banal practical details of dying--a place to lie down--as well as the harrowing psychological ones. This little scene is a psychological masterpiece. Its foolishness, its tragic bewilderment, its struggle between the demands of quotidian decorum and the ripping anarchy of invading Death, between denial and awful acceptance, between role-playing and reality, between the child grasping for all the people she loves and the woman who suddenly must put her life in order, all these elements are in fine and flawless equipoise. There is no melodrama here as there is in Shakespeare's virtuoso manipulation of memento mori props and stagy hysterics. Lope shows us a young, irreverent, willful, laughing girl confronting the fact of her own mortality as Shakespeare's children, with all their fantasies of

post mortem eroticism, never do. Even though Juliet stabs herself, her horrible death is a convention prettified by poetry. Stabbing oneself to death is a difficult, sickeningly bloody, hideously painful, and probably excruciatingly drawn out process, especially for someone who is not a Roman and does not know how to do it properly. But Shakespeare does not indicate that anyone even hears her cry out. Ever the lady, she dies tastefully. Her "real" death is essentially bogus, while Julia's "false" death resonates with authenticity about what it means to be human and young and mortal.

Confrontation with the lovers and the love that Lope has portrayed in Castelvines y Monteses frees us to see, perhaps for the first time, not only how shallow but also how specious Shakespeare's treatment of idealized star-crossed love is in Romeo and Juliet.

Chapter V

Notes

¹ My translation of this passage falls far short of the tempo, naturalness, and rhythmic control of Lope's dialogue, but as a convenience for readers who lack Spanish, I include it here:

JULIA: Ah! My entrails!

Celia, my soul leaves me.

In Jesus' name, what have you given me?

CELIA: My lady, what Aurelio gave to me.

JULIA: I think he must have mistaken

What he put in it,

And this must have been taken

From some vial of poison.

CELIA: And you drank it?

JULIA: Swallowed it all.

wretched! What shall I do?

CELIA: How do you feel?

JULIA: As if every single vein

Had ripped out of my body.

And I can hardly breathe;
I'm faint, I'm suffocating.
O, Jesus, I feel a pressing weight
Upon my heart.

Chapter VI
The Old Men

The work of Lawrence Stone and our examination of the particular circumstances of Shakespeare's male-exclusive creative community suggest that certain of the "problems" critics have found in Romeo and Juliet come from elements of its wider context. The lovers have no paradigm in their world for family as an affective-moral unit. There is passion and there is politics, there is eros and there is polis, but there is precious little agape to model their relationship upon--certainly none that is potent in the familial bonds--and they are unable to create for themselves such an alien idea. Our study suggests that English society at the time of Shakespeare, and in uniquely extreme ways the theatrical community in and with which he worked, operated to undercut the idea of family love as a resource for social or personal redemption, beginning with the generative attraction of male and female. This is not to suggest anything so foolish as that the English at the time of Shakespeare were incapable of love. Only to point out that both Shakespeare's audience and his creative community were working with conceptual models of family affection that

were very different from the models of Lope's audience and Lope's creative community. Shakespeare's play assumes very low expectations for familial love in the characters and in the audience. Lope's play assumes exceptionally high ones. Contrast with Lope's play makes it exceptionally clear that there is no norm in Shakespeare's play for what long term love (as opposed to romantic passion) should or could be. Fiery infatuation turns to moldering decay, not into new life and expanding identification. And graven images will be the fitting progeny of Capulets and Montagues. It is now reasonable to suggest that the universe of Romeo and Juliet is morally as well as physically sterile because Shakespeare could not find in his Italian story the clues for redemption that were readily recognizable to Lope. The idea of family simply lost something in its translation into English thinking. But it gained something in its translation into Lope's cognate Mediterranean Catholic thinking. Lope was able to use the cultural value of the family as a metaphor for a larger metaphysical and moral principle because of connotations available in his language that were not available in Shakespeare's. I refer to the idea and not the words famiglia or familia or family in part because the translations in question are not simply verbal. Lope in fact avoids the word familia in favor of the word bando, which means "band, faction," or even

"tribe." The Castelvines and Monteses have become bandos rather than familias; that is their moral error. True families would not be vulnerable to the scathing parody with which the gracioso, Marín, replaces Mercutio's "Queen Mab" speech:

No sólo en cualquier persona
Me cansa, enoja y fastidia
Ver el odio que en vosotros
Es causa de tantos yerros.
Pero el ver que hasta los perros
Se muerdan unos con otros.
¿Qué es ver salir de las puertas
Monteses y Castelvines?
Bravos gozques y mastines,
Las bocas de furia abiertas,
Que si los dientes sutiles
Espadas pudieran ser
Bastaban á enriquecer
Por horas los aguaciles!
No hay hombre que sin carlanca
Traiga su alano valiente,
Que parece lindamente
Sobre el piel negra ó blanca.
Pues ¿los gatos!. . . tan airados
Andan en sus bandos juntos,
Que hacen campaña por puntos
Las cocinas y tejados.
Si maullan, es por fin

De declarar su interés;
Porque unos dicen Montés,
Y otros dicen Castelvín.
Hasta en los gallos se ve
De aquestos bandos la furia,
Porque tienen por injuria
Que alguno cantando esté;
Y con tantos intereses.
Que si un Castelvín primero
Comienza en su gallinero,
Responden treinta Monteses.

[Not only does it pain me,
as a sensitive, fastidious person,
to see human beings guilty
of such an ill-breeding hate,
but even the dogs of your houses
will bite one another's dogs.
What a spectacle to see
the curs of the Castelvines,
the mastiffs of the Monteses,
come ravening out of doors,
their jaws agape with rage!
If their so sharp-edged teeth
were so many sharp-edged swords,
the constables would have many an hour
to be gainfully employed with you.
There's not a man of you walks his dog

without an armored collar.
 Because the effect is so pretty
 against the black or white fur.
 But the cats! Your packs of cats
 are joined in such mutual wrath
 that their battlefields spring up
 on rooftops and in kitchenyards.
 And the yowls of their battlecries
 announce their allegiances:
 for some will yowl "Montés!"
 and others "Castelvín!"
 until the roosters rally
 to the fury of your houses
 affronted that a cock should croak
 for that other detested faction.
 If one cock crows, "Castelvín!"
 thirty cocks begin crowing, "Montés!".

(1.1.p.1)

It is important to recognize, therefore, that it is not simple the words padre, hija, and hijo, that differ from their apparent English counterparts father, daughter, and son, but that when the characters of Antonio and Julia Castelvín appear onstage together their iconic significance, even before they speak, is different from the significance of Old Capulet and Juliet. As A.A.Parker first observed in his early study, "The Approach to the Spanish Theatre of the

Golden Age," the parent-child relationship-- particularly father-son--is central to the vision of Golden Age Spanish theater. Until we understand the moral progress of the fathers in Castelvines y Monteses, therefore, we cannot fully understand the meaning of the story.

Furthermore, Professors Morley and Bruerton have dated Castelvines y Monteses between 1606 and 1612. This would locate Lope's age somewhere between forty-four and fifty when he wrote it and the date of composition somewhere contemporary to the period in Shakespeare's life between Macbeth and the last works. The synchronicity between the lives and careers of Lope and Shakespeare is in itself extremely provocative, but for the purposes of the present comparison it is exceptionally so, when both playwrights are dealing with a tale of young love struggling against the entrenched hatreds of old men. One cannot help but inquire from what perspective in the authors' own lives this tale is told. Romeo and Juliet is considered an "early work" by Shakespeare, where Castelvines y Monteses clearly emerges from the period of Lope's maturity, and yet, since Lope survived almost a full two decades after Shakespeare's death, there is an odd way in which the decade or two between the composition of the two plays collapses. Shakespeare was in fact the closer of the two to the midpoint of his own more

normal lifespan, closer indeed to his own death. Yet, from the vantage of his early to mid thirties, Shakespeare has still written a young man's play. He gives the old men short shrift and little sympathy. Critical opinion is almost unanimous in finding them the villains of the piece, even such opinion as will maintain that the play condemns the young lovers and must have been perceived by Elizabethans as a moral exemplum against rashness, disobedience, and lust.¹

But even without those dating methods, based upon versification, which Morley and Bruerton employ, it would be difficult to imagine Castelvines y Monteses as having been written by a young man. The portraits of the lovers, yes; Lope never seems to have lost his ability to write with freshness and immediacy about being young. But no young man out of pure imagination could have--or perhaps would have--created those unerring portraits of Antonio and Teobaldo Castelvín, and of Arnaldo Montés and his servant, Lidio. These portraits are striking not simply for their fine-tuned sympathy, but for their clear-eyed and compassionate condemnation. For Lope condemns, not with the impatience of youth, but with the wisdom of one who has been there.

In any case the figures of the old men would be important in both these plays, because it is they who are presumably responsible for the feud, that inherited

obstacle which lies between the lovers. It is they whose actions the lovers react against, they who define what the love is by embodying in a complementary and circumscribing sense what the love is not. At the same time, they provide the terms, the raw material, the matrix from which the young take what they then make into love. That is, in Romeo and Juliet the feud of the parents and the love of the children are both blind, passionate, self-willed, mindless of consequences, and ultimately not only violent but deadly. In Castelvines y Monteses, on the other hand, the love is insightful rather than blind, generous rather than egotistical, life-affirming rather than self-destructive. In both cases, even while they defy the feud, the lovers implement some of the world view they have been given. They have learned from their parents whether they will or no, and conduct themselves very much according to the way they have been treated. Moreover, the meaning their love can have for us is defined not only by the parental world in which it happens but also by whatever sense the parents are able to make of it in the end. We are told often enough in both plays that the love and death (or presumed death) of the young people is supposed to teach their parents a lesson.

But although there is no strong cause to doubt that the senior Capulets and Montagues are strongly

chastened by the catastrophe that has befallen their houses, it is no radical departure to question not only the profundity, but even the nature of their insight. Indeed, we may question whether they are capable of insight at all. Of the four parents (three surviving) Old Capulet is the only one who has been presented to us in any detail. Shakespeare has sketched his personality brilliantly, and partly because of the telling psychological complementarity of his indulgent/tyrannous, buffoon/bully modalities, Old Capulet is certainly vivid and credible. But he is not very smart. And this is an important reason why the play has long been so unsatisfactory. At the end of the play a terrible thing has occurred (or been done), but no one, neither the young people who die nor the old people who are supposed to be made belatedly wiser by this experience, seems to be capable of self-awareness or even the brief flash of philosophical illumination that would render this catastrophe meaningful. To ask us to do it is not at all acceptable when we are so poorly and equivocally provided with information.

Lady Montague has died promptly of grief at her son's banishment, even though he has been gone no more than a couple of days. But the surviving parents, shocked as they are at the scene they discover in the Capulets' tomb and by the long, explicit narrative of

Friar Laurence, are still incapable of drawing the proper moral from the story themselves. It is not until the Prince of Verona, having listened to all the narrative testimony available, and confiscated Romeo's letter to his father, chides himself and both fathers for the loss of his kinsmen and theirs, and explicitly lays the blame for the deaths on the feud, that Capulet gives Montague his hand. Even then their sorrow and their reconciliation are expressed in mercantile terms. With all the extra propulsion of grief, remorse and princely prompting, their minds can rise no higher. The reconciliation is not merely presided over, but virtually administered, by the Prince, who braces their brief speeches before and after with his own longer ones. He is the one who takes charge of the suicide note, although it is addressed by a son to his father. As in the history plays, written not so long before, peace is brokered by a powerful political authority, as if individual moral volition could not and would not arrive at the right conclusions no matter how severely it was chastened. The Prince instructs his hearers, ourselves as well as Capulet and Montague, as to the significance of the narrated events and decrees that the suicides have been caused by their enmity.

Yet the two old men were at least presumably observing a truce when the deaths of Mercutio and Tybalt and then the suicides occurred. Furthermore,

Capulet's insistence on his daughter's marrying the young man of his choice--the Prince's kinsman, incidentally--had nothing to do with the feud. It is an action the Prince probably approved, since Paris mentioned no obstacle from his own family. On the one hand, one may wonder why Old Capulet and Old Montague need the Prince to spell a moral out for them. On the other hand, it is not at all clear why these fathers need to be reprimanded for sins they had already ceased to commit several acts ago. The moral is foisted upon them somewhat uncomfortably as it is upon us. The politically brokered explanation and the politically brokered solution are both inadequate.

Meaning has been asserted, but it has not been demonstrated. I break no new ground when I say this. This happens and then that happens. But this does not happen because that happened. Old Capulet is a vivid but shallow figure for a tragic protagonist because he lacks any but the most primitive sense of causality and significance. And Romeo and Juliet is a vivid but shallow play because it fails to deliver any but the most primitive--and often misleading--sense of causality and significance. But I will go further. We have been bamboozled by speed, language, crisis, and emotion. Shakespeare does this brilliantly. No one does it better. But were this play not by Shakespeare, not only would we lack the extraordinary attempts that

have been made to "criticize it into consequence," but someone surely would have made the case before now that the play is not simply a brilliant experiment that failed, it is in some important sense fraudulent.

Were Lope's play, moreover, not as culturally dangerous as it is, implicitly challenging a vulnerable text in the canon of a writer whose perfect integrity as well as perfect genius has been the keystone of a globally dominant hegemonic mythology, the play's intelligence and integrity would not at this late date require such long defense. Its levels would be better understood, and the modulations of its thematic exploration would have been realized in the craft of actors.

Arnaldo Montés, for example, is the father of the youthful hero of Castelvines y Monteses, the sworn enemy of the heroine's father, and corresponds to Shakespeare's Old Montague. Shakespeare has minimally sketched Old Montague, who appears in the first scene of the play and again in the last. Very few would argue that this character does much more than advance the plot and maintain the situation. But without greatly expanding the character's stage time (some dozen more lines), Lope has greatly enhanced the significance of Arnaldo Montés. In a crucial brawl scene, interestingly enough, each of the characters has about the same number of lines, approximately four. In

addition Montague has some two dozen lines describing his son's melancholy behavior and his own distress at it. He then has some ten lines in the closing scene in the tomb. Arnaldo Montés does not appear at all at the end of his play, but he has a very curious parenthetical scene alone with a servant in Act I.

We first see Arnaldo Montés immediately after the ball scene in which his son has fallen in love with his enemy's daughter and arranged to meet her. Montés, quite ignorant of all of this, has come in from riding in the countryside, apparently hunting, since he carries a loaded arquebus. The swirl of action, high spirits, high risk, high hopes, and drama with which the play has been concerned from its incipience to this moment, stops. And Montés and his servant Lidio, who helps him with his spurs and gun, engage in a dialogue on several subjects. After a passing reference to his hatred of Antonio Castelvín, Montés turns to the cares of his household and inquiry after his wild son. The naturalism of Lope's treatment contrasts sharply with the formal speeches in which Old Montague describes the formal melancholy of Romeo. The particular concern of Montés seems to be the boy's weakness for women of the town, or at least his assumption that the boy has a weakness for women of the town; we have not seen evidence of this, although he certainly has an energetic attraction to girls. Lidio assures his

master that it is the servant Marin who schools the boy in immoral habits, and although, again, we have just seen Roselo and his friend and kinsman Anselmo getting a reluctant Marin in trouble and not the other way around, we cannot be certain that Lidio's accusations are incorrect. Montés, however, digresses into a general discussion of the evils of servants. The longer you keep them, he complains, the more they become their masters' masters. Lidio protests, and Montés returns to the subject of his son. He wants to marry the boy off to settle him down, but Lidio insists that Roselo will only be worse after marriage and will bring grief to his wife if he is not separated from the evil influence of Marin. Montés replies, "Algo te ha hecho a ti" ["He must have done something to you"], to which Lidio retorts rather startlingly:

Ya me espantaba
 Que no juzgases mal de mis consejos.
 Malicias nunca faltan á los viejos.
 (1.6.p.5-6)

[I am always shocked
 at how badly you take my advice.
 Old men are never without suspicions.]

Now it is possible that Lidio means himself to be the representative old man (viejo) in this situation, and that the last line means something more like, "Old

men are always the butts of malice," an expression of self-pity rather than impudence. We have no theatrical tradition to call upon in support of one reading over the other or to dispute selectively. We lack even identifying descriptions of the dramatis personae at the head of the text. But although it is possible that Arnaldo Montés is a robust middle-aged man, it seems more likely that he is the contemporary of his enemy Antonio Castelvín, and Castelvín is old enough to find (in Act III) the prospect of marriage to a young bride burdensome, and the task of begetting an heir perhaps more than he can manage. Assuming, then, that the generic "viejos" is a slur on Montés and the first reading is correct, how is it that Montés does not reprimand Lidio, but replies merely with a reassertion of his judgment that when one servant speaks ill of another the cause is usually malice or envy? The answer must be in Montés' earlier complaint that old servants become their masters' masters. And Lidio's use of the familiar form juzgases towards his master reinforces this. The oddness of the scene dissolves if one perceives it as the crabby rapprochement of an old master and an old servant who agreed a long time ago not to trust each other. The exquisite psychological balance of this fragment opens us into a long vista of the years these two have been at it. And as an example of how our perception of Lope's work is undermined in

countless small, important ways by the lack of a theatrical tradition, this scene is telling.

In no way does Lope sentimentalize the upstairs/downstairs interdependency or suggest that despite his faults the backbiting Lidio is a dog-loyal and picturesque old retainer. And yet there is something touching about this scene. One can hardly suggest that these two like each other. If no man is a hero to his valet de chambre, well, this valet de chambre is no hero either. And as the one pulls the muddy spurs off the other, as they grumble and snipe, they maintain a peculiar understanding. After all, this other bad-mouthed old man is the only one who will listen to you. He has to, because you listen to him. In a play about love and hate, this is a scene of detente.

At the same time, when Montés first hands his gun to Lidio, he warns him to be careful with it. "¿Viene cargado?" Lidio asks ["Is it loaded?"]. Montés replies:

Si lo que tiene en el cañon, tuviera
Antonio Castelvín dentro del pecho,
Gozara agora más descanso el mío--
¿Qué hay de mi hijo?

[If what's in the barrel were
buried in the breast of Antonio Castelvin,
mine would rest more easily--
What news of my son?]

In a sense there are three characters in this scene: Lidio, Montés, and a loaded gun--a very large loaded gun. Its dangerous, wordless presence is there through all the low-key quotidian crabbing. Arnaldo Montés talks in the language of age and impotence, about servants and how they get the best of you, about children and how they can't be controlled, about tale-bearing and how he knows it is treacherous, even while he cannot stop its being fed into his ears. And all the while that huge arquebus, charged with lead shot and an old man's vindictive fantasies, lies nearby. Details such as this suggest to us Lope's extraordinary control of the non-verbal as well as the verbal resources of his theater. Montés is not stupid and he is not evil, but he is dangerous. He is weary, he is cantakerously sympathetic, and he is dangerous. He is capable of seeing through human pettiness and deception, and he is dangerous. And even though it has been totally outside his power to protect his house from the kind of disaster we have been seeing it incur, he is still dangerous. Moreover, we know that the news of the loved but troublesome son he asks after is that the hated Antonio Castelvín has come very close to burying the contents of a scabbard in the boy's breast--and has refrained. Antonio Castelvín is, although by no means a perfect man, a better man than the old rascal Montés is trusting with a loaded weapon.

In the following scene we see Lidio switch faces, cajole Marin, insult Montés behind his back, and look forward to making use himself of Marin's services to meet easy women.

The fathers of Lope's feuding houses, then, are neither buffoons nor villains, but are remarkably credible as men who are capable of committing evil without being inherently evil men. The sour, misanthropic Montés, the volatile Castelvin, are presented to us with a kind of factual dignity, like the common people in the paintings of Velazquez. They are who they are. And this is both an aesthetic and a moral statement.

At the same time Lope's brief, vivid sketch of Arnaldo Montés and his servant puts Roselo in a more complex family circumstance than Romeo, and leaves an audience busy making its own evaluations of people. Whom shall we believe? Our own observations of people or what others say of them? Because we have seen the people before we hear the opinions and the opinions rather surprise us, we are encouraged to question more actively. In Shakespeare the feud is shown to us first in the form of a street brawl initiated by the kitchen help; the Capulets and Montagues as individuals emerge consequently and subsequently. The people are defined by the feud. In Lope the people are presented first. Then when we see the confrontation, we are conscious of

the people involved and apprehensive for them--both that they might be victims of violence and that they might be the perpetrators of it. We hear of Romeo's conduct from the long description given by his father, conduct which is essentially posturing. Romeo is defined as a lover, even by himself, before he appears before us. Then his task is to fulfill that definition. Juliet is discussed by Paris and her father as a very youthful potential bride before we are allowed to see her. Both by defining circumstances (the feud precedes the feuders) and by defining descriptions, then, Shakespeare directs our readings of his characters fairly narrowly from the outset. In contrast, by the time we hear Arnaldo Montés discuss his worries over his son, we have already heard and seen Roselo's spontaneous behavior. We weigh the definition by what we ourselves have already determined about the characters from the character's words and actions. We have been told often enough that Lope's treatment of characters can be "superficial," but here we see a direct challenge to that cliché. Lope has explicitly refused to allow his characters to disappear into the situation. Furthermore, although Lope's play will achieve a comedic ending, the street brawl is not funny, but tragic.

Shakespeare uses impotent old men and lower class characters, for whose safety he does not expect us to

have concern, to suggest that the street fracas is a comic spectacle. Fighting does not become serious or potentially tragic until the young power males take it over--those characters with which his most influential playgoers would identify. The fathers in Shakespeare's tragedy are given a comic dimension at the outset or at least a dimension of buffoonery. They are distanced by the method of their introduction and by Shakespeare's treatment of them. When we do see Capulet's admission of his age, for example, it is just before his ferocious suppression of Tybalt. Even if we are willing to believe that his active duelling days are over, he is still capable of savagery in other ways. His affability is a public affability, moreover; his asides-- although suppressing violence--are violent in themselves. While Montés' hatred of Castelvin is the habitual cursing of an absent enemy, Capulet's tongue-lashing of Tybalt is the humiliation of a present ally. That is, Capulet's nastiness gives much less sign of being permanently or deeply reformable. There just isn't enough inherent sensitivity or intelligence to work with. Whatever the aesthetic arguments for Shakespeare's treatment and use of the old men, his treatment and use undercut the play's ability to examine certain moral implications of the story. The Montagues are more sympathetic, but so stylized in their expressions of concern for their son

that audiences tend to forget them as readily as their son does.

In Shakespeare's play the feud is a kind of natural disturbance caused by elemental forces of aggression. Individuals are propelled by imperatives within themselves over which they do not even attempt to have much control, and assaulted by the propulsions of others over whom they have even less control. But in Lope's play the old men are not just the jaded instruments of the feud, they are responsible for it. The deep, pervasive morality of Lope's vision declares that while you cannot always be held responsible for your circumstances, or even for the information that is available to you, you can be held responsible for your consent. In Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet people are pawns of their own passions and the passions of others. In Lope's play, however, though there are certainly passions enough, humanity is defined as the ability to take individual responsibility for what one wills.

In this regard we circle around again to the father of the heroine, in both plays a pivotal figure. We have seen how Shakespeare's treatment of Capulet serves to distance our response, and also to undermine the possibility of tragic insight. Lope's treatment of Antonio Castelvín is strikingly different in several crucial particulars. Firstly, Castelvín demonstrates a dimension of self-awareness and self-correction that is

lacking in Capulet. Secondly--and relatedly--he demonstrates a receptivity to the people he loves that is lacking in Capulet. Without such receptivity, respect, and reciprocity, Capulet's love for his daughter is of a fairly low and possessive order, and, his loss cannot command tragic stature for Juliet's death. Although Castelvín is spared the loss of his daughter, he has yet as a character greater potential for tragic enlightenment than Capulet does.

There are two scenes crucial to our understanding of what Lope has done with this central and defining figure. The first is the ball scene in which Antonio is outraged to recognize his enemy's son in his house and assumes the young man to have come with violent intention. Antonio's first impulse is to counter violence with violence--Lope has drawn his character with the same hair-trigger temper that Shakespeare has given Capulet. But because Antonio is capable of actually attending to someone besides himself, he averts tragedy with a moral choice. The single word his brother Teobaldo uses to arrest him in his impulse is significant. It is "Oíd," ["Listen"]. Castelvín's capacity to listen--and therefore to learn--is the characteristic which distinguishes him most strikingly from Capulet, and which consequently distinguishes the potential of Castelvines y Monteses to demonstrate meaning through the enlightenment of key characters.

What we see here further is that Lope's play is about human love in a more complex sense than Shakespeare's. It is not only the romantic passion of the two young people which redeems the feud. Rather that passion is one aspect of the redemptive power of a human's being's ability to find another irreplaceably precious. Capulet's rebuke of Tybalt is an act of domination, but Teobaldo's rebuke of Antonio, and Antonio's acceptance of that rebuke, are manifestations of something quite different.

ANTONIO

¿Hay mayor atrevimiento?

Roselo en mi casa.

TEOBALDO

[A ANTONIO]

Oíd.

ANTONIO

¿Qué he de oír?

TEOBALDO

Sólo advertid

Lo que deste mozo siento:

Que es de una noble llaneza,

Y que con su poca edad

No siente la enmista,

Que es en él naturaleza;

Y es señal que no ha tenido
Odio jamas a esta casa,
Pues sabiendo lo que pasa,
Adonde veis ha venido.

ANTONIO

¿No puede venir armado;
Y intentar una traicion?

TEOBALDO

Eso es hablar con pasion.
De noble el mancebo ha entrado.
Sin reparar si era error,
Estando junto un linaje.

ANTONIO

Y ¿no es de mi casa ultraje?

TEOBALDO

Ántes me parece honor.

ANTONIO

Yo lo juzgo de otra suerte,
Y le quisiera matar.

TEOBALDO

Pues yo no os pienso ayudar
A hacer tan cobarde muerte.

Este, como simple azor,
Se ha entrado en el palomar
A ver si puede cazar
Algunas aves de amor.
No alboroteis á Verona,
Ni el bando resuciteis.

ANTONIO

Mucha prudencia teneis.

TEOBALDO

La edad, Antonio, me abona;
Y si teneis hija aqui,
Yo tambien.

ANTONIO

Por vos le dejo.

TEOBALDO

Lo que importa os aconsejo.
(1.4.p.2)

[ANTONIO

Have you ever seen such impudence?
Roselo in my house.

TEOBALDO

Listen.

ANTONIO

To what?

TEOBALDO

I only mean to suggest
what I know about this boy;
he is a noble youth, and open,
and at his age, Antonio,
the feud is nothing to him.
He only does what is natural;
and it is some indication
that he has never hated this house.
But learning what was taking place,
he has come here where you see him.

ANTONIO

And what if he comes here armed
and intending to do some mischief?

TEOBALDO

This is your passion speaking.
The boy comes in a noble spirit,
without thinking if it were a crime
to be kinsman to someone or other.

ANTONIO

And this is not an affront?

TEOBALDO

It seems to me rather an honor.

ANTONIO

It seems to me otherwise.

I am of a mind to kill him.

TEOBALDO

Well, I have no intention
to assist you in so cowardly a murder.
He comes here like a simple sparrowhawk
To see if he can hunt up
a few lovebirds.
Don't throw Verona into havoc
and revive the feud again.

ANTONIO

You are prudent.

TEOBALDO

So old men should be.
And if you have a daughter here,
so have I.

ANTONIO

For you, I spare him.

TEOBALDO

I advise you of what is important.]

The force of Capulet's rebuttal is directed against Tybalt's "not knowing his place," as it were. Tybalt has no right to make judgments in Capulet's house, certainly no right to voice them, much less to act upon them. But this is a line of attack conspicuously absent from Antonio's reponse to his younger brother. Nowhere does he reach for such standard kinds of retorts as "Who are you to tell me what to do in my own house?" or "You are a fool to interpret Roselo's actions as you do. My judgment is superior," or "You are my brother; you must second me." He states his position, but he never questions either his brother's intelligence or his loyalty or his right to speak out.

What is so powerful is what is implicit. It is not simply that Teobaldo represents the "voice of reason," a voice not heard in the house of Capulet, but that both voices, Antonio's as well as Teobaldo's, are in their way reasonable. Reason is a natural language between two men who trust and respect each other. Furthermore, Teobaldo's willingness to risk his brother's anger in order to save him from committing "tan cobarde muerte," and Antonio's willingness to arrest his wrathful impulse, to accept this defiance of his judgment as positive in intention, positive in

content, are both manifestations of love, and remind us that this is a love story, and about the proper relationship between love and family. We do not hear these brothers discuss their respect for one another, but we see them act upon it. This kind of mutual trust and respect, not mere dynastic obsession, is the model Lope puts forth. What these brothers must learn to do is to treat the son of an enemy as they would treat sons of their own.

We see in this scene that Antonio is not so much an instrument of his passions that he is incapable of thought. His receptivity, his ability to listen and to recognize that the charitable interpretation is a plausible one is an aspect of his ability to love, but the ability to love is also the ability to see things as they really are--as God sees them. That is, love is an instrument of clarification, not a form of blindness. Teobaldo's interpretation of Roselo's actions, which Antonio almost immediately appreciates, is not simply benign; it is correct. So made up of strength and weakness, wrath and empathy, passion and insight, blindness and love, Castelvin is presented to us as a true tragicomedia character, a character capable of responding to either comic accident or tragic inevitability. To the extent that this is true, it makes us realize that two-dimensional Capulet is inherently a comedic character, even at the end of a

play purported to be a tragedy. He responds readily to the situation in which he finds himself, and to being "taught a lesson." But he lacks any internally generated need to find meaning in suffering. No one has this need in Romeo and Juliet, not even, we may assert, the Prince himself, who uses the double suicide as leverage to reestablish civil order, not as a means to moral understanding or resignation in the face of some cosmic truth.

That Lope explores the moral implications of his story more deeply than Shakespeare does is evident even more strongly in the second major scene which defines Antonio Castelvín, the scene in which he persuades his daughter to marry Paris. This brief scene (it is only 76 lines long) is remarkable, as we have had occasion before to observe, for its unexpected and disarming tenderness, and for the fact that Antonio wins his daughter's acquiescence not by a display of dominance, but by an admission of vulnerability. Had he known her feelings, he would never have given his word to Paris. But having given it, he is bound. Even what should be a proud assertion of his social position, "que soy hombre principal" ["I am an important man"], following upon "Mira que salir no puedo de mi palabra," ["You must see that I cannot go back on my word"], becomes an almost pathetic plea for her to recognize his impotence. Ironically, the cruellest thing he does is

to fail to bully her, to leave--ostensibly--all the power in her hands to destroy the honor of a father who adores her. The cruellest thing he does is to use her love for him against her. The subtlety of Lope's insight here anticipates that curiously similar scene in Henry James' What Maizie Knew, in which Beale Farange uses his daughter's very love and need for his approval to manipulate her into releasing him from his responsibility towards her.

Although Antonio Castelví is no such patent monster as Beale Farange, the moral and psychological complexity of Lope's scene is still extraordinary, because it is in essence a scene of incestuous seduction, with Paris to be Antonio's proxy in the wedding bed. He does not, after all, ask Julia to love Paris, he asks her to marry Paris out of love for him. Lope has perceived exactly where the psycho-sexual charge is in this story and has opened out the heart of it in this tender and terrible exchange.

That is, Lope confronts the issue inherent in the patriarchal triangle at the center of his story, just that issue which Shakespeare, for all the locker room bawdy of his dialogue, either misses or skirts. The central conflict is between father and lover for the sexual possession of Julia. Particularly poignant and insightful here is the revelation of the other side of the Electra knot, that is, the father learning to give

up the sexuality latent in his romance with his daughter, and all the implications that have adhered to his position as alpha male. The habitual slighting of middle-aged women in plays of this period should not blind us to the way in which the absence of Julia's mother functions particularly here, to isolate Julia and her father together, to underscore the intimacy and exclusivity of their love. When the father allows his daughter to choose her own sexual partner, he yields up control of both her body and her will. In patriarchal terms, the yielding up of power over the nubile females is the yielding up of both sexual and political potency. The young man who takes up that power is by definition an interloper, an enemy gene-pool. There is no reconciliation scene in Lope's play between Antonio Castelvín and his enemy, Arnaldo Montés. The reconciliation is between the brothers Castelvín and their enemy's sexually potent son.

Again, the meanings implicit in this scene are strikingly different from, for example, the meanings implicit in scenes between Prospero and Miranda in The Tempest, or other father-daughter scenes in Shakespeare. Julia and her father conduct themselves more like peers than fathers and daughters in Shakespeare do. In Shakespeare domination and submission are foregrounded in parent-child relationships and affection is often scarcely expressed

except by domination and submission. Even Cordelia fails in her attempt to be both a person and a daughter. But Antonio acknowledges without shame or question, in a radically un-Shakespearean way, his need for his daughter's willing love. And Julia defies and upbraids him in a way that wives, not daughters, upbraid men in Shakespeare. Good Shakespearean daughters are dutiful, but Julia is not dutiful; what she owes her father is overwhelmingly personal. And what Antonio relinquishes is personal. A great deal has been made of the pundonor and the allegiance to public roles and forms in the Spanish theater of the Golden Age, but something else is going on here. It is after he has declared the marriage an accomplished fact, after he has asserted, "Que le he llamado, y que es fuerte la palabra" ["I have already summoned him, and a word given holds,"], after he has said in what appeared to be no uncertain terms, "Tu eres del Conde mujer" ["You are the County's wife"], that he inquires, "¿Que respondes?" ["What is your answer?"], as if, after all this manfully asserted, the matter still hung upon her reply. And it is after all of this that Antonio says:

Hija, no estes de esta suerte,
 Ni seas cruel conmigo:
 Que no soy yo tu enemigo,
 Ni el que á Otavio he dado muerte.
 Mira que salir no puedo

De mi promesa, y que soy

Hombre principal.

(3.1.p.15)

[Daughter, do not be this way,

nor be cruel with me.

I am not your enemy,

nor the man that slew Otavio.

You must see it is not in my power

to go back on a promise, and that I

am an important man.]

Julia capitulates for his sake, trapped between irreconcilable loves, between father and husband, not primarily between love and duty, certainly not between Paris and Roselo. Then, believing Julia dead, Antonio arranges to marry his brother's daughter Dorotea, Julia's friend and second--another incestuous pairing and clearly on one level a stand-in for incest with his own daughter.² His overt purpose is to beget another heir--quickly, since it is almost too late for him to do so, and indeed, there is some humor at his expense from the peasants, who think there is vanity even in the attempt. But in the end he must hand over the role of further sexual begetting to the young men of his enemy's house. It is they who will sire his descendants with his daughters and niece. What he accepts are particularly Christian paradoxes: to keep

is to loose, to love is to relinquish, to be impotent is to allow your seed to multiply, to die is to become immortal, to live on in your child and in your enemy's child and in the children their love will engender. In giving up Julia to Roselo, Antonio recognizes his own impotence, and concomitantly, his own mortality.

The tragicomedia form as a pattern of the "fortunate fall" of Christian theology is apparent in the crucial feud scene outside the church in the second act. Here Antonio sees his house defeated by Roselo, and his familial proxy, his brother's son Otavio, killed, he may even explicitly see Roselo protect his hated enemy Arnaldo Montés, Roselo's father. And yet later when he speaks to Julia he is able to defend Roselo's action in a curious pairing: "Yo no soy tu enemigo,/Ni el que á Otavio ha dado muerte" ["I am not your enemy/nor he who slew Otavio"]. He has seen with his own eyes--and accepted--that Roselo wished to avert a duel, and that Otavio provoked him. Roselo against his will killed Otavio, and Antonio recognizes him as morally innocent. Antonio's acceptance of Roselo in the end, then, is prepared by the very act in which Roselo kills his family's last male heir.

This central scene brings us to the last old man of our discussion, on whom we have had reason to touch before, but who requires some closer examination, Antonio's brother Teobaldo. Teobaldo Castelvín has no

real counterpart in Shakespeare's play,³ but before we go on to examine his singularity we should look at some interesting parallels to the very different character Shakespeare has called Tybalt. The names are analogues, of course, derived from the Italian sources. Moreover, the characters serve in several telling instances similar plot functions. In Shakespeare's play Romeo is recognized at the ball by Juliet's father and Tybalt, who argue whether Romeo should be killed or spared. In Lope's play Roselo is recognized at the ball by Julia's father and Teobaldo, who likewise argue whether Roselo shall be killed or spared. In the duel in the street which is the turning point of both plays, Tybalt provokes Romeo, murders Romeo's friend, and then is killed by Romeo; while Teobaldo provokes his own son, who is then killed by Roselo. Teobaldo serves similar plot functions, but his significance as a character is very different.

Since our discussion of Teobaldo Castelvín has moved out of our discussion of Antonio, it makes sense first to address Teobaldo's significance as a doubling of the character of his brother. The first, most obvious advantage of this device is to put forth an internal conflict as dialogue. That the dialogues between the brothers often do represent a kind of internal conflict is evidenced by the reversing of roles. In the beginning of the play Teobaldo persuades

Antonio to spare Roselo. At the end of the play it is Antonio who persuades Teobaldo to spare Roselo. Each brother becomes at some point the conscience of the other, his brother's keeper in a moral sense. When personality and motivations split between passion and moral intelligence, each brother represents one side. What the second brother provides is a way out of the self-consuming loop of passion. Doubling allows a character to stand outside himself, as it were, and indeed each brother listens to the other to a remarkable degree without ego confrontation, almost as if he were listening to himself. Meanwhile, the peculiar advantage of doubling rather than soliloquy for Lope's purpose is that the doppelganger is not the self, but someone else. Antonio and Teobaldo Castelvín, with their linked destinies, embody in some important sense "brotherhood" as a dimension of identity and as an escape from self-consuming egotism. Only by "selflessness," forgetting the self in love for another, does one find, in Christian terms, one's true self. Again, the pervasive paradigm in this vision is liberation of the soul by the submission of the will to union with God's universal love. Yet the brothers never dissolve into faceless fusion, Tweedle Dee and Tweedle Dum, or even Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern. We are always kept aware that they have separate wills; each man's sins and each man's sorrows are his own. Each man's redemption will depend upon himself.

Because, therefore, our first meeting with Teobaldo shows him in the role of moral intercessor, an advocate of the young people and the youthful concerns that the play celebrates, we respond to him more readily than to Antonio. We trust Teobaldo and we ally with him. We expect his influence to be good and we want him to triumph. In this regard he is strikingly different from Shakespeare's Tybalt who, although young, represents violence, intolerance, factionalism, hatred, and death--the feud personified--or in another sense, the vices of the old compounded by the vices of the young. Teobaldo seems at first to represent the virtues of youth and age reconciled.

The tragedy at the heart of this tragicomedia is the more painful and monitory, then, because it is Teobaldo, not only a good man, but the man we trusted most, who calls up the feud again. Fatally, he allows himself to be caught up in the annoyance, then the anger, then the passion of the moment and briefly, thoughtlessly betrays his only son. The action takes place in the street outside a church, and the characters go in and out as the scene proceeds. Now, a church was certainly no unusual element in a Spanish play. Scenes were often set in and before churches. Religious plays might even be performed in and before churches as they had been since the Middle Ages. What is noteworthy here is how seamless and delicate Lope's

artistry is in complecting the literal and the symbolic levels of the action, the visual, verbal, and dramatic levels of the argument, while maintaining the simplest imitative level perfect and undistorted. Yet, performed, as it were, on the doorstep of the church like an old Morality, the action begins almost magically to extend into an allegorical dimension.⁴ Either consciously or subliminally, Lope's audience would have understood that a higher definition of family was present, witnessing each human choice; that figuratively, if not literally, the image of Christ with arms outstretched stood silently in judgment of the scene enacted on the human stage; that each action of the mortal houses of Castelvín and Montés was spread against and measured by the eternal values of the House of God, and that the profane and foolish sacrifice of Teobaldo's beloved son is a travesty of the redemptive sacrifice of the Son of God. Thus each natural consequence seems not merely poetic justice, but part of a wordless divine dialogue between the Almighty Father and the protagonists of the play.

Teobaldo becomes embroiled in a silly squabble that his daughter brings him, over places in church. A servant of the house of Montés has placed their dias where our dias should be. A typical and perfectly ordinary sort of squabble on the literal level, it smacks of the irrational fury that can be aroused when someone steals your parking space or cuts ahead of you in line, and, like the melee at the beginning of Shakespeare's play, it begins with the

servants. But it is not therefore comic. On the allegorical level it is a perfect symbol of the folly of the feud. It is not, after all, the petty vanities of the houses of Castelvín and Montés which will govern place and precedence in the House of God, nor have the mortal fathers of these earthly families the authority to divide children whom a greater Father claims, all, as his own. But the squabble escalates. Teobaldo upbraids his son Otavio for mooning over his cousin Julia and not being there to defend his sister. Teobaldo and Otavio stride into the church, and by the time they burst out again into the street, they are in the midst of a verbal brawl, both families collected, swords drawn.

It is at this point that Roselo, secretly married to his enemy's daughter, struggles to make peace and almost succeeds. But Otavio's pride is smarting from his father's rebuke. Over and above his jealousy over Julia, he has been pushed to prove himself and will not be appeased. He provokes Roselo and is killed by him. In an agony of grief and remorse, Teobaldo realizes what he has done: "Que yo soy la causa desto!" (2.9.p.10) ["I am the cause of this!"]. Lest we think of Castelvines y Monteses as light, or easy in its solutions, we must remember that this moment is at the center of the play, the father causing the death of his only son by prompting the boy's own weakness. This is the meaning of "the feud." This is the way in which the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children. It is not that

Otavio is released from responsibility for his own actions, or that his redemption is Teobaldo's and not his own to determine. He is borne into the church to make his own peace with heaven. But this in no way releases Teobaldo from having colluded in the occasion of his son's error and death. There is no long verbal explanation given here as there is in Romeo and Juliet about why the parents are responsible. There is simply the sickening shock of self-awareness and remorse in that bare and devastating cry of contrition: "Que yo soy la causa desto!" It is not a political authority figure who defines the intimate morality of a parent's relationship to his child. It is the grief-stricken father himself, standing before the church, who understands more profoundly than anyone else could what he has done.

Lope has placed the moral choices of Teobaldo Castelvín symmetrically, at the beginning of the play, at the middle, and at the end, to shape the moral structure of the play, and each of these choices has to do with Roselo. At the beginning, Teobaldo's spontaneous act of charity, the saving of Roselo's life at the ball, becomes the cause that both the lives and the happiness of others are saved. The dark center of the play, in which that very Roselo becomes the unwilling murderer of Teobaldo's son, is shown to be not Roselo's fault, but in an important way Teobaldo's. And at the end, with Roselo's life again in his hands, Teobaldo allows himself to be persuaded by his brother, as once

Antonio had been persuaded by him, to spare another man's son. For his advocacy of hatred he has lost his own son, but for his championing of love he has won the fruitful continuance of his line. The two old men see their house resurrected in the joyful marriages of their daughters to the two scions of the house of Montés.

With Arnaldo Montés and the doubled characters of the brothers Castelvín, with their explicit and moving potential for both vindictiveness and love, passion and self-control, error and enlightenment, Lope touches the tragic potential of his story more nearly than Shakespeare does and uncovers a significance that Shakespeare cannot see. The story belongs to the young lovers and their triumph, but the context that gives their triumph its profounder significance, its ramifying meaning, is the context of death, and the wisdom that love can teach old men even at the gates of their own mortality.

Chapter VI Notes

¹ Seward (See Cope).

² It is a curious commentary that Philip IV upon the death of his first wife married in 1649 his fourteen-year-old niece Mariana of Austria, the betrothed of his dead son, and the offspring of this marriage was the crippled, mentally retarded Charles II. The tragedy of the closed, incestuous house, averted in Lope's tragicomedia, was therefore played out in the royal house, with disastrous consequences for Spain.

³ Shakespeare's Capulet has an uncle with daughters--apparently unmarried ones--but no brother.

⁴ Such referentiality would have been reinforced by the fact that theatrical companies owed their licenses to the performances they were required to contribute to the annual Corpus Christi celebrations.

Conclusion

The primary object of this paper has been first to enable, and then to make, a responsible comparison between Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet and Lope de Vega's Castelvines y Monteses. The process has inevitably involved confrontation with the myths and prejudices that have precluded such a comparison previously. For Castelvines y Monteses is not simply an obscure play that no one has appreciated because no one has had reason to look at it. It is a play that has been lying on the highroad of the most heavily trafficked route in literary criticism, a contemporary analogue, by a major playwright, of one of the most famous plays in history. And it has been lying there for almost four hundred years with travellers coming and going, stepping over it, walking around it, kicking it to one side, refusing for one reason or another to pick it up, wipe it off, and actually look at it.

Although Castelvines y Monteses has been neglected for a long time, furthermore, this neglect was not caused by an absence of techniques for perceiving its excellence. The methodology has been there; the techniques of critical analysis that I have used here have long been applied to Romeo and Juliet. If these

traditional criteria and methods had been applied, however, the danger existed that Castelvines y Monteses might have been perceived as in certain respects a much better play than Romeo and Juliet, whose weaknesses have long been the subject of critical concern. It was necessary, therefore, to avoid such confrontation by avoiding the play altogether. The reasons for the unwillingness of the critical establishment to confront this outcome cannot be proven, but there are certain elements in the history of Western reception of the work of the Spanish masters that are so extremely and conspicuously prejudicial that we can with some confidence suggest that they have been instrumental in inhibiting the recognition of Castelvines y Monteses.

Shakespeare, the man who was to become an unprecedented icon of cultural dominance, was born and died a citizen of a second-rate power. Lope, on the other hand, was born and died a citizen of the most powerful empire the world had ever seen, the first empire of which it could be said that "the sun never set," the Spanish empire. The polarization of Northern and Southern European cultures, of Protestant and Catholic hegemonies, and particularly of England and Spain, is central to the ideological climate in which Shakespeare lived and wrote. Spain was the crossroads of the world when these two playwrights lived, the culture which clasped together contentious opposites of

North and South, East and West, Old World and New. Even without the outright military action of the Armada, England had reason to feel threatened by the mere existence of Spain's power, prestige, and presence. Furthermore, Spanish power was hardly "defeated" by the debacle of the Armada, although fear of invasion was doubtless much allayed. The tension between English self-definition and the "otherness" overwhelmingly identified with colossal, world-straddling Catholic Spain remained, not only through Shakespeare's lifetime, but long after Spain had lost its power and ceased to be a political threat to anybody. The English words Spain, Spaniard, Counter Reformation, and Spanish Inquisition, not to mention English catch phrases like "Spanish cruelty," "Spanish fanaticism" and "Spanish honor" (to be sharply distinguished from "English honor"), were endowed at that threatened and defensive time with connotations they carry to this day. It is true that Shakespeare rarely mentions Spain, but it is also true that Chaucer neglects to mention the Peasants' Revolt. Some things we leave out because they seem unimportant. Other things we leave out because they are too traumatic to be confronted directly. But these are the things we never cease to struggle with covertly, indirectly, and on the deepest levels.

At the very outset, then, after a plot summary of

the Spanish play (the English one is readily available), this paper has had to address the reception of these two plays in a critical climate which has for centuries polarized Lope and Shakespeare as political and cultural symbols--Lope and his Golden Age dismissed, patronized, or rebuked; Shakespeare and his Elizabethans apotheosized. Chapter I focuses on three elements in the politics of the reception of these plays: first the Black Legend and Hispanophobia in Anglo-American culture, second the deliberate mounting of Shakespeare as the literary icon of English dominance, and third the internalized Black Legend in Spain and the backlash of Spanish intellectuals against their own Golden Age.

The so-called Black Legend of anti-Spanish propaganda began under the reign of Elizabeth with printed language and pictorial matter which historians have been able to document authoritatively. But the wider ramifications and manifestations of anti-Spanish feeling seeping down through later centuries of Western culture--particularly English-speaking culture--are not less real for being less examined. When the effect of this lingering Hispanophobia combines with the patriotic, racial, and religious zeal that has informed much of the movement to exalt Shakespeare above all other authors of all other nations, and with the repudiations of later Spanish intellectuals seeking--

typically--inward for a corrupting "sin" in the will of their culture to explain Spain's decline in political and economic power, then all these elements together exert a complex, pervasive, and potent influence on the reception of any Spanish work which is in a position to directly rival an English one. The Golden Age theater has suffered particularly, exploited for whatever in it could be perceived as bizarre, frivolous, or exotic, and largely neglected otherwise. Even in the radically altered climate of post-Franco Europeanization, the Golden Age drama has yet to be washed clean of centuries of tarring with the nastier aspects of political Catholicism.

In the case of Castelvines y Monteses, the play's position in relationship to an extremely precious and yet critically vulnerable Shakespearean text has brought out all the prejudicial elements in full force to discourage any real examination of Lope's achievement, and subliminally to protect English, poetry, pluralism, progress, democracy, Protestant liberalism, civil rights, white America, serious art, Shakespeare, and everything we hold dear from Lope, Calderón, burning at the stake, murderous jealousy, Philips II and IV, and the Duke of Medina Sidonia.

Therefore this paper has perforce been to a large extent a vindication of a work that has existed for centuries in the shadow of another work that is in many

respects much the weaker. Indeed, I have contended, it is in part because Romeo and Juliet is weak in these respects that critical orthodoxy has found it necessary to avoid engagement with Castelvines y Montes.

I began my attempt at comparison in Chapter II by examining the theatrical history of the two plays and its influence on reception. Castelvines y Montes has, in effect, no theatrical history whatsoever that can influence us, and, therefore, it is not really a "play" in the sense that Romeo and Juliet is, with its long, rich, varied, and familiar theatrical resume, its translation into visual and musical forms, into dance, film and taste-updated "versions" like (early on) Caius Marius and (more recently) West Side Story. The Romeo and Juliet that we think we are reading comes from many more sources than the text and many more creative minds than Shakespeare's, while the "play" we read when we read Castelvines y Montes is utterly deprived of performance recollection or cultural harmonics.

Moreover, Romeo and Juliet has benefited enormously from the Great Precedent of William Davenant which allowed for complete liberty of appropriation and adaptation of the plays of Shakespeare provided only that Shakespeare himself should have primary credit for any success thus achieved, while the adapter and those responsible for performance and production accept all blame for failure. By this means we are allowed to

believe that Romeo and Juliet has been a popular and successful play for over three centuries, even though many of its successes were achieved by radically altered versions. Against this mercurial, propagandized, enhanced and elusive "text" we attempt to measure a bare and barely edited printscript, which tradition unforgivingly reads in the narrowest possible way. Such a comparison can hardly yield more than a confirmation of existing opinions. Indeed, it is strictly structured to preclude more.

Bearing all these distortions in mind, I approached the question of genre in Chapter III in a posture of challenge to the traditional assumption that Lope trivializes the story of the lovers of Verona by giving it a comedic ending. There are two essential parts to this challenge: First, I have argued for the potential for dignity and resonance in the comedic form itself and particularly in the tragicomedia form of Castelvines y Monteses. And second, I've argued that the form Lope has chosen in fact fulfills the potential of his story more successfully than the one Shakespeare has chosen.

The two parts of the argument are unified by the Christian assumptions of Lope's work, which declare human experience to be metaphysically comedic, carrying always the potential for redemption and ultimate joy, the potential to make sin, death, and sorrow

transitional, purgative, "fortunate." Moreover, Lope has found in his story rich resources for reflecting, and reflecting upon, the "family" paradigms of Christianity. Therefore, the story in which young love redeems a family feud becomes a story in which love is both passionate and Christian, an affirmation of both physical and spiritual life, redeeming from sterility both the souls of the old men and the earthly houses of Castelvín and Montés. Because the tomb over which Christ's resurrection triumphed is such a potent symbol for Lope and his audience, the resurrection of Julia by love triumphing over hatred and death cannot be dismissed as simply a trivial or lightweight solution. It taps the deepest and most resonant associations the culture possessed. Meanwhile, the tragic outcome of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet has long been considered one of the play's most problematic elements. And Shakespeare is vulnerable to the accusation of forcing for the sake of pumped-up pathos a tragic outcome which he justifies nowhere near as surely and consistently as Lope justifies his comedic one, and with much less integrity of vision.

The second issue of comparison that needed to be confronted was the issue of Shakespeare's all-male cast and creative community and the influence of these elements on Romeo and Juliet, both in recorded verbal text and in original performance and reception.

Women--like small children and animals--were recognized in the European cultures of the seventeenth century, as they are now, to have a theatrical potential in their very phenomenology that advantaged them over adult males (some would say unfairly, or inappropriately), particularly with an audience dominated by people who were themselves adult males. What needed particularly to be addressed in Chapters IV and V of this discussion was the institution of the boy actress which assigned the roles of erotically desirable females to prepubescent boys, that is, to boys whose extreme youth and conditions of apprenticeship gave them considerably less power in the company than women could command in the Spanish companies. Over and above excluding women from representation by women, the custom of the boy actress placed an erotic premium on late childhood, specifically that period before sexual maturity and its concomitant sexual motivation. The issue has been much beclouded by the assumption that homosexual and heterosexual are morally meaningful categories rather than procreational, social, economic or even medical ones. The real psychomachia has always been and probably always will be between dominationist and consensual sexual orientations. "Boy love" in the English Renaissance, as in the Italian Renaissance, as in Classical Greece, was not consensual homosexuality, but merely a flanking movement of the hegemonic

dominationism, in which a dominant male seizes for his own exclusive gratification not only the woman's sexuality, but also that of the potentially Oedipal boy-child. The relationship of the Shakespearean boy actress to the co-existent institution of the children's company makes clear that these conventions of boy-for-woman substitution were directly related to a vogue in pederastic eroticism among at least one influential segment of Shakespeare's audience and almost certainly in his creative community as well.

Recognition that the boy playing Juliet on the stage of the Globe was likely no more than fourteen and might well have been younger, but the actor playing Romeo was twenty-six or older and a major sharer in the company supports a reading of pederastic subtext in this most famous of all romantic plays. It also gives a more literal referent to Romeo's fantasies of the sexual abuse of blooming Juliet by Death personified as "lean" and "abhorred" but still moved by lust. Although Richard Burbage, who first played Romeo, could not himself have been physically decrepit or repellent, at least not in such ways as would form part of an audience's experience, the imagery of the old preying sexually upon the young constantly circles the boy-love paradigm.

The utter vacancy of identity in Juliet, who is in every way the projection of wills other than her own,

must be seen as relating directly to the erotic substitution of the unprotected and absolutely dependent underage boy-child, without dynastic potential to barter for long-term security, for the willful post-pubescent actress, with her subversive economic independence and her potential for biological consequences, and with her insistence on publicly displaying the charms of her disturbing and inadequately repressible otherness.

All of these examinations led inevitably to a recognition in Chapter VI that there are serious implications not only to the tragedy-tragicomedia contrast of these two plays, and to the boy-for-woman substitution, but also to the generational antipathies of Romeo and Juliet versus the generational inter-identities of Castelvines y Monteses. Curiously enough, parents come off as badly in Romeo and Juliet as they are wont to come off in comedy. But in Castelvines y Monteses both mature wisdom and youthful instinct are perceived as needing one another. Indeed, Lope's play cannot be adequately understood unless it is recognized as being written in a particular cultural language in which parent-child relationships had a personal, social, moral, and even metaphysical meaning that cannot be easily translated into the language of Shakespeare's culture and vice versa. The epiphany of Lope's tragicomedia is not brokered by a political

authority as is the resolution in Romeo and Juliet. Rather the reconciliation is brought about by a father's yielding to the voice of his daughter, who speaks with the authority of a celestial messenger (from an upper floor) and with the terrible invocation of Death itself. As Christianity promises the immortality of the soul, so children promise the immortality of blood and earthly affections. And the two are intimately related. It is powerful in the richly Judaic consciousness of Catholic Spain that God's covenant with Abraham and God's supreme sacrifice of His son to redeem the world have emphasized the sacred character of the bond between parent and child. There are to be no more Iphegenias. The father will no more sacrifice his child, but the child will live on after the father. And this is the covenant of immortality made flesh.

Shakespeare's is a heavily captioned play. The Chorus, the narrative of Friar Laurence, and the pronouncements of the Prince of Verona, all tell us in various authoritative ways how to interpret the action. But if Lope's play is captioned at all, it is captioned by Christian symbols--or rather by a Christian dimension that so many symbols have accrued for Spanish culture by this time. These are the flags Lope uses to guide our interpretation. And in the end--as I hope has been demonstrated--they are notably more reliable

than Shakespeare's more obtrusive Chorus and commentary. The action is consistent with them.

All the dust that may have been raised by the process of challenging such an icon as Shakespeare is, however, should not obscure the central issue, which is that Castelvines y Monteses is a remarkable play, worthy of comparison with Shakespeare's, worthy of study on its own. Its shimmering surface is charming enough to please the simplest level of response, but beneath the surface is an extraordinary richness of understanding, an extraordinary complexity of art and implicaton. Nor need we, incidentally, assume that the simplest level of response was historically that of a lower class mosquetero. Intelligence is not class-specific, as Lope's plays point out.

Furthermore, I should like to suggest that the groundwork which this paper represents implies much more work that might be done, that needs to be done, on the play itself, on its comparison with Shakespeare's plays, and on wider subjects.

In the area of genre, for example, comic elements are not simply an early misdirection in Romeo and Juliet; they are to many minds its most successful elements. The Nurse and Mercutio are praised as two of Shakespeare's most vivid creations, examined for their striking improvements upon his source, treasured as the occasion of virtuoso character performances. Nor are

they explicable as "comic relief" since, as Professor Snyder points out, comedy diminishes abruptly after the death of Mercutio. At least the comic elements do not "relieve" the tragedy in the therapeutic sense, although it may be argued that they do in the sculptural sense; that is, they throw the tragedy into relief. But comic interjections are also a rhetorical device comparable to the anticipation and coopting of objections in argument. When an audience finds a tragic presentation unconvincing or excessive, it laughs, as many are inclined to do at Titus Andronicus, for example. Laughter signifies the withdrawal of assent from the tragic premise and must be the one sound of which tragedians have most reason to live in terror. It is imperative for the text and presentation of tragedy to control the audience's impulse to laugh. In this regard a comparative study of Romeo and Juliet and Castelvines y Monteses would be extremely valuable if it could examine the ways in which Lope and Shakespeare endeavor to coopt laughter in order to control it and in order to prevent unwanted laughter.

But there are even further and more important issues to be dealt with in the area of understanding tragedy as it is developed by Shakespeare and, very differently, by Lope and the Spanish masters.

If we are able to relinquish even temporarily the assumption that the terms of Shakespearean tragedy are

and must be superior in all ways to those of the Spanish masters, we may more readily see that the Spanish terms are--and for good historical reasons--more closely akin to Classical terms than Shakespeare's are (enter the question of free will), and that Shakespeare's first steps into modernism are troubled by problems that trouble modernism still. To call Shakespeare's thinking into question is inevitably to question our own.

Most modern discussions of tragedy, while keeping close to an Aristotelian model, persist in identifying death as the locus of the tragic action. But Aristotle's paradigmatic tragedy is Oedipus Rex, and Oedipus does not die in this play. Classical Greek tragedy being, like the tragedy of the Spanish Golden Age, religious in character and context, it may be argued that for both the true locus of tragedy is not death, but moral despair caused by a recognition of sin. The complex Spanish word desengaño is useful here, "undeceiving," the giving up of a proud belief in one's own virtue. Oedipus does not end his life; he digs out his physical eyes in an agony of contrition at his own moral blindness. And as his story continues through the other two plays of the trilogy, he becomes a kind of holy man, by virtue of having faced what no one else has faced, the depths of his own criminality. Without in any way condoning the crime, indeed, by

understanding and condemning it fully, he first accepts his own sinfulness and then is free to know his own sinlessness, and then he is cleansed.

Such a definition of tragedy must inevitably bring to mind the central scene of Castelvines y Monteses and the cry of Teobaldo, "Yo soy la causa desto!", a cry which might be echoed appropriately by Oedipus as he accepts at last the terrible knowledge that the criminal he has sought is himself: "I am the cause of this."

Such a stark and harrowing acceptance of full moral responsibility, whatever the sins of others or the entrapments of fate and circumstance may be, would not fall readily from the lips of most of Shakespeare's major tragic figures. Neither Hamlet, nor Lear, nor Macbeth, nor Coriolanus would be likely to cry at his supreme moment, "I am the cause of this!" Indeed, all are more likely to feel betrayed from without. Only Othello, who most suggests a Spanish influence, experiences such a shock of devastating contrition. But Othello's sin and expiation lack a sacred or metaphysical dimension. As in Romeo and Juliet a political vector is substituted for a religious one and Othello punishes himself as once he punished a foreigner who "traded the state."

One may observe further that the sin which it is almost unbearable to know is for Oedipus in a highly

problematic way predetermined--in gentler Christian terms "original" or perhaps predisposed.¹ But it is also in part "set up" by the fear, cruelty and folly of his own parents. (Calderón's La vida es sueño comes to mind here as a commentary.) And at the same time it is a sin against his parents, against his children against himself as parent and child. He has polluted the sacred order of the family.

As Lynda Boose has pointed out in a recent article in the Renaissance Quarterly, scholars currently studying Shakespeare from a New Historicist perspective have divided over the importance of addressing issues of politics (with which Shakespeare seems to have been very concerned) or addressing issues of the family (with which we see Lope and the Spanish masters to have been very concerned). This seems to me a very peculiar polarization, since European politics during the lifetimes of Lope and Shakespeare was inextricably entangled in questions of genealogy and legitimacy in the royal families. And the royal families were, after all, much more closely related to one another than to the populations they ruled. As the Spanish in an odd way recognized, the population most deeply national, in the sense of being descended from the longest line of territorial nationals, was the peasantry. Rulers were virtually always "first generation" nationals on at least one side (commonly but not always the mother's).

Such genealogical considerations were crucial in deciding just what constituted a nation, as rulers persisted in defining the nation as their own personal familial inheritance, rather than as an entity bounded by geographical, linguistic, cultural, economic, or traditional encasement. Be that as it may, a comparison of any work by Shakespeare with any work by Lope is likely to stumble upon the polarization of political and familial values with particular force, as that polarization existed for the playwrights and their audiences, not simply as it exists for modern academic schools.

For there are, as we have seen, striking differences in the way Shakespeare and Lope define familial and political relationships. Shakespeare, as is consistent with his fierce belief in hierarchy, is more concerned with the problems of filial obedience (Hamlet, Lear, Coriolanus, and the plays that involve Prince Hal) than with the problems of parental responsibility, which are often (as in The Tempest) largely disciplinary or administrative. But for Lope the family is not a microcosm of the state, but of a much higher moral order, and hence concerns moral nurturance arguably even more than administrative control.

It would be extremely fruitful, I think, if those Shakespeareans interested in issues of the family and

politics were to address the Prince Hal plays ("Can no man tell me of my unthrifty son?" RII, 5.3.1-12) in relation to some of the great Prodigal Son plays of more or less the same period in Spain, as La vida es sueño, Los cabellos de Absalón, Devoción de la cruz, El castigo sin venganza, and El gran duque de Moscovia.

And further understanding of the relationship of the family and politics in Shakespeare would certainly arise from a comparative study of the theme of adultery in, say, Lope and Shakespeare. In Shakespeare's plays an act of adultery is a political act. Adulterers are rare and punished. And adulteresses, with one illuminating exception, are monsters who betray their husbands with insurgents or politically destabilizing men. The single exception is Lady Faulconbridge in King John, who fornicates for England, as it were, providing in Philip the Bastard an heir for Richard Coeur-de-lion. But the exemplary if wry-tongued Bastard never presumes to the throne, dedicating himself unflaggingly to the cause of his imperfect but legitimate uncle, King John, and his mother's provident lapse is excused on the basis of the natural supremacy of the late king: "He who perforce robs lions of their hearts /May easily win a woman's."

The nature of this atypical indulgence on Shakespeare's part should make us realize how different the attitude of the Spanish masters is towards

adulteresses. We have heard much about the awful vengeance wreaked by men in the Spanish theater upon unfaithful wives. But it must be born in mind that wife-murder plays are few in number in proportion to the vast canon of the Golden Age and figure disproportionately in the imaginations of English-speaking critics, who are far and away more obsessed with the theme than the Spanish playwrights were. It must further be noted that although adultery is certainly excoriated as a sin in Spanish plays, the adulteresses themselves are not invariably portrayed as monsters. Indeed, they are sometimes, as in Lope's El castigo sin venganza, portrayed with a great deal of sympathy, more sinned against than sinning. Husbands may feel that their wives' infidelities are cataclysmic, but there is little indication that the cosmic or political orders are really seriously undermined by the sensuality of woman. Like the Shakespeare of Othello, Winter's Tale, and Cymbeline, perhaps, the Spanish masters might be comparatively examined for their treatment of the personally destructive nature of obsessive jealousy.

Jealousy is an important theme to compare in Lope and Shakespeare, but it leads in turn to deeper issues, for example the question of the nature of love, and indeed the whole matter of self and other. Lope's famous themes of love and honor may, after all, be

interpreted as what one owes oneself and what one owes someone else. Or as what one requires of oneself and what one requires of someone else. Or as the relationship of one's own self-value to the need for affirmation from someone else. It might be extremely profitable in this regard, therefore, to examine the scapegoating or sacrifice of "outsiders" in love, as Malvolio in Twelfth Night and Otavio in Castelvines y Monteses.

In the area of theatrical performance it goes without saying that comparison is up against serious practical difficulties. The majority of theatrical presentations of Lope and the Spanish masters are, at least in this country, execrable, both in concept and in execution. Actually, this is true of the majority of Shakespearean productions also. The difference, however, is not only that Shakespeare has in addition the advantage of a numerically (as well as proportionately) greater number of brilliant productions, but that when playgoers come out of a bad production of Shakespeare they usually have the sense that they have missed something--whoever may be to blame. When playgoers come out of a bad production of Lope they feel, alas, that they have learned something--about the inherent inadequacies of play, playwright, Spanish thinking and the Golden Age.

Furthermore, since classical training for the

English-speaking means Shakespeare, many classically-trained directors unconsciously intrude Shakespearean prejudices into their interpretations of the Spanish plays. In a recent New York production of Don Juan to which I have previously referred, not only was the director's anti-Catholicism blatant both in the production and in the notes (and presented as if it were Tirso's), but also her transferred classist assumptions. Her notes insist that the language of the peasant characters is primitive compared to Don Juan's (despite the cultivated poetry we hear from Tisbea and the peasant bride and bridegroom). And when in this production the aristocrat Otavio takes the hand of the wronged peasant bride Aminta to lead her to court and join her cause with his own--he puts a handkerchief to his nose as if to protect himself from the smell. But it is Shakespeare, not the Spanish playwrights, who expresses this kind of contempt for the lower classes, particularly the repeated accusation that they are "stinking."² The example of this production is particularly egregious, but it is symptomatic of a general problem. The Spanish plays are not allowed to have their own virtues in production but must suffer the faults of others, particularly Shakespeare, to be foisted upon them. Thus the possibilities for comparison are even more seriously compromised in the theater than they are in the study.

It must be recognized that, like Romeo and Juliet, Castelvines y Monteses is a difficult a play to perform. Translation may make the language more contemporary, but it also makes actors less respectful of the language, even while theater professionals complain about poor translations. But if they want good ones, they are going to have to take some responsibility for participating actively in the process, and also for helping to uncover in purely theatrical ways the theatrical potential of this supple, nuanced, versatile, complex, and quite un-Shakespearean style of poetry.

In the end, then, engaging the problems presented by a comparison of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet with Lope de Vega's Castelvines y Monteses implicates traditional attitudes towards Shakespeare as well as traditional attitudes towards the entire Golden Age dramatic canon. The problems encountered in this particular comparison are extreme but by no means unique, and the work that needs to be done must entail inevitably a radical re-thinking of all the issues of canon formation in regard to English and Spanish drama and the cleft tradition of Western theater from that time to this.

Conclusion

Notes

¹ Oedipus is, of course, innocent of deliberate wrongdoing--except for a negligible highway murder, arguably in self-defense, although not unprovoked. But making the connections even more provocative is the fact that the sin for which Oedipus is punished is actually the sin of his father, Laius, the primal pederast, punished by Apollo for the rape of Chrysippus. The raped boy kills himself. Oedipus likewise curses his sons, who fulfill his curse by murdering one another.

² See Teresa Kirschner's "The Mob in Shakespeare and Lope de Vega," forthcoming in Parallel Lives: English and Spanish Drama, 1580-1680 from Bucknell University Press.

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