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HONOR RECONSIDERED: LOPE DE VEGA'S TREATMENT
OF HONOR IN HIS CONJUGAL HONOR PLAYS.

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HONOR RECONSIDERED:

LOPE DE VEGA'S TREATMENT OF HONOR IN HIS CONJUGAL HONOR PLAYS

by

ALIX S. ZUCKERMAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Spanish in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

March 22, 1979
date

Albert M. [Signature]
Chairman of Examining Committee

March 22, 1979
date

Martin [Signature]
Executive Officer

Manuel E. Bergman
Maria Soledad Carrasco
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		
I.	INTRODUCTION.	1
	Lope, the <u>comedia</u> and the critics	
	Critical Approaches to honor	
	The <u>comedia</u> and its audience	
	"Unorthodox" presentation of honor in Golden	
	Age Literature	
II.	<u>LOS COMENDADORES DE CÓRDOBA</u>	48
III.	LOPE'S RE-ELABORATION OF SOURCE MATERIAL.	93
IV.	THE "PERPLEXING" <u>DESENLACE</u>	120
V.	IRONY AND EQUIVOCATION IN THE CONJUGAL HONOR	
	PLAYS	142
VI.	CHARACTERIZATION.	205
VII.	HONOR AND <u>LIMPIEZA DE SANGRE</u>	243
VIII.	CONCLUSIONS	291
	APPENDIX	295
	BIBLIOGRAPHY.	297

Chapter I

Introduction

A. Lope, the comedia and the critics

"The Spanish comedia," says Arnold Reichenberger, "is a collective enterprise. . . it is the form (Gestalt) created, primarily by Lope de Vega, to symbolize the communal feeling (Gehalt) of the Spanish people, and not the feeling of any individual dramatist. . . . One could almost say that there is only one protagonist in the Spanish comedia, the Spanish people."¹

Such descriptions of the comedia as a homogeneous genre created for an equally homogeneous public form the basis for much of what has been written about Spanish Golden Age theater. In keeping with its supposed collective character, the comedia is often seen to be governed by a set of definable rules. A. A. Parker, for example, enumerates five principles which govern the structure of the comedia:

(1) the primacy of action over character drawing; (2) the primacy of theme over action, with the consequent irrelevance of realistic verisimilitude; (3) dramatic unity in the theme and not in the action; (4) the subordination of the theme to a moral purpose through the principle of poetic justice, which is not exemplified only by the death of the wrongdoer; and (5) the elucidation of moral purpose by means of dramatic causality.²

Similarly, critics writing about specific aspects of the comedia often emphasize its uniformity of structure and purpose. José Antonio Maravall, in his discussion of the ideological content of the comedia,

sees Golden Age theater as an instrument of social propaganda which imposes its peculiar moral outlook on a collective audience in an attempt to preserve the traditional values of Spanish society.³ To this end, he states, the comedia presents its audience with a "sistema social en el cual las posibilidades de la felicidad están garantizadas por el respeto recíproco a ese orden de la sociedad y al puesto que a unos y a otros corresponde y que lleva tras sí el mecanismo coactivo de la autoridad suprema que lo restablece en caso de violación."⁴

Juana de José Prades, in her study of character in five minor Golden Age dramatists, sees adherence to a specific formula as the basis for characterization in the comedia. She points out that characters always fall into the same groups: dama, galán, gracioso, criada, rey, and padre: "Cada uno de estos personajes exhibe una serie de atributos fijos que le comunican una individualidad muy precisa y determinada, que le aislan y distinguen del personaje inmediato." The result, she says, is the creation of the personaje-tipo, a set model from which all character is drawn.⁵

Margaret Wilson notes homogeneity in the comedia's treatment of a specific theme: ". . . the comedia never adopts an amoral attitude to love, or treats adultery as a joke. Love is moral and respectable, and fulfilment in marriage is the rule."⁶

Such assertions regarding the comedia lead to the notion that Golden Age dramatists never presented original ideas in their plays: "Si se manifiestan propensiones y gustos personales en las largas tiradas de verso o en los trozos más brillantes, o es por inadvertencia

o se hace con la mayor discreción. Ninguno de ellos piensa, en efecto, poner en tela de juicio, ni siquiera por un prurito de originalidad, los cimientos de la cultura común."⁷ The theater of Lope de Vega in particular has been characterized in this way:

Lo particular y decisivo a la observación histórica en la conducta vital de Lope me parece residir en el hecho de que no haya actuado ni como reformador, ni como restaurador, ni como rebelde, ni como renovador, ni ilustrando, ni demoliendo. Antes bien todas sus opiniones y convicciones más íntimas iban de tal modo acordes con la época y el pueblo a que pertenecía, que lo más llegó a tener enemigos personales y algunos envidiosos literarios en su larga vida de creador, pero ningún verdadero adversario objetivo.⁸

If such views are held by prominent hispanists, it is no wonder that the comedia has long been considered an inferior genre -- and Lope "el más grande poeta de la conformidad"⁹ -- by non-hispanist scholars. Thus, in 1935, a British lopista actually found it necessary to defend a presentation of El caballero de Olmedo at Cambridge University in the face of what seemed to be a total ignorance regarding Lope's dramatic work on the part of her colleagues. The question posed then -- "Why Lope?"¹⁰ -- has since been broadened with the result that today, more than forty years later, an increasing number of scholars are responding to the need for a re-evaluation of Lope's work. His literary creation is being re-examined with regard to the ideas it may offer as well as the techniques with which Lope presented them.

For the most part, this re-evaluation has been directed toward Lope's non-dramatic works, especially La Dorotea and the Arte nuevo. This is not surprising, since in these works created for a reading public Lope did not have to contend with the inhibiting reactions of

an assembled audience. In the non-dramatic works critics have begun to observe Lope's skillful use of irony and other devices of equivocation which would have required even greater skill and subtlety when applied to the public spectacle that was the comedia. The possibility that Lope was capable of such subtlety in his dramatic works becomes more likely upon consideration of recent criticism regarding other areas of his literary production.

Alan S. Trueblood, in his monumental study of La Dorotea, considers irony a major aspect of the work:

With Lope irony is sometimes simply a corrective or an indication of reservations based on a wider vision, a purely supplementary dimension. Sometimes it cements a more complex statement or situation, showing Lope to be genuinely of two, or several minds. . . . Sometimes it is properly situational or dramatic, as when the characters through words or acts unconsciously foreshadow developments unforeseen by them. For the most part it appears, however, that Lope's irony is expressing not the apperception of a multifaceted reality but a reluctance to surrender any possibility. He is not uncomfortable in his ambivalence, if such it is, or multivalence, because it is one of affirmation, not indecision, an avid response to the manifold possibilities of life.¹¹

The presence of Lope himself as a kind of figura del donaire in La Dorotea has been discussed by Montesinos, Ruggerio and Trueblood. For José F. Montesinos, Lope's active participation in the work is constantly felt: "Don Fernando ya no puede, pese a sus propósitos, ser galán de comedia, ni Julio gracioso. Otra figura del donaire, hombre de humor, que está detrás de la escena, les ha jugado una mala pasada."¹² Michael J. Ruggerio discusses Lope's ironic voice in a number of works: the Novelas a Marcia Leonarda, the Rimas of Tomé de Burguillos, the Gatomaquia and La Dorotea: "Essentially this phenomenon . . . consists

of an ironic vision both of his own past life in general and of the immediate reality of which he is a part."¹³ Trueblood refers to this presence as the spirit of Tomé de Burguillos: "What strikes one first . . . is Lope's proneness to make light, through him, in a spirit ranging from spoofing to satire, of things usually taken seriously: his own literary métier, the values placed on love and honor, social pretensions of every sort."¹⁴

Lope's ironic approach to dramatic form in La Dorotea has also been noted: "La estructura de La Dorotea muestra a Lope recubriendo con elementos formales de la tragedia heroica, a modo de irónica concepción a los clasicistas. . . , una concepción teatral aprendida en 'la tragedia famosa de Celestina.'"¹⁵

Lope's equivocal attitude toward some of the dictates of classical dramaturgy has been studied extensively with regard to the Arte nuevo. Menéndez Pidal sees in this work ". . . la expresión irónica y firme de los principios artísticos concebidos por Lope en su primera juventud. . . ."¹⁶ Rinaldo Froldi describes the work as a "sabrosa sátira literaria."¹⁷ While Froldi observes that Lope is being ironic in speaking despectively of his public,¹⁸ Miguel Romera Navarro maintains that there is further irony in the way in which Lope speaks to his public: "Hallamos en todo el Arte nuevo una ironía, hasta ahora no señalada, cuando se trata de los preceptos clásicos. Ya en la segunda estrofa nos llama la atención el tono resueltamente irónico con que se dirige a los ingenios de la Academia de Madrid. . . ."¹⁹ Bruce Wardropper agrees, criticising the view that Lope's opening tone

is merely one of exaggerated politeness, and suggesting that Lope is aiming a subtle attack at his fellow dramatists: "Is he not saying in effect: 'You fellows, students of dramatic theory, think you know all there is to writing plays. I, as a mere practitioner of the art, know nothing, of course.' Irony . . . is anything but polite."²⁰

Karl Vossler even sees irony in the versification of the Arte nuevo: "Dada la índole del designio, se le ofrecía como forma natural y tradicional la epístola poética de estilo horaciano. Lope la italianiza al servirse del endecasílabo sin rima y la ironiza además al concluir con rimas las distintas cesuras de sentido e intercalar poco antes del fin cinco dísticos latinos cuyo último verso rima a su vez con el español."²¹

Montesinos seems to bear in mind all of these views of the Arte nuevo when he describes it as a completely ironic work: "El que la comprensión del Arte nuevo haya sido tan insatisfactoria se explica por su índole misma. Como escrito irónico, es un tornasol que da un color diferente según se mira."²² This visual image of the Arte nuevo as an iridescent object is of central importance to the present study. If the Arte nuevo can simultaneously project so many different nuances of meaning, there is the possibility that even Lope's dramatic works may be viewed from a number of very different perspectives.

An ironic Lope would call into question the generally accepted view of Lope as a conformist, and would cast serious doubt as to whether he was always saying what his audience thought it was hearing. One must ask, in effect, whether Lope's theater is truly as inoffensive

as it appears to be; whether it is possible that Lope actually did express in his dramatic works a number of ideas that challenged the traditional values of Golden Age Spain, ideas which may well have been shared by some of his audience but which, for a number of reasons, have escaped the understanding of others as well as the eye of subsequent critics.

Eric Bentley, complaining about Lope criticism in general, has suggested that the last word has not yet been said with regard to Lope's theater: "The portrait of Lope that emerges . . . is exactly what was taught about Shakespeare and Molière a generation ago: they too were 'geniuses of conformity' without an independent idea in their heads. . . ." ²³ But this view is beginning to change, and both Lope and the comedia in general may be suspected to be far more complex than was originally believed.

Honor has generally been regarded as one of those traditionally monolithic themes through which the solidarity of the comedia could be demonstrated. Today, however, critics are beginning to question the significance of its presentation. While open contradiction of the honor code was a rarity in Golden Age theater, it is becoming more and more apparent that dramatists often presented this theme with a good deal of ambivalence and equivocation. P. N. Dunn, for example, has noted the "Ambivalent system of honour" in Calderón's honor plays. ²⁴ These plays, he believes, were intended not (as many have judged them) as a model for behavior but rather as a negative example:

It is probable that Calderón had in mind an audience which . . . contained a fair proportion of gentlemen who were susceptible of their blood, their privileges, their rank, and what the neighbors thought of them . . . caught up in their catch-phrases, "mi opinión . . . quien soy . . . lo que valgo . . . " When Calderón showed to these men the perfected simulacrum of themselves in his "honour plays," it was as if to say: "You are trying to have the best of both worlds and are losing both" These plays do not grudge the qualities of dignity and respect, but the terrible consequences which . . . are also latent in this exaltation of honour and conformity, even at its best.²⁵

In addition to the exemplary purpose described by Dunn, there is also the possibility that Calderón, in these works, is being ironic with his audience, resolving conjugal honor problems with bloody solutions which many members of the audience might applaud, but which others might find horrifying -- or even absurd.

Peter Podol claims that there are two Golden Age plays which present a truly unorthodox treatment of honor: Rojas Zorrilla's Cada cual lo que le toca and Lope's Los embustes de Fabia.²⁶ In the first play a husband tolerates a wife dishonored before marriage, and allows her to take her own vengeance. In the second, a deceitful wife triumphs over a suspicious but loving husband, and is ultimately united with her lover.

Donald R. Larson, the first critic to undertake a systematic investigation of Lope's honor plays, believes that an unconventional treatment of honor is common in Lope's early works. He notes that in one of these, Las ferias de Madrid, " . . . the usual oppositions of the honor play are reversed: the man who is the protagonist and nominal hero of the piece is blamed and ridiculed; and the man who is the antagonist and nominal antihero is vindicated and praised."²⁷ Larson

also discusses Lope's apparent approval of a lenient attitude toward honor in other early comedies: El castigo del discreto and La bella malmaridada.²⁸

The unconventional presentation of honor in Las ferias de Madrid has been examined by Donald McGrady as well. He demonstrates how Lope uses a multi-levelled structure in order to make fun of the honor code and those who uphold it.²⁹

Recent criticism has also begun to take a closer look at the treatment of honor in some of Lope's more serious plays, particularly in two of his tragedies, La desdichada Estefanía and El castigo sin venganza. Hugh W. Kennedy, in his edition of La desdichada Estefania, sees the characters' overwhelming preoccupation with honor as a kind of tragic flaw which leads to self-destruction.³⁰ Edward M. Wilson, in his study of El castigo sin venganza, expresses an evaluation of the Duke's vengeance that would lead to a similar conclusion: "La única victoria que ha conseguido es haber mantenido la justicia y haber ocultado su deshonor marital a sus súbditos, pero ¡a qué precio!"³¹

B. Critical approaches to honor

Before dealing directly with Lope's honor plays, it will be necessary to discuss briefly the concept of honor in Golden Age Spain. While honor has been recognized as one of the major themes of the comedia, and while some critics have realized that it is a theme which may be presented from different perspectives, attempts to define or describe honor in Golden Age Spain have not always been successful.

One reason for this may be that the multi-faceted honor theme simply does not lend itself to the static definitions which some critics have attempted to impose upon it.

The study of honor and its utilization in the comedia has generally responded to two overlapping objectives: 1) an attempt to describe the concept of honor in general and to indicate its significance in both literature and life; and 2) an attempt to show how this theme is stated and restated in a large number of plays as a set code of behavior. It must always be borne in mind, however, that whether a critic is dealing with honor as an aspect of Spanish society or as a literary phenomenon, he nearly always uses the comedia as his major source of documentation. The boundary between life and art seems to dissolve where honor is concerned, and what holds true for the comedia is assumed to be applicable to real life as well.

Critics dealing with the general concept of honor have noted its fundamental dependence on the external (la opinión) rather than the internal or inherent (la virtud): " . . . el honor y la fama," says Américo Castro, "son idénticos; la pérdida de la honra es análoga a la pérdida de la vida (i.e., in the sense that loss of honor would permanently disqualify one from life in Spanish society); consistiendo la honra en la buena fama, para conservarla hay que sigilar los actos que pueden motivar mala reputación" ³² Thus honor would be external because of its dependence on others: "La honra . . . es la consideración social, es el juicio que del valor del hombre forman los demás; la causa ocasional somos nosotros, pero la causa eficiente

de la honra son los actos de nuestros semejantes."³³ Similar points of view are expressed by most critics. In fact, one of the most frequently cited sources for this view of honor is Lope himself:

honra es aquella que consiste en otro:
ningun hombre es honrado por sí mismo,
que del otro recibe la honra un hombre:
ser virtuoso hombre y tener méritos,
no es ser honrado; pero dar las causas
para que los que tratan les den honra.³⁴

A number of critics, however, while not denying the external component of honor, place more emphasis on honor's dual nature. For them, honor consists of both reputation and virtue, and these two aspects of honor often appear to be in conflict. Joseph E. Gillet, for example, sees honor as a concept based on two distinct views. Honor is the reward for virtue and cannot exist independently of it.³⁵ But it is also " . . . external, conferred by others at their discretion and according to their fallible judgement. . . ."³⁶

The source of this conflict may reside in the fact that the concept of honor in Spain was not static. The external nature of honor emphasized in the comedia was the result of a process of change which took place over a number of centuries. Furthermore, this change was not always accepted without question. Pérez de Guzmán, writing at the end of the fifteenth century, contrasts honor (reputation, honra) with consciencia (virtue, honor):

La honor nunca consiente
vn punto contra su fama,
nin cura de aquella flama
del infierno muy ardiente;
la consciencia el rostro offrece
al golpe, que assi paresce
que del primero nin siente.

La honor muy alto clama
ninguno ami se atreua,

. . .
la consciencia assi derrama
sus lagrimas e clamores
por los sus perseguidores
como por los que mas ama.
La primera es la criada
del Cesar, e la segunda
dela casa pobre e munda
de sant Francisco dotada ³⁷

Antony Van Beysterveldt sees these opposing poles as reflecting two distinct ideological (and, it might be added, historical) orientations: honor as virtue is seen as an aspect of humanistic ideology,³⁸ while honor as reputation reflects a preoccupation imposed, historically, by el vulgo³⁹: "La comedia offrait au vulgo una image idealisée de la réalité, ou rien n'était possible sans la complicité de l'opini3n."⁴⁰ While he sees virtue as an important factor, he does note that virtue never triumphs over la opini3n within the framework of the comedia.⁴¹

Alfonso García Valdecasas also notes the internal and external aspects of honor, and sees these as a function of two types of morality in conflict: "El conflicto entre los preceptos de la moral cristiana y la moral propia de la sociedad no es exclusivo de ninguna época. Lo singular era de la intensidad con que ambos principios morales se vivían, y que dió ocasión a que tantas veces el contraste se señalara en la literatura."⁴² He also sees honor as an internal attribute at the mercy of external forces:

El honor, de una parte, parece afectar a lo más íntimo de nuestra personalidad; un agravio al honor es como una lesión a lo más propio e intransferible del individuo. El sonrojo en que se manifiesta la sensación del agraviado, se diría que trasluce una herida íntima, con interior derramamiento de sangre.

Pero, por otra parte, el honor parece venir de los otros; el honor nos aparece, a un tiempo, como una exigencia y una consagración social, y la honra consiste en reconocimiento que otros otorgan o tributan.⁴³

By the time the comedia had reached its full development in the seventeenth century, the concept of honor had become firmly established as reputation, and the appeal to virtue, while not totally abandoned, was greatly reduced in importance. The conflicts described by Van Beysterveldt and Valdecasas could not be expressed directly in the theater of Lope's day, and it is for precisely this reason that a dramatist wishing to challenge the Spanish notion of honor had to do so with great subtlety.

Honor was the first priority in the literary portrayal of Spanish society in the comedia: " . . . la honra, la opinion, es sin duda el bien más alto a que el hombre puede aspirar; la vida, el amor, la hacienda, son a su lado valores de menor calidad" ⁴⁴ It served as both a regulator of all social behavior and as a reward to be gained by those who lived according to its dictates:

. . . la honra no consistía tan solo en una férrea regulación de las relaciones conyugales o en la atroz responsabilidad del varón por la conducta de la mujer; la honra era un sistema total de conducta social que abarcaba todas las relaciones del individuo con su familia, con sus amigos, con sus iguales, con sus inferiores y con sus superiores sociales, con la nación, con el rey. Era, de un lado, unos canales de carácter puestos al fluir de la personalidad, unos modos de conducta circunstanciadamente fijados por la experiencia colectiva y por la tradición; del otro, la honra era un premio, la honra ceremoniosa y casi de valor ritual que el individuo recibía de la sociedad por ajustar su conducta a estos ideales de comportamiento. La honra era, en fin, la llave maestra del sistema de relaciones recíprocas entre el individuo y la sociedad. La deshonra era la muerte civil.⁴⁵

Since honor depended on the opinion of others it could be easily lost; and honor lost could not be recovered. Such a system of honor would create intolerable social pressure. As Francisco Ayala points out: " . . . el concepto del honor que, con tremenda compulsividad social, prevalecía en España durante el siglo XVII, ponía a los españoles en condiciones de tensión insufrible"46

For Viel-Castel, in fact, the pressures produced by honor in the comedia are so great that honor begins to function as an autonomous force,

. . . un misterioso poder que se cierne sobre toda la existencia de sus personajes, arrastrándoles, imperioso, a sacrificar sus afectos e inclinaciones naturales, inspirándoles tan pronto actos del más sublime rendimiento, como crímenes y maldades atroces, pero que pierden este carácter por efecto del impulso que los produce, de la terrible necesidad cuyo resultado son.⁴⁷

In his later work Américo Castro examined the socio-historical bases for this dramatic presentation of honor: "Los dramas de honra tenían como invisible trasfondo el drama vivo de los estatutos de limpieza de sangre, y las prolongadas polémicas acerca de su conveniencia o inconveniencia."⁴⁸ He sees the role of honor in the theater, then, as a dramatic motif which transposes into a literary mold a vital preoccupation which could not be dealt with openly:

" . . . el conflicto social, sin estar directamente aludido, hizo posible el mas glorioso período de la literatura en España; Cervantes problematizó el conflicto: Lope de Vega construyó su comedia sobre el unanimismo triunfal del imperio ortodoxamente hispánico."⁴⁹ Castro's view of Lope's "orthodox" approach to both honor and limpieza de sangre will be called into question in the present study.

Finally, one feature of honor which had major importance for the honor play is worthy of mention. This was the fact that a man's honor was generally seen to reside in the woman. Valdecasas notes, for example, that "El honor femenino es el centro de gravedad, el cimiento de la cohesión social. En el honor de la mujer descansa la comunidad de la familia, la de las casas y linajes, la del cuerpo político entero."⁵⁰ Francisco Ayala also discusses the connection between the woman's behavior and a man's honor, and notes how this resulted in a "double standard" of social morality.⁵¹

Donald R. Larson presents an excellent synthesis of Américo Castro's view of honor, and then uses this to explain the importance of the woman. For Castro, the two essential features of honor were honor and limpieza de sangre, two closely related values which had their origins in the triumph of the Christian caste over the Jews and Moors in Spain.⁵² The woman's behavior was a major indication of a man's honor because "if honor depends on the ability to impress one's will on others, it is clear that nothing could be so dishonoring as a man's not being able to exert authority over those whom he is most obliged to control and should most easily control: the women of his family."⁵³ Furthermore, a man's lineage too could be jeopardized by the women of his family: "if purity of blood was a cause for honor and impurity of blood a cause for dishonor, then all heads of family who believed their lineage to be 'clean' would do everything in their power to prevent that lineage from becoming in any way defiled."⁵⁴

Not all critics, however, agree with the notion that honor in the comedia had some basis in reality. C. A. Jones, in particular, views the honor theme less as a reflection of real life than as an extremely adaptable dramatic convention around which plots could be built:

In my opinion the code of honour in the Spanish drama of the Golden Age is a convention which, although not entirely divorced from reality or from morals, is closely concerned with neither of these things, and a defense of the code of honour, or an attack on it, should not refer to the conditions of real life, nor to any contemporary moral opinions, without bearing in mind that it is bound up with the popular entertainment of the time. One might suggest also that the makers of popular entertainment may not always have accepted without reservation the conventions upon which their productions were often based.⁵⁵

Whether one chooses to agree with Jones or with Castro, one fact is certain: honor in the comedia was governed by a set of principles which is now referred to as the "honor code." Some if not all, of these principles may be culled from Fichter's study:

1. "Its pivotal tenet was that the esteem of society was indispensable."⁵⁶
2. "The action of such plays centers on the preservation of a husband's reputation or on the vengeance taken by him to regain his honor once it is lost or thought to be imperilled. . . ."⁵⁷ "The injustice of this situation is frequently decried in the plays of Lope and others, but its acceptance is inevitable."⁵⁸
3. " . . . the unpardonable sin of infidelity . . . could call for no less punishment than death for the adulterers."⁵⁹

4. " . . . once the husband was sure of his wife's guilt, punishment was to be quickly administered."⁶⁰

5. " . . . the wronged husband must avenge himself secretly, making an end of the wife and her lover as stealthily as possible."⁶¹

Criticism is divided over the dramatic use of this code in Lope's honor plays, although a majority of critics believes that the code is rigidly adhered to. Fichter, whose study has been used as the basis for most of the work done on conjugal honor, points out a number of apparent deviations from this code, but always finds a reason (e.g., poetic justice, the nature of the literary or historical source, the avoidance of a "real" conflict through farce) for assuming that the honor code is always upheld.⁶² Fernando Lázaro Carreter also believes that the comedia treats honor as a prescribed code:

La venganza ha de cumplirse aunque repugne al vengador, aunque la sienta como una dolorosa obligación. Es algo que está por encima de él, fuera por completo de su elección.

Con razón ha podido decirse que el honor representa en el teatro español un papel semejante al del fatum o hado en el teatro clásico o en el francés del XVII. El hado es un oscuro destino, una fuerza ciega que conduce a los héroes trágicos a acciones que están fuera de su voluntad. El honor posee idéntica fuerza, si bien ésta no es irracional ni enigmática. Por el contrario, se trata de un sistema coherente de prescripciones, de obligaciones que culminan en la venganza, y que todos los españoles conocían a la perfección.⁶³

Rudolph Schevill too insists on the sanctity of honor in the theater. The honor theme, he says, " . . . expanded into a veritable code which dominates all other sentiments."⁶⁴ Shevill sees this as evidence of the conformist nature of the comedia: "After comparing a great many writers and plays, I find that the treatment of honor is,

to no small extent, a matter of formal phraseology, together with constant imitation and copying which gave unoriginal minds a welcome opportunity to deal with a lofty subject."⁶⁵

Shevill does not mention the fact that Lope's use of the honor theme was a means of providing the public with a theme which would "move" people most effectively.⁶⁶ Many critics, however, do maintain that the adherence to a rigid code of honor in the comedia was a response to popular demand. Fichter implies this when he talks about the conventional resolution of an honor conflict as a "popular requirement."⁶⁷ Froldi maintains that the public " . . . quiere ser convencido a través de la ficción artística," and sees the dramatic use of the honor code as " . . . un ideal moral que requería ser representado en una proyección agigantada y deformada, para que resultase más persuasivo y provocase una participación emocional mayor."⁶⁸ Ricardo del Arco believes that the preference for pardon over vengeance expressed in some non-dramatic works could not have been presented in the comedia " . . . porque el autor había de acomodarse a las preocupaciones fundamentales de su público."⁶⁹ Peter Podol agrees:

It is important to make a clear distinction between interesting or unusual presentations of the honor theme and non-conventional treatments of the code that actually violate its most sacred law (death as punishment for adultery). The latter category refers exclusively to plays that deal with conjugal honor, and the dramatist who treats that theme must be exceedingly careful not to violate the dictates of the code in his pursuit of originality and dramatic effect.⁷⁰

The importance of popular demand to the success of an honor play becomes strikingly evident when one considers the case of Rojas Zorrilla's Cada cual lo que le toca.⁷¹ This play containing a highly unconventional resolution of an honor conflict was whistled off the stage by the audience. As Duncan Moir has suggested: "It . . . seems highly probable that Cada cual lo que le toca so deeply offended the sensibilities of its first audience . . . that it became . . . a taboo play which managers refused to put on the stage, knowing that to perform it would arouse the indignation of their clients."⁷²

A number of critics, however, have questioned the notion of universal adherence to an honor code in the comedia. Larson claims that there was no real code of honor, but rather what Castro calls a sentimiento honroso.⁷³ He does seem, however, to accept tacitly the existence of such a code in the theater, since he uses the term "honor play" only insofar as it describes a play which adheres to the set pattern dictated by the honor code. Larson's study of the honor plays, it has been noted, is essentially chronological, and he believes that Early, Middle, and Late honor plays contain definably varying degrees of compliance with the demands of honor.

Karl Vossler, although he does view Lope as a conformist,⁷⁴ considers Lope to have been incapable of blindly upholding the honor code in his plays: " . . . en Lope tropezamos siempre y en todas partes con este tema; pero ni en sentido profano ni en sentido religioso puede decirse de él que sea un celoso paladín del honor. No suelen ser cosa suya las alternativas severas, los conflictos

implacables y los puntos de vista exclusivos. Es humano y no es doctrinario."⁷⁵

There has been a growing tendency in recent criticism to accept this point of view. C. A. Jones, for example, believes that the honor code as a dramatic motif may not always be strictly adhered to in Lope's theater: "Although Lope de Vega himself made very considerable use of the honour theme in his drama, there is room for some doubt whether he believed as implicitly in the code of honour as his plays have sometimes led critics to think. Even in the plays there is in fact more than a hint from time to time of Lope's dissatisfaction with honour vengeance."⁷⁶ Donald McGrady goes even further, suggesting that outright parody of the honor code might not be as rare as most critics believe.⁷⁷

But whether or not the action of a play adheres to the honor code may not always constitute an accurate indication of the attitude toward honor expressed by the dramatist in that particular play. As noted earlier, some degree of adherence was a practical necessity, given the nature of the theatergoing public. Yet this was not an entirely homogeneous public, and its make-up must be considered in greater detail.

C. The comedia and its audience

Bernard Beckerman, in his Dynamics of Drama, describes two different types of audience, the "communal" and the "random." The first he sees as the ideal audience for a theatrical presentation,

consisting of " . . . people whose total social experience is at one with each other and with the presenters." The "random" audience, on the other hand, is composed of " . . . a collection of individuals assembled haphazardly to witness a play."⁷⁸ Even a minimal knowledge of Golden Age stagecraft would suggest that Lope and his contemporaries were writing for this second kind of audience. A perusal of the Arte nuevo, furthermore, reveals that Lope himself felt anything but "at one" with his public:

Y escriuo por el arte que inuentaron
 Los que el vulgar aplauso pretendieron,
 Porque, como las paga el vulgo, es justo
 Hablarle en necio para darle gusto.⁷⁹

Lope, then, seems to perceive a considerable distance between the dramatist and his public; and he goes on to enumerate some of the less admirable characteristics of his audience:

Porque considerando que la cólera
 De vn Español sentado no se templa,
 Si no le representan, en dos horas,
 Hasta el final jüycio desde el Génesis,
 Yo hallo que si allí se ha de dar gusto,
 Con lo que se consigue es lo más justo.⁸⁰

The impatience of the public, according to Lope, is accompanied by another intellectual limitation: an indifference to anything but plot:

Ponga la conexi3n desde el principio
 Hasta que vaya declinando el passo,
 Pero la soluci3n no la permita
 Hasta que llegue a la postrera scena,
 Porque en sabiendo el vulgo el fin que tiene
 Buelue el rostro a la puerta, y las espaldas
 Al que esper3 tres horas cara a cara;
 Que no ay mas que saber que en lo que para.⁸¹

But is Lope's description of the audience in the Arte nuevo an accurate representation of the Golden Age audience? Was every spectator incapable of perceiving any but the most heavy-handed aspects of a dramatic production? Certainly, as Hugo A. Rennert has pointed out, there were members of the audience who fit in well with Lope's description. Audiences, according to Rennert, were " . . . often unjust and noisy, and always hard to please." The mosqueteros in particular, he says, were " . . . feared by both author and actor, for upon their whims the success or failure of a comedia generally depended."⁸² Many critics, however, have assumed that such spectators comprised the entirety of Golden Age audiences; and this assumption has, in turn, provoked a series of conclusions which tend to undermine the comedia as a literary undertaking. Lope, for example, has often been accused of limiting the content of his dramatic works to just those visions of life that his "public" wanted to see, and the audience itself is generally characterized as having a specific set of values which could not be violated by a dramatist who wanted his plays to be successful.⁸³ Critics dealing with the thematic content of the comedia tend to emphasize the importance of the whims of an ultra-conservative -- and for the most part uneducated -- public. The honor theme is considered to be particularly subject to those whims, and its treatment is believed to reflect the care taken by Golden Age dramatists not to alienate their public with unconventional presentations of this theme.⁸⁴

It has also been pointed out that there was a vast difference between the audiences of Lope's day and those of the early days of

drama in Spain, when theatrical works were written and produced specifically for court audiences. Elaine Wertheimer, for example, states that "Lope and his followers composed their comedias with attitudes, purposes and values that differed from those of their early predecessors."⁸⁵ The vulgo nature of the audience, she believes, made necessary a change in the way the honor theme could be presented, and a problem of honor was thus " . . . not to be treated with levity or burlesqued, as it was at times in the pre-Lope theater."⁸⁶ Sturgis Leavitt would agree. He sees the relationship between dramatist and public as an essentially financial one. The playwright cared about what the audience wanted because he knew that the theater could provide him with "a little quick money."⁸⁷ The inference here is that the dramatist had little faith in the capacity of his audience to deal with challenging ideas, and therefore wrote works which tended to confirm the values already held by the public.

It must be noted, however, that there were at least some members of Golden Age audiences who could not be classified as mere vulgo. Lope himself, in spite of the scornful attitude he presents in the Arte nuevo, suggests elsewhere that there were those in the audience who were, in fact, capable of appreciating the comedia as literature. In his Prólogo dialogístico to the Parte XVI of his comedias (1621) Lope presents two conflicting points of view, that of El Teatro and that of un forastero. The "Theater" takes the side Lope himself took in the Arte nuevo, while the forastero suggests that there might be more to the audience than the "Theater" is willing to allow:

Forastero. --Pues ¿no hay discretos?
 Teatro. --Pocos.
 Forastero. --Eso es mentira.
 Teatro. --Yo digo, algunas veces, en la comedia, pues nadie se podrá persuadir con mediano entendimiento que la mayor parte de las mujeres que aquel jaulón encierra y de los ignorantes que asisten a los bancos, entienden los versos, las figuras retóricas, los conceptos y sentencias, las imitaciones y el grave o común estilo.
 Forastero. --Algunos doctos y cortesanos habrá también que agradezcan a los poetas sus estudios, con diferencia de los buenos a los no tales, de los legos a los científicos; que bien saben que hay poetas, y unos como poetas, que se salvan con el vulgo en la desconfianza, como los otros se pierden en la satisfacción. Que la opinión tal vez hace menores las cosas grandes, y el poco crédito grandes las pequeñas 88

That Lope is unwilling to see his dramatic production as merely popular entertainment can be seen in another prologue (Parte XII, 1619), in which El Teatro speaks directly to the reader:

Entre los que me siguen, unos hay que entienden, otros que piensan que entienden y otros que dicen lo que oyen a los que entienden. . . . No te fatigues, pues, a quitar el nombre a los ingenios que me honran con sus escritos; que como todos los elementos se corrompen, si no es el fuego, tus palabras serán agua; tus objeciones, aire, tus pensamientos, tierra, y la fama de mis claros poetas, un vivo fuego que consuma tu envidia y no la consuma el tiempo.⁸⁹

Does all of this imply that Lope, while ostensibly producing works for an ignorant public, was really writing plays to suit himself? This would seem unlikely. Drama in the first place, could not function under those conditions: " . . . the dramatist, working in a medium especially dependent on inference, anticipates a group of spectators capable of appreciating his effects and interpreting them in relation to its own experience. He relies, in other words, on a sure knowledge

of his audience's expectations, values, beliefs, ideals, prejudices, and emotions."⁹⁰ In the second place, Lope cared very much about what others thought of him and his work, and this preoccupation lies at the very heart of the above-quoted prologues.

It is most necessary, therefore, to consider the non-vulgo members of Lope's audience. Noble spectators ranged del rey abajo, and private presentations of comedias at the palace itself were no uncommon occurrence.⁹¹ And even the corrales had their share of the nobility: "The audience of the corrales . . . was far from being entirely plebeian, for there was nothing socially degrading in hiring an 'apósito' to see the play, and there is plenty of evidence, in the seventeenth century at least, to show that these rooms, or boxes, were rented by some of the noblest families in Spain."⁹²

Several critics have noted that this part of the audience must be taken into account if one is to arrive at a better understanding of Golden Age drama. As Menéndez Pidal has stated,

. . . en las obras destinadas a la audición de la masa espectadora, aunque Lope llama a sus comedias 'versos mercantiles,' nunca se baja como el cine industrial o el teatro de suburbio hasta colocarse captatoriamente en la zona inferior de la comprensión, por cima de la cual los torpes no pueden levantarse y hasta la cual los discretos pueden darse el gusto de descender; al contrario, él nos dice expresamente que desecha la comedia satírica, tan grata al vulgo, y en cambio prefiere la comedia urbana, levantando su público hacia concepciones dramáticas refinadas ⁹³

Francisco Ruiz Ramón holds a similar view of the Golden Age audience, although he believes that its heterogeneous nature made necessary a certain discrepancy between the thematic material and its presentation:

"forzosamente había que crear un teatro mayoritario, esencialmente popular y nacional. Pero, además, . . . tenía que ser también arte, debía tener calidad poética."⁹⁴

Some critics have gone even further, suggesting that the content as well as the form of these works could appeal to the more sophisticated theatergoers as well as to the vulgo. Noël Salomon talks about "un public complice" capable of picking up subtle allusions and ironies.⁹⁵ Stephen Gilman too has noted the public's participation in "Lope's ironies, tensions, and ambiguities" ⁹⁶ Montesinos, finally, sees Lope's comedia as "Arte popular, pues ma non troppo,"⁹⁷ and feels that Lope was a master of providing something for everyone: "Había que dar a cada uno lo suyo, pero siempre teniendo cuidado de que la acción de la comedia no se demorase ni languideciera; la plebe podría no entender muy bien los versos, pero éstos no estorbaban si la dejaban seguir interesada en la acción."⁹⁸ Montesinos is referring here to the poetic structure of the comedia, but there is no reason why this idea could not be extended to include other aspects of Lope's dramatic production. If a portion of the audience was capable of appreciating subtleties of versification, such spectators would also be likely to comprehend subtle criticism of honor as well. In fact, many works destined for a public more sophisticated than that of the corrales did contain criticism of the honor code.

D. "Unorthodox" presentations of honor in

Golden Age literature

A major irony of Golden Age literary history may be the fact

that while literature itself has provided the critics with the notion that the honor code was an inviolable regulator of social behavior, many of the outstanding works of the period reflect a less orthodox view, showing a good number of authors to be extremely dissatisfied with honor as a social force in Spain. Such was certainly the case with La Celestina:

Notable es la ironía con que la Tragicomedia corroe el sentimiento de la honra, tan importante en la sociedad hispánica. En contraste con el papel tradicional del padre como guardador de la honra, Pleberio ni siquiera la recuerda: quien se esfuerza por mantenerla es el padre infame que trafica con la virginidad de su hija La doncella "de alto linaje" tiene bien presente su deber de honra, pero lo atropella para satisfacer su pasión y casi se ufana en su deshonor; el caballero la ve como un obstáculo para sus amores y halla, al cabo, razones para desatenderla. Mientras los nobles se entregan a sus apetitos sin cuidarse del qué dirán, la tercerona, su pupila y el criado, muy conscientes de la sanción social, recomiendan envolver pesares y alegrías en el más riguroso secreto Celestina siente la responsabilidad y el orgullo de su jerarquía social y de su honor profesional, por el que aventura a sabiendas la vida y--nueva ironía--es irreprochablemente honrada en el ejercicio de la tercería La más necia y desalmada de las dos ramerías es también la que exhibe mayor devoción y vanidad social Como si no bastara tanta irrisión tácita . . . el rufián Centurio adopta por burla la actitud de paladín pundonoroso, ávido de ejecutar hazañas para la mayor gloria de su señora, de suerte que su mentido alarde de orgullo profesional y de abolengo convencen de absurdas las pretensiones de los personajes que abrigan en serio tales sentimientos.⁹⁹

Américo Castro has also observed, as a basic purpose in the creation of La Celestina, "la perversión y el trastorno de las jerarquías de valoración vigentes, de los ideales poéticos y caballerescos."¹⁰⁰

This is achieved, he says, through the subversion of the meaning and purpose of already existing literary material incorporated by Rojas into the fabric of his work.¹⁰¹

It should be mentioned that Rojas, not having to contend with the inhibitions imposed by the popular audiences of Lope's day, could criticize honor far more openly than the dramatist of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The same holds true for the dramatists of the early sixteenth century, whose work was intended for courtly audiences. A number of plays of this period were, in fact, greatly influenced by La Celestina.

The best known of these is Torres Naharro's Comedia Ymeneo (1516), a work in which the honor code is undermined in a number of ways. Not only is an honor vengeance avoided, but the whole moral system which makes such a vengeance necessary is subjected to mockery when Phebea, told by her brother to confess before he kills her, makes the following "confession:"

Confieso que en ser yo buena
 mayor peccado no veo
 que hize desde nascí,
 y merezco toda pena
 por dar pasión a Ymeneo
 y en tomalla para mí.
 Confieso que pecca y yerra
 la que suele procurar
 que no gozen ni gozar
 lo que ha de comer la tierra,
 y ante vos
 yo digo mi culpa a Dios.¹⁰²

Joseph E. Gillet has observed: "In Torres Naharro's plays there is no actual adultery and no actual murder for the sake of honor" Two possible explanations for this, he says, are " . . . a half-hearted deference to the traditional principles of comedy, or a curious early Renaissance refusal to take death seriously."¹⁰³ One possibility

he does not consider, however, is that Torres Naharro may simply be rejecting the validity of the honor code.

Donald Larson discusses the treatment of honor in two plays which were influenced by both La Celestina and the Comedia Ymenea: the Comedia Vidriana (1535?) of Jayme de Güete and the Comedia Radiana of Agustín Ortiz. Both plays deal with matters of family honor involving the lovers and the girl's father, and both end in marriage as an alternative to vengeance.¹⁰⁴ Larson wonders why vengeance is never taken in these works, and discusses a number of possible answers, including the fact that so many of the early playwrights were conversos, who "by virtue of their marginal status could be expected to have held ideas on honor and vengeance that differed widely from those of the majority of the people."¹⁰⁵ Larson's personal conclusion is that the absence of vengeance in the early theater may be traced to the dramatic conventions of the period, and that "whatever audiences were willing to accept in other genres, they were not yet disposed to having a play and in catastrophe."¹⁰⁶ It should be recalled once again, however, that the audiences for these plays were courtly audiences, who probably had very different notions of honor from those held by the popular audiences of the corrales.

Lope de Rueda, in a paso now known as Cornudo y contento, deals specifically with a case of conjugal honor. The husband here is not only ignorant of his wife's illicit relationship with a student, but actually helps the lovers deceive him. It is worthy of particular note that the opening "scene" of this paso informs the audience that

the husband is cuckolded in reputation as well as in fact. The work ends as humorously as it begins, and the lovers go off together with the husband's blessing.¹⁰⁷

Cervantes, in his entremeses La cueva de Salamanca and El viejo celoso, also presents humorous deviations from the norm of the honor code. In these works, as in Lope de Rueda's paso, the seriousness of an honor conflict is overshadowed by the humorous means used by the other characters to deceive the unsuspecting husband.¹⁰⁸ With regard to Cervantes' general attitude toward honor, Américo Castro has observed: "La doctrina del honor cervantino no es sino un aspecto de su moral. Siendo ésta autónoma e immanente, también lo será su concepto de la dignidad del hombre, que no pende de circunstancias externas (fama, opinion, galardones), sino de la intimidad de la virtud individual."¹⁰⁹ In his discussion of El curioso impertinente, Castro talks about Cervantes' more serious utilization of the conjugal honor theme in his works: "Cervantes no ha presentado nunca un caso de adulterio cuya responsabilidad no caiga de lleno sobre el marido, y eso demuestra, por lo menos, que no le interesaba desarrollar de hecho la cuestión de si podía el marido ser ofendido por la esposa."¹¹⁰ Castro's conclusion is that conjugal honor in Cervantes " . . . aparece en manifiesto contraste con las doctrinas vulgares en los casos justamente en que se le juzga perdido La renuncia a castigar a la adúltera es el rasgo más característico de Cervantes."¹¹¹

It should be noted that the values portrayed in the entremés were very different from those of the comedia, and the comic treatment

of conjugal honor in such works could not be considered unconventional. Commenting on the frequent appearance of the adultery theme in the entreméss, Hannah E. Bergman has observed: "El marido engañado, figura trágica en la comedia, es objeto irrisorio en el entremés por haberse atrevido, siendo viejo o bobo, a casarse con mujer joven."¹¹² Since entremeses were performed before or between the acts of the comedias, they were of course seen by the same audiences.

Another Golden Age genre which, almost by definition, rejected the conventional view of honor, was the picaresque novel. Bataillon sees picaresque literature as an "elogio . . . del deshonrado, hecho para lectores honrados" ¹¹³ According to Bataillon, two of the most notable characteristics of the pícaro are those which serve to create a distance between himself and an "honorable" existence: "1.^o El pícaro nace más bien en la ignominia que en la extrema miseria. 2.^o Su cinismo le lleva, más allá de los hurtos y estafas de dinero, a cometer estafas de honra."¹¹⁴ A third characteristic he mentions, very much in keeping with the first two, is the pícaro's "insolente usurpación de identidades honradas," a factor which comes into play in El buscón and La pícara Justina.¹¹⁵

The undermining of honor has been studied extensively with regard to Lazarillo de Tormes. Américo Castro sees the whole tone of the work as ironic rather than didactic.¹¹⁶ Albert A. Sicroff notes how "Lázaro nos advierte que la búsqueda de la honra no va siempre acompañada en el hombre por un deseo igualmente intenso de realizar grandes hechos. A menudo bastará la apariencia exterior de honra, sin el

contenido de una acción noble." He shows how the anonymous author prepares the reader for this theme in the Prologue,¹¹⁷ and demonstrates how the episode of the escudero constitutes the thematic and stylistic culmination of this ironic view of honor.¹¹⁸ The irony implicit in the conclusion of the novel is seen by Sicroff as a function of this same theme,¹¹⁹ while Bataillon notes that "Lázaro, dispuesto a defender con su vieja espada su felicidad más bien que su honor conyugal, es la más graciosa antítesis del honor que nos ofrece la literatura española."¹²⁰

Bataillon also discusses the criticism of honor based on wealth in Guzmán de Alfarache¹²¹ and the ironic view of honor based on limpieza de sange in Guzmán de Alfarache and La pícara Justina.¹²² He points out that Marcos de Obregón as a character "es el perfecto anti-pícaro" in the sense that he never undermines, in words or in actions, the concept of honor. Espinel's novel, he says, ". . . constituye . . . una verdadera humanización y rehabilitación de la honra 'escuderil.'"¹²³ It should be mentioned, however that while his hero might not have been a real pícaro, Espinel did work into his Vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón a number of incidents involving honor which challenge the morality of the honor code.

In one of these (Book III, Descansos VI and VII), he presents what could be described as an almost Calderonian caso de honra in which a husband, led to suspect his wife's infidelity, brutally murders the supposed offender and the witness who has informed him of the offense, but finds himself incapable of killing his wife. Marcos

describes the sight of the two dead men as "uno de los más horrendos espectáculos que los ojos humanos han visto."¹²⁴ He advises the husband to forget about killing his wife, since 1) "la honra o infamia de los hombres no consiste en lo que ellos saben de sí propios, sino en lo que el vulgo sabe y dice . . . ;" 2) his honor is now secure because "nadie lo ha sabido sino estos dos que ya no pueden publicallo . . . ;"¹²⁵ and 3) his wife might be innocent after all. Finally, after the wife's innocence has, in fact, been accepted, Marcos turns to his reader and comments on the incident:

Que de arrabatarse de su pasión sin hacer reflexión en considerar ser falso, hizo homicidios y llevaba camino de acabar con la inocente e inculpable mujer, con quien viviera inquietísimo, si viviera, y ella quedara infamada de lo que no había cometido. Que el caballero se engañase con tantas apariencias de verdad, lastimado de la honra y de los celos, raíz de tantos y tan exorbitantes males, no es maravilla; pero que sea tanta la asistencia o pertinacia de un pecho doblado y lleno de cautelas, que por llevar su intención al cabo de que había de gastar con quietud lo gasta en estratagemas, trazas y bullicios, en ofender a la honra ajena¹²⁶ y poner en peligro su vida, cosa es que espanta

Such counterbalancing of a conventional view of honor with a negative or critical view is employed by Lope himself in some of his non-dramatic works. In La Dorotea (Act I, scene 5) it may be observed in the following dialogue between Fernando and Iulio:

Fer. --Yo hago lo que me manda mi honra.
 Iul. --¡Qué amor tan honrado, para ser libre!
 Fer. --No toda la honra está sujeta a leyes.
 Iul. --La que no está sujeta a ellas no es honra.¹²⁷
 Fer. --Los hombres hazen honra de lo que quieren.

These two contrasting views of honor are presented by Lope as having equal value: nowhere is the reader advised as to which character Lope

really agrees with. It is the reader himself who must come to some kind of conclusion about the true nature of honor, which may be as Fernando sees it, as Iulio sees it, or, perhaps, as a composite of the two.

The notion that Lope deals with honor far more candidly when he is addressing a reading public may be further corroborated by examining his comments regarding honor in his Novelas a Marcia Leonarda. In one of these, La prudente venganza, he is dealing directly with a conjugal honor situation. The characters act out a tale of extra-marital love under the vigilant eye of the honor code: Marcelo, the husband, bearing in mind the fact that his dishonor must be kept secret at all costs, avenges himself on the guilty parties and on all others who are aware of his wife's infidelity and his own revenge. But there is a point, just before the last of these deaths is described, when Lope pauses to address his reader directly, thus providing the contrasting point of view:

. . . he sido de parecer siempre que no se lava bien la mancha de la honra del agraviado con la sangre del que le ofendió, porque lo que fue no puede dejar de ser, y es desatino creer que se quita, porque se mate el ofensor, la ofensa del ofendido; lo que hay en esto es que el agraviado se queda con su agravio, y el otro, muerto, satisfaciendo los deseos de la venganza, pero no las calidades de la honra, que para ser perfecta no ha de ser ofendida. ¿Quién duda que está ya la objeción a ese argumento dando voces? Pues ¿qué medio se ha de tener? El que un hombre tiene cuando le ha sucedido otro cualquiera género de desdicha: perder la patria, vivir fuera de ella donde no le conozcan y ofrecer a Dios aquella pena, acordándose que le pudiera haber sucedido lo mismo si en alguno de los agravios que ha hecho a otros le hubieran castigado. Que querer que los que agravió le sufran a él y él no sufrir a nadie, no está puesto en razón; digo sufrir, dejar de matar violentamente pues por sólo quitarle a él la honra, que es una vanidad del mundo, quiere él quitarles a Dios, si se les pierde el alma.128

Menéndez Pidal has noted that Lope does not go so far as to assert that honor consists of virtue, and that Lope "cree, con criterio social, no individualista, que la honra depende del juicio y de los actos ajenos" ¹²⁹ What he fails to mention, however, is that Lope is not presenting a single view here, but several: while recognizing that a code of honor (based on reputation) does exist, he also recommends exile as being morally preferable to vengeance, and then denounces honor as a "vanidad del mundo" when seen from the point of view of Divine law.

Furthermore, these lines are strikingly similar to a passage in Cervantes' Persiles y Sigismunda, a passage often cited as evidence of Cervantes' unorthodox view of honor:

--Vos, señor, ciego de vuestra cólera, no echais de ver que vais a dilatar y a extender vuestra deshonor. Ahora no estáis más deshonorado de entre los que os conocen en Talavera, que deben de ser bien pocos, y ahora vais a ser lo de los que os conocerán en Madrid; ¿Qué os puede suceder, como digo, sino hacer más público vuestro agravio? Porque las venganzas castigan, pero no quitan las culpas; y las que en estos casos se cometen, como la enmienda no proceda de la voluntad, siempre se están en pie, y siempre están vivas en las memorias de las gentes, a lo menos, en tanto que vive el agraviado. Y no os aconsejo por esto a que perdonéis a vuestra mujer para volverla a vuestra casa, que a esto no hay ley que os obligue; lo que os aconsejo es que le dejéis, que es el mayor castigo que podréis darle. Vivid lejos de ella, y viviréis; Y, finalmente, quiero que consideréis que vais a hacer un pecado mortal en quitarles las vidas, que no se ha de cometer por todas las ganancias que la honra del mundo ofrezca. ¹³⁰

Other aspects of this novela which indicate Lope's dissatisfaction with the honor system include his sympathetic portrayal of the lovers and even the possibility that the title itself is ironic. Francisco Yndurain believes that the title refers to Marcelo's rigid (and,

presumably, laudable) adherence to the honor code:¹³¹ but Yndurain never mentions the above-quoted passage containing Lope's "personal" comments regarding honor. Once these are taken into account, it becomes difficult to see the title solely as a function of the action narrated, which takes on an ambiguity leading one to wonder whose prudencia is greater, Marcelo's or Lope's?

The foregoing review of the critical approach to honor in a number of Golden Age works has not been intended as a thorough examination of the subject. Nor has an attempt been made to present a complete study of this attitude in the works mentioned. An important conclusion, however, may be drawn from even this brief survey. All of the works cited--except the entremeses--were created for a public very different from that of the comedia. They were works which would be read or, in the case of the plays, would be seen by a fairly sophisticated audience. Such works show a greater measure of freedom in dealing with honor than could possibly be incorporated into works whose success depended on the whims of the vulgo. Lope himself, in some of his prose works, shows a good deal of dissatisfaction with the Spanish obsession with honor. Assuming that these denunciations of the honor code might more accurately reflect Lope's personal views than his apparent approval of that same code in his dramatic works, it is necessary to ask whether Lope may, in fact, have used a number of subtle techniques in his honor plays which would tend to challenge or undermine the popular notion of honor.

The present study proposes to explore a number of ways in which Lope appears to challenge the validity, the efficacy, and even the morality of honor in his conjugal honor plays. The way in which honor conflicts are resolved will be one of the factors considered, but it will not be the only one. Of equal--if not greater--importance will be the various means by which Lope manages to undermine honor while at the same time appearing to cater to his public's preference for conventional treatments of the honor code. Thus the techniques to be studied include: 1) the deliberate alteration of recognizable source material; 2) the "perplexing" resolution of an honor conflict; 3) the use of irony and equivocation; 4) unusual methods of characterization; and 5) the questioning--both direct and indirect--of some of the social implications of the honor code and its relation to the question of blood purity in Golden Age Spain.

Since few Golden Age plays fail to include, in one way or another, some treatment of honor, this study will be limited to those plays which deal specifically with conjugal honor. Such plays are especially interesting in an examination of Lope's unconventionality, as these are the very works in which so many critics have seen Lope in his most conservative attitude. Furthermore, this group of works provides a representative cross-section of Lope's dramatic production as a whole, ranging from farce to high tragedy, and including several vidas de santos and even two autos sacramentales.¹³²

The honor plays have generally been approached only in so far as they might tend to exemplify a certain code of conduct.¹³³ Thus

they tend to be dealt with as part of a group rather than as individual dramatic creations. Recent criticism--particularly Larson's examination of the chronological evolution of the honor plays--is beginning to indicate that Lope was quite capable of expressing a variety of differing--and even contradictory--points of view. He could brutally uphold the honor code in one play, ridicule it with equal brutality in another, and fill a third one with such subtle nuances of meaning that one is never quite sure which of a chorus of Lopean voices is dominant. It is hoped that the present study will succeed in demonstrating that this multiplicity of voices is a major characteristic of Lope's honor plays, enabling Lope to express his own views regarding honor while at the same time satisfying the demands of the majority of his public.

Notes to Chapter I

¹"The Uniqueness of the Comedia," Hispanic Review, XXVII (1959), 304-305.

²Alexander A. Parker, "The Approach to the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age," Tulane Drama Review, IV (1959), 58.

³Teatro y literatura en la sociedad barroca (Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones, 1972), pp. 21-22.

⁴Maravall, p. 35. Reichenberger, too, stresses the notion that " . . . a Spanish play follows the pattern from order disturbed to order restored." See "Uniqueness," p. 307.

⁵Teoría sobre los personajes de la comedia nueva, en cinco dramaturgos (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1963), p. 252.

⁶Spanish Drama of the Golden Age (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1969), p. 42.

⁷Charles Vincent Aubrun, La comedia española (1600-1680), trans. Julio Lago Alonso (Madrid: Taurus, 1968), pp. 101-102.

⁸Karl Vossler, Lope de Vega y su tiempo, trans. Ramón de la Serna (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1933), p. 94.

⁹Amado Alonso, "Lope de Vega y sus fuentes," Thesaurus, VIII (1952), rpt. in J. F. Gatti, ed., El Teatro de Lope de Vega, 2nd ed., (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1967), p. 195

¹⁰Inez Macdonald, "Why Lope?" Bulletin of Spanish Studies, XII (1935), 185.

¹¹Experience and Artistic Expression in Lope de Vega: The Making of La Dorotea (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 629. Edwin S. Morby, in the introduction to his edition of La Dorotea (Madrid: Castalia, 1968), also seems to suggest an ironic ambivalence in Lope's treatment of time, erudition, and the confluence of literature and life. See pp. 20-32.

¹²"Lope, figura del donaire," Cruz y raya, XXIII-XXIV (1935); rpt. in Estudios sobre Lope de Vega (Salamanca: Anaya, 1969), p. 67.

¹³"Lope and his role as figura del donaire," Romanische Forschungen, 78 (1966), p. 64.

- 14 Trueblood, Experience and Artistic Expression, p. 160.
- 15 María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, La originalidad artística de La Celestina, 2nd ed. (Buenos Aires: EUDEBA, 1970), p. 56.
- 16 "El Arte nuevo y la nueva biografía," in De Cervantes y Lope de Vega, 6th ed. (Madrid: Colección Austral, 1964), p. 88.
- 17 Lope de Vega y la formación de la comedia, trans. Franco Gabriele y señora de Gabriele (Salamanca: Anaya, 1968), p. 19.
- 18 Froldi, p. 34.
- 19 La preceptiva dramática de Lope de Vega y otros ensayos sobre el Fénix (Madrid: Yunque, 1935), p. 38.
- 20 From a letter quoted by Sturgis E. Leavitt in Golden Age Drama in Spain: General considerations and Unusual Features (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), p. 25.
- 21 Vossler, p. 144.
- 22 "La paradoja del Arte nuevo," in Estudios sobre Lope de Vega, p. 2.
- 23 "The comedia: Universality of Uniqueness," Hispanic Review, XXXVIII (1970), p. 56. Bentley's article forms part of a polemic with Arnold Reichenberger and other hispanists growing out of Reichenberger's original article of 1959, "The Uniqueness of the Comedia." Reichenberger's reply to Bentley, also called "The Uniqueness of the Comedia," appears in the same issue of Hispanic Review (pp. 163-173) as the Bentley article. A general discussion of the polemic may be found in Everett W. Hesse, La comedia y sus intérpretes (Madrid: Castalia, 1972), pp. 129-144.
- 24 "Honour and the Christian Background in Calderón," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, 37 (1960), 79.
- 25 Dunn, "Honour," p. 78.
- 26 "Non-conventional Treatment of the Honor Theme in the Theater of the Golden Age," Revista de estudios hispánicos, VII (1973), 462-463.
- 27 The Honor Plays of Lope de Vega (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 28.
- 28 Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 24-27. In both of these works the traditional honor vengeance is rejected in favor of a simple (and comical) beating.

²⁹"The Comic Treatment of Conjugal Honor in Lope's Las Ferias de Madrid," Hispanic Review, 41 (1973), 33-42.

³⁰Lope de Vega's La desdichada Estefanía, (University, Mississippi: Romance Monographs, Inc., 1975). See pp. 60, 70, 73, 76-77.

³¹"Cuando Lope quiere, quiere," trans. Rafael de Ferreres, Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, 161-162 (May-June, 1963), 295.

³²"Algunas observaciones acerca del concepto del honor en los siglos XVI y XVII," Revista de filología, III (1916); rpt. in Semblanzas y estudios españoles (Princeton, 1956), p. 334.

³³Castro, "Algunas observaciones," p. 336.

³⁴Los Comendadores de Córdoba, Acad., XI, 290b. In the Acad. edition of Lope's plays (Madrid: Real Academia Española, 1890-1913) the first letter of each line is capitalized, while the Ac. N. edition (Madrid: Real Academia Española 1916-1930) follows ordinary rules for capitalization. For greater uniformity, all quotes from Academy editions will follow the procedure used by Ac. N.

³⁵Torres Naharro and the Drama of the Renaissance, vol. 4 of Propalladia and Other Works, by Bartolomé de Torres Naharro (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961), pp. 193-194.

³⁶Gillet, p. 195.

³⁷Quoted by Gillet, p. 198.

³⁸Such a view was defended for the most part by conversos (or their partisans) who wanted to be judged on their personal virtue rather than on the "appearance" of their genealogy.

³⁹Répercussions du souci de la pureté de sang sur la conception de l'honneur dans la "comedia nueva" espagnole (Leiden: E. J. Brill 1966), p. 22.

⁴⁰Van Beysterveldt, p. 25.

⁴¹Van Beysterveldt p. 152.

⁴²El hidalgo y el honor, 2nd ed, (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1958), p. 187.

⁴³Valdecasas, p. 119. Valdecasas, as well as a number of other critics, distinguishes between the terms honor and honra. As Lope uses these terms interchangeably, this study will not make such a distinction.

⁴⁴Américo Castro, "Algunas observaciones," pp. 337-338.

⁴⁵Amado Alonso, pp. 202-203.

⁴⁶"Sobre el punto de honor catellano," Revista de occidente, 2nd series, no. 5 (August, 1963), 154.

⁴⁷Quoted by Menéndez Pidal, "Del honor en el teatro español," in De Cervantes y Lope de Vega, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁸De la edad conflictiva (Madrid: Taurus, 1972), p. 33.

⁴⁹Castro, Edad conflictiva, p. 212.

⁵⁰Valdecasas, p. 156.

⁵¹Ayala, pp. 151-174.

⁵²Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 7-13. While the Moors were talented artisans and the Jews excelled in business and the learned professions, the Christians considered their own special skill to be their masculine ability to dominate others. The ultimate triumph of the Christians brought with it the emphasis of this "skill" at the expense of the others. One way in which the Christians asserted their domination over the other two castes was by forcing Jews and Moors either to convert or be expelled from Spain. At the same time, they refused to accept as real Christians anyone with a trace of Jewish or Moorish ancestry.

⁵³Larson, Honor Plays, p. 10.

⁵⁴Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 10-11.

⁵⁵"Honor in Spanish Golden-Age Drama: Its relation to real life and to morals," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXV (1958), 206. Jones explains, in a later article, that he is mainly concerned here with the critical approach to the comedia, which should be seen as literature, and not as social history. See "Spanish Honour as Historical Phenomenon, Convention and Artistic Motive," Hispanic Review, XXXIII (1965), 32-39.

⁵⁶Lope de Vega's El castigo del discreto. Together with a study of conjugal honor in his theatre (New York: Instituto de las Españas, 1925), p. 29.

⁵⁷Fichter, p. 33.

⁵⁸Fichter, p. 35.

⁵⁹Fichter, p. 42.

⁶⁰Fichter, p. 43.

⁶¹Fichter, p. 45.

⁶²Fichter, pp. 60-72.

⁶³Lope de Vega: introducción a su vida y obra (Salamanca: Anaya, 1966), pp. 206-207.

⁶⁴The Dramatic Art of Lope de Vega. Together with "La dama boba" (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), p. 31.

⁶⁵Schevill, p. 32.

⁶⁶"Los casos de la honra son mejores/ Porque mueuen con fuerza a toda gente." Lope de Vega, Arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo, ed. Juana de José Prades (Madrid: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1971), ll. 327-328.

⁶⁷Fichter, p. 58.

⁶⁸Froldi, p. 33.

⁶⁹La sociedad española en las obras dramáticas de Lope de Vega (Madrid: Escelicer, 1942), pp. 458-459.

⁷⁰Podol, p. 452.

⁷¹See p. 8 of this study.

⁷²"Notes on the significance and text of Rojas Zorrilla's Cada cual lo que le toca, in Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age: Presented to Edward M. Wilson, ed. R.O. Jones (London: Tamesis, 1973), p. 149.

⁷³Larson, Honor Plays, p. 16.

⁷⁴See p. 3 of this study.

⁷⁵Vossler, p. 283.

⁷⁶Jones, "Honor," p. 206.

⁷⁷McGrady, p. 34.

⁷⁸Dynamics of Drama (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 135-136.

⁷⁹Arte nuevo, ll. 45-49.

⁸⁰Arte nuevo, ll. 205-210.

⁸¹Arte nuevo, ll. 232-239.

⁸²The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega (Hispanic Society of America, 1909; rpt., New York: Dover, 1963), p. 117.

⁸³R. D. F. Pring-Mill, for example, maintains that Lope's " . . . version of reality is calculated to appeal by showing life not as what it is but as his audience would like to think it was." See his introduction to Lope de Vega (Five Plays), trans. Jill Booty (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. xiii. Karl Vossler, like many others, sees the audience as unified under the banner of the "traditional" Spanish values of the day. See Vossler, pp. 216-217.

⁸⁴"The Spaniard of the Golden Age who attended the theater demanded a conventional approach to the question of honor, and the dramatist, whose main concern was to please the public, evidently complied with the desires of the theatergoers." Podol, p. 463.

⁸⁵Honor, Love and Religion in the Theater Before Lope de Vega, unpublished doctoral dissertation (City University of New York, 1975), p. 18.

⁸⁶Wertheimer, p. 19.

⁸⁷Leavitt, p. 38.

⁸⁸Quoted in Hugo A. Rennert and Américo Castro, Vida de Lope de Vega (Salamanca: Anaya, 1969), p. 261

⁸⁹Rennert and Castro, p. 245.

⁹⁰Thomas F. Van Laan, The Idiom of Drama (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 72-73.

⁹¹See Rennert, pp. 230-245.

⁹²N. D. Shergold, A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the End of the Seventeenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 534.

⁹³Menéndez Pidal, "El Arte nuevo," pp. 99-100.

⁹⁴Historia del teatro español, 2nd ed., vol. I (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1971), p. 162.

⁹⁵"Toujours la date de Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña, 'tragicomedia' de Lope de Vega," in Mélanges offerts à Marcel Bataillon par les Hispanistes français (Bordeaux: Féret and Fils, 1962), p. 624.

⁹⁶"The Comedia in the Light of Recent Criticism Including the New Criticism," Bulletin of the Comediantes, XII, no. I (Spring, 1960), p. 4.

⁹⁷Montesinos, "Paradoja," p. 12.

⁹⁸Montesinos, "Paradoja," p. 13.

- 99 Lida de Malkiel, p. 257.
- 100 La Celestina como contienda literaria (Madrid: Revista de occidente, 1965), p. 96.
- 101 Castro, Celestina, p. 95.
- 102 Bartolomé de Torres Naharro, Tres comedias, ed. Humberto López Morales (New York: Las Américas, 1965), ll. 1536-1547. Elaine Wertheimer presents a detailed study of the equivocal and ironic treatment of honor in Torres Naharro, pp. 314-320.
- 103 Gillet, p. 197.
- 104 See Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 18-19. See also J. P. Wickersham Crawford, Spanish Drama Before Lope de Vega, 2nd ed., revised (1937); rpt. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), pp. 98-99.
- 105 Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 19-20.
- 106 Larson, Honor Plays, p. 20.
- 107 Pasos completos, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1964), pp. 51-61. Cornudo y contento is the 3rd paso of El Deleitoso, published posthumously in 1570.
- 108 Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, Obras completas, ed. Angel Valbuena Prat, 16th ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1970), pp. 715-730.
- 109 El pensamiento de Cervantes, nueva edición ampliada (Barcelona: Noguer, 1972), p. 355.
- 110 Castro, Pensamiento, p. 367.
- 111 Castro, Pensamiento, p. 368.
- 112 Introduction to Ramillete de entremeses y bailes, ed. Hannah E. Bergman (Madrid: Castalia, 1970), p. 16.
- 113 Pícaros y picaresca, trans. Francisco R. Vadillo (Madrid: Taurus, 1969), p. 205.
- 114 Bataillon, Pícaros, p. 209.
- 115 Bataillon, Pícaros, p. 210.
- 116 Hacia Cervantes, 3rd ed. (Madrid: Taurus, 1967), p. 145.
- 117 "Sobre el estilo del Lazarillo de Tormes," Nueva revista de filología hispánica, XI, no. 2 (April-June, 1957), 159.
- 118 Sicroff, "Sobre el estilo," p. 164.

¹¹⁹Sicroff, "Sobre el estilo," p. 169.

¹²⁰Novedad y fecundidad del Lazarillo de Tormes, trans. Luis Cortés Vázquez (Salamanca: Anaya, 1968), p. 68. One very different view, however, is that of Stephen Gilman, who sees the end of the work in far more serious terms. Lázaro, he says, "commits spiritual suicide--after which he goes on to live, presumably forever, submerged in the bland Hell of commonplaces which he has taught us to despise. It is a just punishment for Lázaro, the narrator, if not for poor Lazarillo, himself so capable of authentic goodness and charity." "The Death of Lazarillo de Tormes," PMLA, LXXXI, no. 3 (June, 1966), 158.

¹²¹Bataillon, Pícaros, pp. 207-208.

¹²²Bataillon, Pícaros, p. 212.

¹²³Bataillon, Pícaros, p. 209.

¹²⁴Vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón, ed. María Soledad Carrasco Urgoiti, vol. 2 (Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1972), p. 150.

¹²⁵Marcos de Obregón, p. 160

¹²⁶Marcos de Obregón, p. 162.

¹²⁷La Dorotea, p. 112.

¹²⁸Novelas a Marcia Leonarda, ed. Francisco Rico (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1968), pp. 141-142.

¹²⁹Menéndez Pidal, "Del honor," p. 160.

¹³⁰Book II, Chapter VII. In Obras completas, p. 1914a, b.

¹³¹Lope de Vega como novelador (Santander: Publicaciones de la Universidad Internacional Menéndez Pelayo, 1962), p. 60.

¹³²My criteria for the selection of plays are different from those of Larson. The nineteen works he classifies as honor plays are all works which portray the recognition and resolution of an honor conflict by a male protagonist. These include two plays not dealing with conjugal honor: Fuenteovejuna and El robo de Dina. The present study will not cover these two works, but will include all authentic plays by Lope which contain conjugal honor conflicts. These are, for the most part, the works listed by William L. Fichter in his edition of El castigo del discreto (pp. 57-58, n. 2). Like Larson, I have eliminated those works whose authenticity, according to Morley and Bruerton, cannot be ascertained (See Cronología de las comedias de Lope de Vega, revised ed., trans. María Rosa Cartes (Madrid: Gredos 1968), pp. 603-607). Three additional plays--Lucinda perseguida, El

gran duque de Moscovia and El esclavo de Roma--do not deal sufficiently with the honor theme to warrant their inclusion in this study. Finally, I have added one play, Los pleitos de Ingalaterra, which does not appear on the Fichter list.

¹³³As Larson has pointed out (Honor Plays, p. 16), such an approach has lead to interminable debates as to whether or not these plays were true to life. "That that action may not have been as common in real life as on the stage is not particularly important. What is important is that the values that motivate the action were recognized by the great majority of Spaniards, and more than just recognized, passionately affirmed."

Chapter II

Los Comendadores de Córdoba

Faced with the impracticality, if not impossibility, of undertaking a full-scale analysis of each play upon which this study is based, perhaps the detailed examination of one play will suffice as a point of departure to lead to some fundamental observations regarding Lope's complex presentation of honor. For this purpose a suitable paradigm would be Los Comendadores de Córdoba, a play which offers striking examples of the various types of techniques to be studied. This is said with full realization that this work has been seen traditionally as the most brutal of Lope's honor plays and one devoid of any semblance of unconventionality.

A. Re-elaboration of source material

The use of a literary or historical source as the basis for the action of a play was common practice in the Golden Age, and many of the plays that will be discussed in this study were based on such sources. But Lope's decision to use a particular source is of far less interest (except in so far as that source would lend itself to his purpose) than the ways in which he makes use of this borrowed material. Even in Los Comendadores de Córdoba, where Lope is generally thought to have followed "con toda fidelidad"¹ the action traced by his source, there were a number of pressing reasons for making at least some changes in the source material.

On the most basic level, of course, an action described in prose or verse had to be re-structured into an action performed and presented by dialogued encounters without the aid of an omniscient narrator. Furthermore, in the transformation from a narration to a dramatization, the expectations and demands of a Golden Age audience had to be taken into account. Lope himself was well aware of the need for meeting the preferences and limitations of much of his audience. The use of a well-known source would therefore impose some difficult conditions upon a dramatist who understood the volatile temperament of the Spanish theatergoer. Suspense with regard to the outcome becomes a dramatic necessity, and Lope will attempt to maintain it by drawing the attention of the spectator away from an action whose outcome is known and redirect it temporarily to another line of action, characterization or thematic content.

The ways in which Lope builds such suspense are of particular interest to this study. In the first place, the techniques used in creating an original work from a pre-existing source should provide a better idea of just how Lope went about structuring his dramatic works; given a known point of departure--the source--one can then trace the ways in which Lope chose to elaborate this material in order to produce a dynamic action which would be capable of maintaining audience interest. In the second place, specific changes made in a source story are also of interest, as they may indicate Lope's intention to bring new meaning to a well-known tale.

Los Comendadores de Córdoba is based on an historical event: the brutal vengeance taken by Fernán Alfonso, Veinticuatro de Córdoba, on his wife, two Comendadores, and his entire household, in the year 1447, during the reign of Juan II.² The primary source through which the story was transmitted to Lope was Juan Rufo's Romance de los Comendadores, published in 1596 in Las seiscientas apotegmas y otras obras en verso.³ The basic elements of the action of the Lope work are virtually the same as those of Rufo with one notable exception: Lope has greatly expanded the role of the King, Fernando el Católico, who is mentioned only briefly in the earlier version.

Rufo's "Romance" opens with an introduction to the major characters, beginning with the Veinticuatro and Beatriz, and the early announcement that the wife's infidelity will lead to a "memorable castigo."⁴ Lope, of course, has his characters present themselves, thus drawing his audience into the dramatic development of his comedia. The young Comendadores are the first to appear on the stage, and they are seen as fairly sympathetic characters who have been greatly honored by their uncle, the bishop. Their plan to visit their cousin Beatriz is discussed. The audience--perhaps familiar with the Rufo version--may have its suspicions about the consequences of that meeting, but there is a quick change of scene, and attention is turned to the valor of the Veinticuatro and the King's recognition of his services.

The technique of using quick cinematic-like cuts is one of Lope's most frequent means of dramatizing the narrated source. By

moving rapidly between two or more lines of action in Los Comendadores de Córdoba Lope is able to set up a system of parallel and contrasting segments which serve to break up the strictly linear development of the action and involve the audience in certain details of plot and nuances of meaning which are not present in Rufo's narrative. Thus Lope builds his caso de honra by accumulating a number of dramatic "moments" which parallel each other insofar as each deals with some aspect of honor, while offering contrasting points of view regarding it. In the first act of the play, for example, the following sequence is observed:

1. The young Comendadores have been honored by their uncle, and must retain their good opinión by riding through Córdoba on horses which, they fear, may prove too spirited for them. During this scene their servant, Galindo, arrives and describes an altercation which has taken place between himself and a mulato in which the two traded racial insults regarding blacks and Jews.

2. The Veinticuatro is honored by the King, and is given a ring as symbol of this honor.

3. Beatriz, looking through her window, admires the Comendadores, who are on their way to visit her. They meet, and the imminent threat to the Veinticuatro's honor is established. This scene is structured around alternating dialogues between, on the one hand, the Comendadores, Beatriz and Ana, and, on the other, a parodic dialogue between Galindo and Esperanza in which the growing relationship between the masters

is reflected humorously in a comparable relationship between the servants.

4. The King, called back to Castilla, is honored by the words of his knights. This very brief scene draws audience attention away from the developing honor problem and also serves to keep before the audience the presence of the King who, as previously indicated, will be a more important figure in Lope's play than he was in Rufo's romance.

5. The Veinticuatro returns home, elated by his newfound honor, unaware of the threat to his conjugal honor.

6. The action pauses as the Comendadores and Galindo express their love in a trio of sonnets the last of which, recited by Galindo, is a parody of the first two.

Thus Lope has structured his first act around a single theme--the need for honor and the fear of losing it--viewed from a number of different perspectives: honor as reputation (the Comendadores in the eyes of others and their own fear of losing face by riding the horses of Córdoba), racial honor (the hostilities between Galindo and the mulato), honor bestowed as a reward for valorous acts (The King and the Veinticuatro and references to the Comendadores and their uncle), honor inherent to the monarchy (the King and his knights) and conjugal honor (from the point of view of both the would-be adulterers and their future victim). Through the interplay of this multiplicity of honras Lope has re-set the basic elements of his source in such a way that

the idea of honor, in all of its ramifications, is brought to the foreground. The actions of the characters might be similar to those depicted by Rufo, but their preoccupations represent Lope's contribution to the tale and bring about a subtle shift in the focus of the action.

Furthermore, while presenting the honor that has been earned and has received recognition, insinuations have also been made regarding its fragility: it may be lost (1) in the ride on the spirited horses; (2) in a verbal exchange of insults (Galindo and the mulato), (3) through conjugal infidelity; (4) by provoking the displeasure of the King.

The development of the action involving the ring provides another example of Lope's re-structuring of source material in order to turn Rufo's narrative into a dramatic work marked by the new thematic accent Lope has chosen to give it. When Rufo first mentions the ring, it is already on the hand of Jorge, and the reader is simply informed how the ring had come into his possession. Jorge

Después besó al Rey la mano,
y en la suya llevó anillo
que de la traición oculta
descubrió bastante indicio: (ll. 401-404)

· · · · ·
Esta fue la última prenda
que, recelosa de olvido,
dio Beatriz a sus amores
cuando le vio de camino. (ll. 413-416)

The passing of the ring from hand to hand is noted by the King, and it is through his words that the reader learns that the ring was a gift he had given to the Veinticuatro.

In the play, Lope restores the logical sequence of the ring's ownership from the King to the Veinticuatro, then to Beatriz and finally to Jorge. Furthermore, while all mention of the ring in Rufo is limited to the space of thirty-five lines, Lope prolongs the account of the ring's movement from the beginning of Act I until the end of Act II; and each time the ring appears in the action it marks a significant moment of the intensification of the drama.

Lope's elaboration of Rufo's brief reference to the ring bears a number of similarities to his structuring of Act I. As a dramatic motif, the ring weaves its way through the comedia and leads the audience to a multi-faceted view of honor. The ring as a reward for valor is transformed: on Beatriz' hand it functions as a symbol of conjugal honor; as it passes to Jorge it is instrumental in the endangerment of that honor while also representing a new bond of honor between the lovers; the King's recognition of the ring on Jorge's hand would challenge his honor as monarch, since the token of honor bestowed on the Veinticuatro was not prized and somehow was allowed to pass to the hand of Jorge; finally, when the King tells the Veinticuatro that he has seen the ring on Jorge's hand, the ring becomes a symbol of honor lost. Thus the ring undergoes a complete reversal in meaning: From honor bestowed for virtue to honor entrusted to the conjugal keeper of that honor to the wife's bestowal of it as a token of illicit love and therefore a betrayal of the honor of her husband.

The deliberate development of the ring motif also serves to produce a growing feeling of suspense in the audience, because it alone is aware of the process that has unfolded and must now wait to see where it will lead. Even if the legendary or historical ending were known to the audience, there still remained interest in how it would be reached.

It has been shown, then, that Lope has made a number of changes in the principal source for his comedia to give dramatic life to the play and to add a certain thematic depth to it. The question that must now be considered is whether Lope has made any changes which transform the original significance of the Comendadores story. In order to answer this question one must first ask another: what is the Rufo romance about? It is, as Larson has stated, an essentially didactic work: " . . . a kind of cautionary tale that revealed not only the foolhardiness of those who transgress the laws of Heaven . . . but also--in the case of the Veinticuatro--the danger of trusting too much in one's destiny" ⁵ Lope, through his treatment of material contained in the romance, has shifted the focal point of its underlying concern, and conjugal morality and false pride no longer appear to be the major issues. The moralizing narrative by Rufo has been replaced with a dramatic action which, rather than emphasizing the ethical aspects of the story, concentrates on a presentation of how individuals interact in a society dominated by the honor code; and this was, for the Golden Age Spaniard, a matter of profound importance. ⁶

Lope's emphasis on the problematic nature of honor is particularly evident in the final act, as he prepares his audience for the vengeance scene. The discussion between the Veinticuatro and his slave Rodrigo at the beginning of Act III concerning the importance of honor for man's existence in society serves a dual purpose. From a dramatic point of view, it slows down the pace of the action. At the same time it draws the audience's attention away from the sequence of occurrences which will end with the vengeance scene and leads it to ponder a concept of great importance both to the play and their own lives. The whole issue at stake is defined, discussed, and even questioned: twice, during the dialogue, the Veinticuatro inveighs against the injustice of an honor system in which personal valor is of less importance than reputation, a system in which a man's honor, residing in his wife, is often beyond his control.⁷ Whether these invectives represent Lope's own views⁸ or are intended primarily to sharpen the idea of internal conflict, they do present to the spectator a distinctly negative view of the exigencies of honor.⁹

The technique of building the action of an honor play derived from a well-known source around a new focal point concerned with the Spanish preoccupation with honor is frequently used by Lope and will be examined in greater detail in Chapter III. Once he has established honor as the central theme of a play, Lope examines, develops and comments upon this theme in several different ways. Limited by the fact that Golden Age audiences expected honor to triumph and would accept no major deviations from the honor code, Lope sought to present honor in a way that would either subtly lead

his audience to view honor as something less than "el bien más alto"--or simply have it miss the point entirely and be satisfied with the more superficial aspects of the plot.

B. The "perplexing" desenlace

Los Comendadores de Córdoba is generally considered to contain one of Lope's most traditional resolutions of an honor conflict. The Veinticuatro regains his lost honor through a brutal vengeance which involves the killing of all witnesses to his dishonor, and the King later approves the vengeance and rewards the Veinticuatro with even greater honor. While the vengeance and its aftermath are conducted strictly according to the demands of the honor code, however, the desenlace of Los Comendadores de Córdoba does contain some disturbing notes.

The vengeance, first of all, is carried out in a fury--the Veinticuatro even refers to himself as "otro furioso Roldán (296a)," thus comparing himself with a character moved by madness to commit extravagantly brutal murders. And this is most certainly an extravagant vengeance, as the Veinticuatro kills all living witnesses to his dishonor (including the domestic animals of his house). The death of all witnesses does comply with the honor code's demand that the agravio remain secret. But the Veinticuatro does not keep his vengeance a secret. Instead, he runs to the King and tells him what he has done, expecting to be punished for his acts.

It might be argued that this vengeance is not of Lope's invention, since it has its basis in historical fact and is present in the Rufo version. It must be noted, however, that Rufo merely narrates the vengeance, while Lope has it occur on stage. Furthermore, it has been shown that the thematic focus of the play is different from that of its source. The vengeance presented by Lope is the culminating point of a work which plays with the nature of honor and the problems it imposes. Thus the vengeance should represent the ultimate triumph of the honor code. But while honor does triumph, the process through which the Veinticuatro's honor is regained is a dehumanizing one as the Venticuatro, a self-professed madman, rages through his house eliminating all evidence of his dishonor.

While most of the spectators were likely to have applauded the Veinticuatro's vengeance, part of the audience may well have been induced to reflect upon an obsession with honor which leads to such behavior. And this may have been reinforced by the final scene, in which the King exonerates the Veinticuatro and praises his actions:

Hónrase Córdoba más
que por Séneca y Lucano,
de tener tal ciudadano. (299a)

These words, referred to by Menéndez y Pelayo as an "extraña asociación de nombres,"¹⁰ may be understood from two very different perspectives. On the one hand, the King does describe the vengeance as an exemplary act. On the other hand, however, these words might best be seen as an ironic reference to the extravagance of the vengeance. While Seneca and Lucan were from Córdoba, they were also Stoics, and

Lope may be drawing a cynical contrast here between the Stoics' self-sufficiency and rejection of vengeance and the excessive demand for retribution imposed by a system of values in which honor gained automatically becomes honor jeopardized, and honor lost must be regained with blood.

C. Irony and equivocation

Lope's use of irony and equivocation is evident throughout the honor plays, and it is a technique of major importance in Los Comendadores de Córdoba, where it can be found in both the action itself and the dialogue reflecting upon this action.

The episodes dealing with the ring are a good example. It has already been noted that as the ring passes from hand to hand it undergoes changes in what it is seen to represent. In addition to the fact that this constitutes a re-working of the source, it may also be noted that the ring itself is given an ironic function within the play.

When the Veinticuatro is given the ring, he thanks the King, saying:

Si el anillo antiguamente
era de prisión señal,
esa tendré eternamente;
que de Aguila tan Real
ser presa, es honra excelente. (266a)

By the time he returns home, Beatriz and Jorge have already met, and the Veinticuatro's conjugal honor is threatened. At the

beginning of Act II the Veinticuatro, ignorant of his wife's involvement with Jorge, and finding that he must again leave for the court, presents the ring to Beatriz, thus changing the ring's dramatic function. While in Act I the ring was bestowed to honor the Veinticuatro in recognition of his valor, in Act II it begins to function ironically, as this token of his honor is no longer under his control. In the following sonnet, it is the Veinticuatro himself who puts his honor, through the ring, into play:

Beatriz, entre este dedo y el pequeño,
y grande, luego al corazón aplico,
este diamante, aqueste anillo rico,
más que por sí por el valor del dueño.
En él todo mi crédito os empeño,
y en él todo mi amor os certifico;
para su estimación el mundo es chico;
la plata es precio vil, el oro es sueño.
Yo os doy aquí mi ser, mi honor, mi hacienda:
este es mi fe: con mi leal decoro,
aquí mi hidalga sangre está esculpida.
Guardadle bien, que os doy en esta prenda
valor, crédito, anillo, plata y oro,
lealtad, fe, honor, hacienda sangre y vida. (274b-275a)

The audience's understanding of this sonnet is quite different from the sentiments which the Veinticuatro intends to express. Of particular importance is the notion, contained in the first line of the second quatrain and reiterated in the first tercet, that the Veinticuatro is "pawning" his honor, entrusting it to the care of his wife, who has already indicated she will not be a reliable guardian for such a treasure.

The ring appears for the third time in the middle of this act, when Beatriz presents it to Jorge, who must also leave for Court:

Este anillo, Jorge, os doy
 por prenda de esta partida:
 guardadle como la vida
 si sois mío y vuestra soy. (282a)

and Jorge responds:

Guardaré el anillo en prenda
 de la partida y la fe;
 cuando á otra mano le dé
 éste de alquitrán se prenda. (282b)

At this point the ring, first presented as a fixed token of honor, has now fatefully become a dynamic force that will impel the crucial action of the play. The ironic function of the ring is further developed in Jorge's vow that the ring should turn to tar if he ever gives it away; for as Jorge keeps his promise to Beatriz, it is the ring, once a symbol of the Veinticuatro's honor, which, seen on Jorge's hand by the King, will "tar" the Veinticuatro's reputation.

The final appearance of the ring occurs at the end of the second act, which corresponds to the place in which, in the Rufo version, the entire episode of the ring takes place. Between the King's first recognition of the ring and his conversation with the Veinticuatro, however, Lope inserts a brief dialogue between the Veinticuatro and Jorge. Irony, as well as suspense, is at its height here, as the protagonist is set up for his impending fall:

Veinticuatro	¿Viste á Beatriz?	
Jorge		No;
	que anduve muy ocupado.	
Veinticuatro	Mal lo hicistes.	
Jorge		Fué imposible.
	Y su gran recogimiento	
	impidió mi buen intento.	

Veinticuatro Es, de encogida, terrible.
 Yo aseguro que está ya
 puesta entre cuatro paredes.
 Jorge Pues eso creerlo puedes:
 recogidísima está. (284b)

Here Lope's use of the word "recogidísima," with its two distinct meanings ("retiring" and "gathered up") adds verbal irony to the general dramatic irony of this dialogue.

Finally, the ring-related action reaches its climax: the King accuses the Veinticuatro of not keeping his ring. The accusation is, at first, not a direct one; instead, the King begins by repeating, in an obviously sarcastic tone, the effusive words of gratitude uttered by the Veinticuatro when he received the gift. When the Veinticuatro fails to understand, however, the King tells him that he has just seen the ring on Jorge's hand. Thus the Veinticuatro finally realizes that the ring which had once honored him now points to his dishonor. It is the King who at this point advises the Veinticuatro what he must do:

Si á tu mujer se la diste,
 que tu mujer te la dé. (285a)

In Rufo, it should be noted, no such suggestion is made by the King, and the Veinticuatro is left with full responsibility for deciding upon and planning his own solution to the problem of his conjugal honor.

The second act ends with a soliloquy by the Veinticuatro which revolves around these words spoken by the King, words whose meaning the Veinticuatro feebly seeks to understand: that it is honor rather than the stone that he must reclaim from his wife.

Thus the ring, having returned to its point of origin in the play--the relationship between the Veinticuatro and the King--has functioned as an indicator of the paradox inherent in the Spanish system of honor. At first a symbol of honor bestowed as a reward for valor, the ring is now used to demonstrate objectively that to have earned it and the honor it represents also bestows the danger of losing one and the other. Such a loss is not the simple one of no longer possessing what was once owned but immediately threatens one with a contrary "possession": dishonor.

The way in which the Veinticuatro reclaims his honor is presented in a scene whose very structure is ironic. The vengeance scene is, in the first place, permeated with a certain grotesque sense of humor. It is humor which functions on two levels: on the one hand, it serves to break up the total horror of the vengeance itself; but, on the other, this relief serves to accentuate even further the brutality, and even the "madness" of the Veinticuatro's vengeance. Such humorous notes would seem to suggest Lope's dissatisfaction with (or at least his lack of enthusiasm for) the serious matter of avenging dishonor.

In the second place, the alternation of humorous dialogue with the vengeance proper lends a grotesque sort of movement to the whole scene, which is structured along to distinct lines of action. Along one line, the Veinticuatro and his servant Rodrigo are seen at work killing every living being in sight; the other one offers the audience the spectacle of the servants Esperanza y Galindo making comical and futile efforts to escape by rolling themselves up into mats:

Esperanza	Aquí puedes esconderte.
	¡Animo!
Galindo	De esto no trates.
	¡Santa Bárbara, San Blas!
Esperanza	Métete bien en la estera.
Veinticuatro	Entra, y cuanto hallares, ¡muera!
Galindo	¡Veisme algo por detrás?
Esperanza	Salte, Galindo, acá fuera. (296b)

The vengeance begins, with the words of Esperanza and Galindo providing a comic counterpoint to the incessant bloodshed and also, perhaps, preparing the spectator to see at least some monstrosity in a vengeance which includes as victims characters who have just moved him to laughter.

Galindo	¿Dónde iremos? ¡Ay de mí!
Rodrigo	Aquí está Medrano.
Veinticuatro	¡Dale!
Rodrigo	Jorgillo, el negro, está aquí!
Veinticuatro	Jorge es blanco para mí. (296b-297a)

The Veinticuatro's play on words adds an additional note of humor at the expense of an innocent victim. The vengeance continues, as does the dialogue between Esperanza and Galindo:

Rodrigo	¡Morirán las dueñas?
Veinticuatro	¡Dalas!
Galindo	Todo va arreo, sin duda.
Esperanza	Cerrado han cuadras y salas.
Galindo	¡Quién fuera hormiga ó aluda, porque me nacieran alas!
Esperanza	¡Sabes el Anima Christe?
Galindo	Supuesto que la supiera, se me olvidara.
Esperanza	Resiste este temor.
Galindo	Si pudiera; pero ya es muy tarde, ¡ay, triste!
	¿Quién fué aquel desvergonzado que me hizo amante tierno, siendo un roble mal cortado? ¿Quién me hizo suelo de invierno,

que tan presto me ha esterado?
 ¡No estuviera yo en Argel,
 y no en púlpito de estera!
 Rodrigo Aquí está Celia.
 Veinticuatro ¡Esa, muera!
 Galindo Nadie perdona el cruel.
 Veinticuatro Salgamos, Rodrigo, fuera.
 Rodrigo No queda viva persona. (297a)

The killing of the animals is another element taken from Rufo's work which Lope chooses to treat ironically. While Rufo merely informs the reader that they are killed, along with the Veinticuatro's human victims, Lope has the Veinticuatro give reasons for killing them:

Veinticuatro Basta que maté la mona,
 porque ya me parecía
 que de corrido salía.
 Galindo ¡Que aun la mona no perdona!
 ¿Qué hará de mí, que es lo mismo?
 Veinticuatro ¡No ha vuelto aquesa mujer
 del desmayo ó parasismo?
 Rodrigo Ya se comienza á mover.
 Veinticuatro ¡No hay más fuego en el abismo!
 ¿Quién suena?
 Rodrigo Es el papagayo.
 Veinticuatro Pues ¿éste dejaste vivo?
 ¡Véle á matar como un rayo!
 Rodrigo Llámame perro cautivo.
 Galindo ¿Qué harán del pobre lacayo?
 Veinticuatro ¡Mátale, que á todo estuvo
 presente, y su hablar detuvo;
 y pues lo supo, y confieso
 que no me dijo el suceso,
 señal es que culpa tuvo!
 Rodrigo Ya es muerto.
 Veinticuatro Bien muerto está.
 (297a, b)

There is a good deal of irony present in these explanations. Lope is playing with the idea that since honor depends on others, everyone (including animals) who has witnessed Beatriz's infidelity must be eliminated.¹¹

In a later, comic, play, El cuerdo en su casa, Lope recalls the vengeance scene in Los Comendadores de Córdoba, repeating with particular relish the Veinticuatro's explanation for the killing of the animals:

. . .
que de un cierto Veinticuatro
hay una historia espantosa,
de corónicas en prosa
y versos en el teatro.
Este dicen que mató
las criadas y criados,
o inocentes o culpados,
tanto, que no perdonó
a un papagayo que hablaba,
porque no se lo decía,
y a una mona, porque hacía¹²
señas de hablar, y callaba.

By isolating these lines from the context of a vengeance scene, Lope further emphasizes the ludicrous nature of both the vengeance and the principle on which it is based. In fact, the reference to the Veinticuatro's vengeance in a work so thoroughly comic in tone may well be indicative of Lope's equivocal attitude toward the vengeance in the Comendadores story; that while such vengeance is a frightening fulfillment of the honor code, it is also a "frightfully funny" act.

The vengeance scene in Los Comendadores de Córdoba ends with the bringing together of the two lines of dialogue through the Veinticuatro's discovery of Esperanza and Galindo, and the death of these sympathetic characters is accompanied by a rather brutal play on words on the name Esperanza and a wry final comment from the Veinticuatro:

Galindo	¡San Nicodemos, San Quirce, San Remigio! . . .
Veinticuatro	Escucha acá: ¿quién reza?
Rodrigo	¡Oh, bellaca Circe, Esperanza!
Veinticuatro	No lo es ya.
Rodrigo	Los dos para en uno son. Este es vuestro galardón: ¡muera el infame villano!
Veinticuatro	¡Qué esteras para el verano! (297b)

Thus the entire vengeance scene is presented from two opposing perspectives. While the Veinticuatro functions as a man fulfilling his obligations to honor, Esperanza and Galindo as victims of his vengeance recite lines with comic effect. Since Lope has portrayed these servants as likable, humorous characters, the opposition he has set up between just vengeance and absurd slaughter is further sharpened. If honor must be served at all costs the servants must be destroyed; but if the servants elicit audience sympathy, something must be wrong with an honor vengeance which demands their sacrifice.

The vengeance scene in Los Comendadores de Córdoba, therefore, is a complex scene which Lope has arranged for ambiguous effects. These correspond to the heterogenous nature of Lope's audiences and have, furthermore, left their mark on today's Lope criticism. On one plane, the Veinticuatro may be seen to represent, through his extreme form of vengeance, the typical husband of the Golden Age honor play; and there are, in fact, many critics--most notably, Larson--who view Los Comendadores de Córdoba as the prototype for the drama de honra.¹³ Lope's ironic construction of the vengeance scene, however, suggests the possibility that Lope is not presenting the Veinticuatro's

vengeance as a serious and laudable solution to a problem of conjugal honor. Rather, the implication may well be that a system demanding such vengeance must be questioned, since it forces those living by its rules into just the type of situation presented in Los Comendadores de Córdoba.

In addition to his ironic presentation of portions of the action of Los Comendadores de Córdoba, Lope also includes in the work a number of scenes containing discussions of the Spanish system of honor. The action pauses, and the speaker considers the question of honor: its nature, its demands, and the problems it creates.

Most of these discussions occur in the final act of the play, preceding the vengeance scene. Best known is the scene in which honor is defined, first by Rodrigo, then by the Veinticuatro:

Veinticuatro	¿Sabes qué es honra?
Rodrigo	Sé que es una cosa que no la tiene el hombre. (290b)

Rodrigo describes honor as a negative, thus making the point that the very nature of honor resides in the fact that it is always in jeopardy. This notion is further elaborated by the Veinticuatro:

Bien has dicho:
honra es aquella que consiste en otro;
ningún hombre es honrado por sí mismo,
que del otro recibe la honra un hombre;
ser virtuoso hombre y tener méritos,
no es ser honrado; pero dar las causas
para los que tratan les den honra.
El que quita la gorra cuando pasa
el amigo ó mayor, le da la honra;
el que le da su lado, el que le asienta
en el lugar mayor; de donde es cierto
que la honra está en otro y no en el mismo. (290b-291a)

Thus the Veinticuatro sees honor as a game of appearances in which the individual is continually at the mercy of the opinions of others. The honor system, he says, makes virtuous acts meaningless, requiring only that the honorable individual maintain a good reputation in the eyes of others.

Such a definition of honor would present nothing new to Golden Age audiences, as theatrical honor in Spain was consistently derived from reputation rather than from good deeds. However, through the placement of this and other similar speeches in the scenes preceding a particularly brutal vengeance, Lope may be questioning that system of values so universally accepted in the comedia. Thus a standard definition of honor may be seen as equivocal: while giving the public what it wants to hear Lope, at the same time, points to the glaring paradox of honor: that the greatest good an individual may acquire is, once acquired, at the mercy of others who may despoil him of it.

In another speech, one which immediately precedes the vengeance scene, the Veinticuatro deals with a somewhat different aspect of honor: its effect on the roles men play in society. Describing himself as a new Orlando furioso, he attempts to define his own role within the general scheme of worldly honor:

Hoy, ¿en qué me diferencio
de otro furioso Roldán?
¡Ay, honra, veísme aquí ya
en vuestro teatro puesto,
como todo hombre lo está;
que nacimos para esto,
desde que Dios sér nos da! [sic]
Uno representa el Papa
con su pontificia capa,

otro el Rey con su corona,
 otro su misma persona,
 que su puesto ocupa y tapa;
 otro con él corresponde,
 es Duque, y menos que él,
 éste Marqués, y aquél Conde,
 y otro le sirve y responde,
 porque aquél se sirve de él;
 tal es, y un hombre ciego
 oficial y ciudadano,
 tal pone el pueblo en sosiego,
 con vara ó pluma en la mano,
 y honor representa luego.
 Y mirad lo que le plugo
 al cielo en darme este yugo;
 que entre las figuras todas,
 la honra, autor de mis bodas,
 me vino á dar el verdugo.
 ¡Ea, desnuda la espada,
 no te mueva compasión! (296a)

Donald Larson sees in this speech the culminating point in the Veinticuatro's development of self-knowledge, in his awareness "that he has arrived at one of the critical moments of his existence: depending on how he meets the challenge of the next few minutes, his 'life' will either be triumphantly regained or lost forever."¹⁴ It is possible that this is one function of these lines, but it is not the only idea being expressed here. Why, for example, does the Veinticuatro begin by comparing himself with Orlando? Does he truly see himself as a madman, or perhaps, does he wish to be seen as one?

Alan Trueblood, in his discussion of Lope's presentation of the Orlando theme in Belardo el furioso, believes that there is a good deal of role-playing in Lope's portrayal of madness: "Orlando's spontaneity gives way in the Lopean passage to a sense of make-believe" ¹⁵ It is precisely this idea of make-believe (as the nature of the human condition) which forms the basis for the entire

passage. The Veinticuatro describes himself within the framework of a sort of Gran teatro del mundo in which honor, as the framework which would mark the limits of life within this make-believe world, has given him an unenviable part to play.¹⁶ While others govern and hold titled positions in the "theater of honor," to him has fallen the humiliating role of executioner, a role which, though necessary to save his reputation, will not give him the benefits that the higher nobility enjoys by virtue of their noble birth alone. The Veinticuatro sees himself in a dependent position, obliged to regain through violence what others have never lost: the right to be seen as an honorable man. The mood of make-believe set up by the Veinticuatro's speech dissolves with the lines of Rodrigo which follow:

Entra, que sí entra manchada
de afrenta y mala opinión,
saldrá con sangre lavada. (296a)

Audience attention is brought back to the reality of a society dominated by the honor system, as Rodrigo urges his master to get on with the business at hand. The Veinticuatro's speculations on his own role and the roles of others are meaningless: the only thing that matters is compliance with the dictates of honor. It seems almost as if Lope were subtly taunting his audience for its demand for more and more honor plays and its insensitivity to the problems created by the honor code itself. With Rodrigo's words the audience would be satisfied, knowing that the long-awaited vengeance is about to begin.

Lope's use of sonnets in Los Comendadores de Córdoba constitutes another means of dealing ironically with honor. P. N. Dunn, emphasizing the notion that the dramatic sonnet should be considered not so much as a self-contained poetic work but rather as a vital component of the play, describes the sonnet as "particularly suited to those moments in the theatre when the sources of irony or ambivalence have to be brought sharply to light."¹⁷

An excellent example of Dunn's view can be found in two sonnets directly related to the honor theme in Los Comendadores de Córdoba. In the first, the Veinticuatro speaks of the significance of the ring he gives Beatriz (for the text of this sonnet see p. 62 of this study); the second is a soliloquy sonnet spoken by Rodrigo during the dinner scene in which he ponders the problem and the burden that the concern with honor imposes:

La honra del casado es fortaleza
 donde está por alcaide el enemigo,
 con voz y rostro de fingido amigo
 porque es de la mujer igual flaqueza.
 Suelen decir que por naturaleza
 son fáciles al mal, pero yo digo
 que de nuestra soberbia fué castigo,
 porque está la soberbia en la cabeza.
 ¡Oh dura ley del mundo, que la honra
 no está en la mano, sino en una propia
 del hombre mismo y de sus costumbres!
 ¡Cuán fuerte caso es que la deshonra
 esté en una arca, que es la mujer propia
 de donde mil ladrones traen vislumbres! (292a)

The sonnet, appropriate for the expression of views which could not be shared with others or which might be too intimate for simple dialogue, is used in each instance to present the paradox of the honor system: the fact that what a man earns by his own merits may be lost

by the actions of others--especially those of his wife. In the Veinticuatro's sonnet the honor he has won is entrusted to Beatriz, who becomes guardian of all it represents. Rodrigo's sonnet expresses the corollary of this: that honor, entrusted to women, is thus endangered. While the Veinticuatro describes honor as a positive value, Rodrigo recognizes the peril of honor which is so fragile, and the fact that the arrogance which accompanies the possession of honor can itself contribute to the endangerment of that honor.

Through these two sonnets, Lope sets up the limits within which honor functions, and the problems which are the inevitable result. Honor earned carries with it the danger of honor lost, and what is first seen as a prize soon becomes an oppressive burden. It is the honor system itself which places a man's honor in jeopardy (since honor can be lost through the actions of others) and then demands that the dishonor be avenged--in this work, by means of such an exaggerated vengeance that what should be the triumphant moment of the honor system becomes its fulminating condemnation.

This aspect of the honor system also forms the basis for one of the Veinticuatro's invectives against honor which Lope includes in the final act:

¡Ay, honra, al fin sofística inventora
de tantas ceremonias y locuras!
Acertó quien te puso las coronas
de los Césares altos y sus triunfos,
en el noble laurel, mortal y lírico,
en la rama inmortal, en los trofeos,
en las aras que antiguamente hicieron
los Macabeos, que en el templo santo

de Jerusalén colgar pudiesen;
pero en mujer, ¿por qué? Porque fué justa. (291a)

The Veinticuatro's reference to ceremonias y locuras suggest once again the possibility of role-playing in the vengeance scene. Could not the vengeance itself represent the mad acting-out of a grotesque ceremony through which, according to the rules set up by Spanish society, a man's honor might be restored?

Donald Larson maintains that all of Golden Age theater in Spain was "profoundly ritualistic in nature."¹⁸ He believes that Lope, through his preference for the caso de honra, shows that he " . . . was intuitively aware both of the ritualistic function served by the theater of his time and of the burden which that function placed on the dramatist: the obligation to create for the audience viable 'myths.'"¹⁹ Larson sees Los Comendadores de Córdoba as an excellent example of a play which functions as myth, which he defines as "the story acted out in ritual."²⁰ It would be difficult to deny the ritualistic aspect of the vengeance scene in Los Comendadores de Córdoba, particularly if one considers this vengeance in terms of the acting out of a prescribed role. It is necessary to ascertain, however, just what the dramatic function of this "ritual" might be.

Larson suggests a connection between the ritualistic nature of Golden Age theater and the essential purpose of that theater: "Its interest was . . . in affirming the worth of the traditional truths, and thus it asked the audience not to stand back and contemplate but to come forward and participate."²¹ Thus, according to Larson, an

atmosphere of ritual would be effective in establishing audience "participation" in the action. The spectator, in this sense, would be moved to involve himself vicariously in an honor vengeance, thus reaffirming his commitment to a society which holds honor above all else.

It may well be the case that the honor vengeance represented a ritual that the public demanded to see on the stage. It is also possible, however, that Lope, complying with the demands of his audience, would do so in a highly equivocal fashion. Is the Veinti-cuatro's vengeance really, as Larson believes, a ritual of death and resurrection and, in that sense, one of those profound themes which runs through all of world literature?²² This seems at best only partially true. The vengeance scene, enveloped in suggestions of madness and hints about play-acting, punctuated by humorous dialogue which serves only to spotlight the grotesque image of a reductio ad absurdum in which even innocent servants and household pets must be included in the sacrifice, also appears to be an ironic exaltation of social expediency as much as one of those profound rituals by which man reaffirms his very existence.

Lope, then, is playing ironically with a system based on a polarity between honor gained (though virtue) and honor lost (through honor's reliance on la ajena opinión). On the one hand, he appears to offer an exemplary caso de honra to be applauded by an audience that understood and accepted the fact that honor won by one's own merits could indeed be lost through the actions of others--and that blood

vengeance was the appropriate means of regaining lost honor. On the other hand, however, Lope also offers a subtle criticism of the whole honor system, questioning the logical and moral foundations upon which it was built. What seem like perfectly acceptable actions according to the honor code accompanied by equally acceptable statements regarding the nature of honor are incorporated into the texture of the work in such a way as to render their meaning equivocal, questioning at one stroke both the Spanish system of values and the taste of Golden Age audiences.

D. Characterization

Characterization in the comedia has often been said to adhere to a set of formulas according to which characters are presented as types which perform specific functions within a play.²³ A study of characterization in Los Comendadores de Córdoba would raise the question of whether characters in this work are presented in accordance with the roles they appear to play. This would apply in particular to three characters: the Veinticuatro as the protagonist who must regain the honor he has lost; the King as supreme authority and justiciero; and the black slave Rodrigo as servant. If the roles played by these characters within the context of Los Comendadores de Córdoba are at variance with these generalized descriptions, it will be of interest to examine the dramatic function of each and its contribution to Lope's presentation of the honor theme.

What is particularly striking about Lope's portrayal of his protagonist is that the Veinticuatro is not a strong character. He is, rather, almost obsessively dependent on others, and this dependence often shows him to be a rather pathetic figure. In his first appearance on stage, he asks the King's leave to return home. While the King seems perfectly willing to grant his request, the Veinticuatro is so acutely sensitive to the monarch's wishes that even a simple question from the King is sufficient to change his mind:

Rey En fin, Fernando, ¿te vas?
 Veinticuatro Señor, mi intento revoco;
 ni me voy, ni iré jamás. (265b)

On returning home, the Veinticuatro extolls the virtues of marriage, on which, he says, his happiness is based:

Hasta los perros parece
 que alegra verme en mi casa.
 ¿Qué piensa quien no se casa?
 La libertad envejece.
 ¡Oh, alegre y dichoso estado!
 Si la cabeza me duele,
 tengo al fin quien me consuele,
 que es, mi mujer á mi lado.
 Siento, en efecto, mi mal,
 alégrase de mi bien,
 y, en efecto, tengo quien
 lo sienta con rostro igual.
 Si me ausento, me desea,
 si vengo, me da sus brazos,
 no con fingidos abrazos
 como de otros bien se crea. (272a)

The audience, by this time, knows enough about Beatriz to view this speech as pathetic. The Veinticuatro's joy at being received "no con fingidos abrazos" is particularly ironic, since he is indeed being deceived in this way.

When the Veinticuatro presents the ring to Beatriz his honor (along with all other aspects of his existence) is entrusted to his wife. Thus, by his own hand, the honor won on the battlefield is handed over to the untrustworthy care of Beatriz. The irony here is underscored when, just after giving his wife the ring, the Veinticuatro praises the Comendadores, seeing in them a potential source of even greater honor:

Mozos de grande esperanza:
 á su fianza me obligo.
 En tales manos cayese
 siempre mi honor. (275a, b)

What could be the purpose of Lope's portrayal of his protagonist as a man excessively dependent on others? Donald Larson believes that the Veinticuatro's ignorance, presented early in the play, will develop later on in the work into a heightened awareness of himself and his role in society. The Veinticuatro, he claims, "having been cast into adversity, exerts will and strength together not simply to recover his former position, but actually to climb above it."²⁴ Seen from another perspective, however, the Veinticuatro's dependence on others, the source of his ignorance in the early scenes of the play, may serve to reflect the perils of living in a society in which honor is itself dependent on others. Moreover, the Veinticuatro does not, as Larson seems to suggest, recover his honor without the help of others, but rather relies heavily on both the King and his slave Rodrigo in the resolution of his conjugal honor problem.

Heeding the advice of a servant is not uncommon in Spanish literature, but Rodrigo's role in this work is unusual, particularly within the context of a caso de honra. It is Rodrigo who tells the Veinticuatro what must be done and why:

Rodrigo	Señor, que ahora es tiempo de cobrar el honor que te han quitado.
Veinticuatro	¿Que, en efecto, perdí mi honor, Rodrigo?
Rodrigo	Señor, no le ha perdido quien le cobra: ¿un mentís no se cobra por el duelo, por dar de palos, y éstos con la muerte? Pues también la rompida fe se niega por dar la muerte á los que son culpados. (290b)

This dialogue occurs near the beginning of the third act, and is directly related to the Veinticuatro's musings over the King's words which bring the second act to a close. While it is the King who makes the Veinticuatro aware of his dishonor, the idea of vengeance is not specifically expressed in the second act, either by the King or by the Veinticuatro. The King merely suggests that the Veinticuatro must do something to recover what has been lost. It is Rodrigo, now, who tells the Veinticuatro what he should do, and the vengeance which takes place, with the help of Rodrigo, must be considered at least in part as a consequence of this dialogue.

It could of course be said that Rodrigo is only acting in accordance with the loyalty he owes his master; but this is not entirely correct. Rodrigo is not a disinterested party concerned only with the honor of his master but is, in fact, jealous of Galindo, who has taken from him the affections of Esperanza. Rodrigo's motivations can be seen quite early in the scene in which he tells the

Veinticuatro what has been going on during his absence. After hearing about Beatriz, Ana, and the Comendadores, the Veinticuatro has heard enough. Rodrigo, however, is not finished:

Rodrigo	No basta, que aún hay más.	
Veinticuatro		¿Como?
Rodrigo		Esperanza
	es de Galindo, un mozo de don Jorge;	
	tanto, que si las yeguas estuvieran	
	en casa y no en el campo, presumiera	
	que también las cubrieran los caballos.	
		(291b)

While these lines were no doubt meant to be humorous, they also serve to call into question Rodrigo's avowed concern for the honor of his master.

The King's involvement in the Veinticuatro's conjugal honor problem has been noted in tracing the ring motif, but it has an additional, and considerably broader, significance within the play as a whole. It has been shown that the Veinticuatro is first presented to the audience in a scene in which he is being honored by the King. The ring, symbol of this honor, goes through a number of transformations, passing from hand to hand until it comes full circle back to the King's attention and, through the words of the King, sets the Veinticuatro on the path toward vengeance. In the last scene of the play the action returns, in a wider circle, to the King, who lavishly praises the Veinticuatro's vengeance and rewards him with a new wife.

Since the play ends with the King's approval of a brutal and extravagant vengeance, a number of questions must be considered. Is the King's role to be seen as that of justiciero, and is Lope thus

showing his public that the Veinticuatro's vengeance is truly worthy of such praise? Or, on the contrary, are the references to Seneca and Lucan Lope's hint to the astute spectator that the vengeance, as well as its aftermath, are the absurd consequences of an equally absurd code of honor? If the King is, in fact, being used to point to Lope's unhappiness with the honor code, is there further evidence within the work that the King is a character whose words do not represent Lope's own views?

In addition to his involvement with the personal affairs of the Veinticuatro, Fernando el Católico is also presented in this work as a King involved in his own family affairs. Interspersed throughout the play are a number of scenes in which the King is seen first in the process of arranging the marriage of his daughter Juana (La loca) with the Archduke Philip of Austria (El hermoso), and later planning his own "retirement" from the throne, passing on the crown to his new son-in-law (Lope has condensed historical time in this work so that the matters being discussed by the King, which actually occurred over a period of about ten years--1496-1506--appear within the indeterminate time period of the play's action).

What would be the effect of Lope's inclusion of this historical material in the action of the play, and why would he include two scenes in which the King discusses the succession to the throne? Each of these scenes directly precedes a scene involving the King's participation in the Veinticuatro's affairs. In each, the King is

extravagantly enthusiastic about his son-in-law and the contributions he will make to the glory of Spain and to the Spanish monarchy:

De esta elección, famosos caballeros,
espera un grande bien nuestra corona,
y no menos ventura para España;
y así es razón que su venida muestre
agradecido rostro y alegría. (298a)

One would suspect that excessive praise from this King is more a function of Lope's characterization of the King than it is a reflection of Lope's own views. Just as he favorably compares the Veinticuatro with Seneca and Lucan, the King says of Felipe:

. . . tenga España, y Dios lo quiera,
cual Grecia y Macedonia, otro Filipo,
que dé Filipo en Castilla tales,
que ganen mundos á Alejandro iguales; (283a)

Lope, of course, would not resist an opportunity to include a few words of praise for the current Felipe, but this does not alter the fact that this King is showing a great deal of enthusiasm over the arrival of a son-in-law who is about to relieve him of his throne.

In this context, an examination of the historical record regarding Felipe is most illuminating. In his brief reign as Felipe I he was best known for his unpopularity at the Court (for awarding important cargos to Flemish rather than Spanish noblemen)²⁵ and his marital infidelity: "Era asimismo dado á los juegos, y holgava de fablas y tractar con mugeres; no le parecia cosa mejor que los gentiles gestos de mugeres."²⁶

Moreover, the relationship between Felipe and his father-in-law was one of open hostility, and Fernando's departure for Naples, eagerly anticipated by the King in Los Comendadores de Córdoba was, in fact, a consequence of Felipe's successful efforts to get him out of the way.²⁷

Why would Lope include in his play--and give considerable emphasis to--historical material which shows the King to be in error? Is it possible that Lope was ignorant of the problems which existed between Fernando and Felipe, or that he was simply suppressing these to avoid a negative presentation of such a popular monarch? In either case it would seem unlikely that Lope chose to present his King in a different way from his source, selecting one of the low points of Fernando's career by mere accident.

If, on the other hand, one considers the possibility that Lope had a specific purpose in mind in his portrayal of the King, a new question arises: is it possible that Lope presents his King as capable of making errors in judgment in order to question the validity of his praise of the Veinticuatro at the end of the play and even his discretion in dealing with the Veinticuatro throughout the work? While it is impossible to give a definitive answer to such a question at a distance of more than three centuries, the possibility is, at the very least, intriguing.

In Los Comendadores de Córdoba, then, Lope has set up a trio of characters who may be seen to deviate from their expected roles. The Veinticuatro, though a good soldier, is a weak husband in matters of

honor, unable to recognize and avenge an honor problem without the intervention of others. Rodrigo appears to be a loyal servant, but his motives are not entirely trustworthy, since he too considers himself to have been offended, and the Veinticuatro's vengeance will bring him personal satisfaction. The King, appearing to fulfill his role as a source of wisdom and justice, is shown to make errors regarding his own family problems, and his ultimate approval of the Veinticuatro's vengeance may thus be considered questionable.

It is doubtful, of course, that the majority of spectators were capable of having second thoughts of the kind suggested here. It does seem, however, that Lope's characterization does point to a dissatisfaction with the Spanish system of honor. When viewed in conjunction with other unconventional aspects of the work, Lope's presentation of character can be seen as yet another technique with which he challenges his audience and its values.

E. Honor as a function of blood purity

Why would one deal with the question of limpieza de sangre in a discussion of plays dealing with conjugal honor? It has been noted earlier that honor in the comedia has two major attributes: first, its overwhelming importance to a man's existence in Spanish society; and second, its extreme fragility--to the extent that there is no drama in honor until one is in danger of losing it. The conjugal relationship becomes a convenient way of putting a protagonist's honor into play, offering a specific type of situation in which honor may be

jeopardized and thus making possible a dramatic treatment of the resulting conflict. The fact that the conjugal relationship is such a frequent means of dramatizing honor may suggest the possibility that the question of "racial" honor, which did not figure as a major theme in the comedia, may have been sublimated into a question of conjugal honor and thus become acceptable for stage production. There was certainly a connection between marriage and the problem of limpieza de sangre, since through an injudicious marriage the pure might become impure.

While the notion that dramas of conjugal honor might reflect the Spanish preoccupation with blood purity would be impossible to prove (or disprove), it is worthy of note that a number of Lope's conjugal honor plays do contain references to limpieza de sangre. In Los Comendadores de Córdoba, the more general theme of honor depending on birth runs through the play as a kind of leitmotif. The Comendadores are honored for their lineage as well as for their good deeds:

. . .
por buena sangre, las cruces,
por obra, las encomiendas. (261b)

The Veinticuatro is placed somewhat lower on the social scale, referring to himself as a "tosco aldeano"²⁸ who must achieve honor through his deeds alone. Farther down the scale is Galindo who, though only a lacayo, feels superior to a black servant--who in turn would look down on him as a Jew. In the following lines, Galindo describes the altercation:

Y entonces la rienda arrojó,
y acercándose, desató
la lengua con este enojo:
"Si está preñado el mulato,
llegue, cumplirle he su antojo."

"Los negros, dijo, no son
judíos, y es argumento
que aprueba bien la cuestión,
que hubo en el Nacimiento
negros, y no en la Pasión."

Yo entonces, con algún brío,
le dije: "Perro, no ladre;
que bien puede ser judío
por la parte de su madre,
y basta ser gusto mío; (263b)

Even on the lowest rung of the social ladder one may observe a certain preoccupation with racial honor when Rodrigo, during the vengeance scene, seems glad that the parrot too will be killed, since it has "insulted" him ("Llámame perro cautivo").

The possibility of another reference to limpieza de sangre appears in one of the Veinticuatro's invectives in the third act:

"Cuál fue el villano que la honra santa,
que es de los hombres el mayor tesoro,
que debiera engastarse entre diamantes,
la puso en vasos de sutiles vidrios,
que con qualquiera golpe que dan, quiebran?
La honra se derrama como el agua.
¿Que dije bien del casamiento? (291b)

The honor which the Veinticuatro had once thought could, quite literally, be symbolized by a diamond (the ring), turns out to be a most fragile possession which cannot be maintained through one's own actions. The idea that this perversion of la honra santa must have been the work of some villano is also interesting, particularly within the context of the theme of blood purity: if, as Américo Castro has suggested, the

peasant possessed the highest degree of racial honor because he was thought to be free of any possible contamination by impure blood²⁹, then the difficulty faced by any non-villano of feeling secure in his own honor would be most understandable. Honor of this sort would be exceedingly fragile, since the merest suggestion of tainted lineage would be sufficient to destroy completely a man's reputation, and thus his honor. It is impossible to say whether Lope was consciously expressing this idea through the words of the Veinticuatro, but it might be noted that the Veinticuatro, in his next speech, undergoes a curious change of attitude. After being reminded by Rodrigo that there is nothing inherently wrong with marriage, he is quick to retract his criticism of a sacrament of the Church:

Dios lo inventó, la Iglesia lo recibe
por Sacramento; adórole y estímole:
pecados míos son; Dios me castigue. (291b)

It seems possible that Lope may be injecting another wry bit of humor here. Not only does the Veinticuatro uphold the value of marriage as a sacrament, but he also feels it necessary to remove any question of his total devotion to all of the tenets of the Catholic faith, inviting divine retribution for any inappropriate thoughts he might have expressed. It may be that Lope is humorously suggesting that his Veinticuatro has enough problems with honor as it is, and does not want to incur any additional problems by bringing his orthodoxy under suspicion.

Thus in Los Comendadores de Córdoba, as in Golden Age society, there seems to be an awareness of the blood purity problem--and its relation to honor--which underlies men's actions. While it is not brought to the foreground of themes dealt with in the play, the concern is nonetheless present, and its importance is recognized. Since the question of limpieza de sangre is involved in matters of personal (and family) honor, and since the validity of the honor system as a whole may well have been challenged in this work, some of the humorous treatment of limpieza de sangre (Galindo's narrative and even, perhaps, the Veinticuatro's rapid reversal on the matter of marriage) may be understood as pointing to Lope's own unhappiness with blood purity as a criterion for honor.

Thus in Los Comendadores de Córdoba Lope uses a number of techniques to question the Spanish honor code. Through changes in and additions to the source, through the strangely unsatisfactory desenlace, through irony, the complex presentation of character and references to blood purity, he embellishes a traditional tale of conjugal honor with discordant notes which would tend to undermine the supposedly exemplary nature of the action itself. This is all done very subtly, so as not to arouse the suspicions of those members of the audience who would applaud the Veinticuatro's vengeance.

The fact that such techniques were used to undermine the honor theme in one of Lope's most "conventional" honor plays suggests the

need to examine his other honor plays to ascertain whether there is any consistency in his dramatic presentation of the conjugal honor theme.

Notes to Chapter II

¹Diego Marín, La intriga secundaria en el teatro de Lope de Vega (México: Ediciones de Andrea, 1958), p. 105.

²See Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, Estudios sobre el teatro de Lope de Vega, vol. V (Santander: Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 1945), pp. 249-268, for a discussion of Lope's historical and literary sources.

³For the text of this romance see the edition of Alberto Blecuá (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos, 1972), pp. 245-280. The Blecuá edition also contains what the editor calls the texto primitivo (pp. 352-378), which was published in the Flores del Parnaso, also in 1596, but which does not contain some of the details included in the Apotegmas version which Lope did find useful in his play. References to additional literary source material are made in Larson's The Honor Plays of Lope de Vega, (pp. 39-41) as well as in his article "Los Comendadores de Córdoba: An Early Honor Play," in Homenaje a William L. Fichter (Madrid: Castalia, 1971), pp. 401-402, and, in the same Homenaje, Margit Frenk Alatorre's "Un desconocido cantar de los Comendadores, fuente de Lope," pp. 211-222. For the polemic regarding the date of Los Comendadores de Córdoba see María Goyri de Menéndez Pidal, "La Celia de Lope de Vega," Nueva revista de filología hispánica, IV (1950), 347-390, and S. G. Morley and C. Bruerton, "Lope de Vega, Celia y Los comendadores de Córdoba," Nueva revista de filología hispánica, VI (1952), 57-68.

⁴L. 84. All quotes from the Blecuá edition.

⁵Larson, Honor Plays, p. 58.

⁶" . . . ninguna nacion ay que mas se jacte de ser nobles, ni mas se precie de ser hñrados, que los Españoles" Bernabé Moreno de Vargas Discursos de la nobleza de España (1621). Quoted in Albert A. Sicroff, Les controverses des statuts de "pureté de sang" en Espagne du XVe au XVIIe siècle (Paris: Didier, 1960), p. 291.

⁷See p. 291a, b. The texts of these will be dealt with later on in the chapter.

⁸We believe that such is the case. See Lope's comments regarding honor in La prudente venganza, Chapter I, pp. 35-36 of this study.

⁹A. David Kossoff, in his edition of El perro del hortelano and El castigo sin venganza (Madrid: Castalia, 1970), seems to see the invective more in the light of its dramatic function: "No sé si refleja ésta las ideas de Lope en la materia, pero en todo caso las maldiciones ocurren en . . . momentos de máxima tensión dramática, el punto en que el protagonista tiene que decidirse entre el honor y la atracción de poderosos sentimientos" (p. 358n) Van Beysterveldt, on the other hand, believes that the use of these invectives by a number of Golden Age dramatists shows a basic feeling of dissatisfaction with the social norms of the day. See Van Beysterveldt, pp. 152, 217.

¹⁰Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. V, p. 283.

¹¹A similarly ironic point is made by Mateo Alemán in Guzmán de Alfarache. In the Dorotea-Bonifacio story, Bonifacio's honor is threatened by the fact that a great number of people know of Dorotea's infidelity. Here, however, it is not the husband but the author himself who conveniently eliminates all witnesses so that Bonifacio never even becomes aware of his loss of honor. (Part II, Book II, Chapter IX.)

¹²Ac. N. XI, p. 581b.

¹³See Larson, Honor Plays, p. 39.

¹⁴Larson, "Los Comendadores de Córdoba," p. 410.

¹⁵Trueblood, Experience and Artistic Expression, p. 134.

¹⁶Our interpretation of this passage differs considerably from that of Larson, who feels that the Veinticuatro is saying that every man, at some time in his life, is called upon to insure the security of his honor. See "Los Comendadores de Córdoba," pp. 410-411.

¹⁷"Some Uses of Sonnets in the Plays of Lope de Vega," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXXIV (1957), 221

¹⁸Larson, Honor Plays, p. 59

¹⁹Larson, Honor Plays, p. 61.

²⁰Larson, Honor Plays, p. 61

²¹Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 60-61

²²See Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 62-64 for this "structural" view of the honor plays.

²³See p. 2 of this study.

²⁴Larson, Honor Plays, p. 42.

²⁵See William Prescott, History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella the Catholic, new and revised ed., ed. John Foster Kirk (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1892), p. 547 and Jose Luis Comellas, Historia de España moderna y contemporánea (1474-1965), 3rd. ed. (Madrid: Rialp, 1972), p. 72.

²⁶From the anonymous continuation of Hernando del Pulgar's Crónica de los señores Reyes Católicos Don Fernando y Doña Isabel de Castilla y de Aragón . . ., Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 70 (1923), p. 524b. See also Prescott, pp. 466, 511.

²⁷Crónica, p. 524a: " . . . pareció comunmente ser visto á todos que la fina reverencia por el Don Phelipe acerca de su padre como convenia no serle guardada. En este tiempo el Rey Don Fernando, mas forzado de voluntad que con ella, salió destos Reinos de Castilla, y se partió para sus reinos de Aragón y dende alli con grande armada pasó al Reino de Nápoles. See also Prescott, pp. 534-539, regarding Philip's manipulation of Fernando, which resulted in Fernando's unwillingly giving up all rights to the crown and his subsequent departure for Naples.

²⁸265b. It might also be recalled that, in the soliloquy preceding the vengeance scene, he places himself on a level below the titled nobility. See pp. 71-72 of this study.

²⁹See, for example, De la edad conflictiva, pp. 212ff.

Chapter III

Lope's re-elaboration of source material

It has been shown in the previous chapter that Lope, making a very limited number of changes in the action presented in the source for his play, has created a work which differs considerably from that source in tone and thematic content. Lope may also make more substantial changes, even adding a considerable amount of new material to a well-known story, as he does in La desdichada Estefanía¹, with more far-reaching consequences.

The principle details of this story may be drawn from the prose version of Prudencio de Sandoval (1600):

Una camarera de doña Estefanía tratava mal con un su aficionado y iba cubierta siempre con el pellote . . . de su señora dos escuderos . . . entendieron verdaderamente que su señora doña Estefanía era la que hazia este maleficio Creyólo fácilmente Ruy Fernández Ciego Ruy Fernández con la passion de tal caso arremetió para ellos con un puñal en las manos Embarazado en esto, tuvo la camarera de huir, que los escuderos, entendiendo que era su señora, no la echaron mano . . . y metióse debaxo de la cama donde llegó Ruy Fernández con el puñal sangriento, y sin reparar en cosa, dió de puñaladas á la pobre señora, y la mató sintió debaxo de la cama á la alevosa causadora de tanto mal. Ella confesó luego su culpa y la inocencia de su señora.²

According to this version, Ruy Fernández then has the maid burned alive and appears before the Emperor, his father-in-law, to confess what he has done. The Emperor has the case judged by "hombres sabios," and

Ruy Fernández is exonerated because he had not acted out of conscious disloyalty in killing the Emperor's daughter.

La desdichada Estefanía contains all of the elements of the action of the Sandoval narrative, but there are two major differences. No judgement is reached at the end of the play (the audience is told that it will have to wait for a sequel); and, of far greater importance to the general structure of the play, the guilty man is Fernán's rival, who never discovers that the woman with whom he is involved is not Estefanía but her servant.

The Lope play, moreover, contains a good deal more action than the original story of Estefanía. Most of the source story, in fact, is relegated to the third act. In the first two acts some allusions to it are made, but the action in general turns upon other matters. The couple is not even married until the end of the second act. The first reference made to the source occurs close to six hundred lines into the first act when Ysabel, the servant, who has not yet uttered a word, declares herself (in a soliloquy) to be in love with Fortún;³ but this line of action is quickly withdrawn with the entrance of Mudarra, Fernán's lacayo, and the playing out of the traditional comic love scene between servants. No more is heard regarding Ysabel's interest in Fortún until well into the second act, more than five hundred lines later, when Ysabel, hearing that a marriage has been arranged between Fortún and Estefanía, is thankful for the opportunity to be close to Fortún.⁴

After another gap of about four hundred lines, knowing now that Estefanía will marry Fernán and not Fortún, Ysabel cries out:

¡Ay de mí !
 perdióse el remedio mío
 a vista de mi esperanza:
 ya no es Fortún su marido,
 mas yo haré tales enredos
 que goze el bien que ymagino. (1528-1533)

These lines, spoken shortly after reaching the middle of the play, give a new twist to the story the audience has been waiting for: Estefanía's death will not simply be the result of a case of mistaken identity, but rather will it be an indirect consequence of willful enredos on the part of another character. Thus, in the second act, Ysabel sets her plan in motion by telling Fortún that Estefanía has changed her mind and that, while she must marry Fernán, she will carry on an affair with Fortún.⁵ The audience knows what she really plans to do, and is ready for the action of the source story to begin; but Lope again holds off, and the expected consequences do not start occurring until the third act.

Lope's technique of hinting at a well-known story and then withdrawing in favor of other action produces a dramatic tension which the use of the anticipated story alone could never achieve. Audience interest is heightened, and an ever-increasing mood of suspense takes hold of the spectator, who knows what is going to happen, but is kept guessing as to when, how and why.

Lope has thus used his source to set up a recognizable framework which guides the flow of the action. This framework, however, is by no

means the play itself: the play is rather the outcome of a dramatic interaction between this framework and other material. The latter, in turn, is no mere filler, since it governs the greater part of the first two acts and some portion of the third. It is necessary, therefore, to examine the nature and function of some of Lope's additions to the action.

Aside from the story of the tragic death of Estefanía, Lope's play presents 1) an affair of honor between two gentlemen, 2) some additional historical material and 3) a love interest (of a more or less comic nature) between Ysabel and Mudarra. Of these, the rivalry between Fernán and Fortún comprises the major secondary interest in the play.

This rivalry is introduced almost immediately, and occupies the larger portion of the first two acts. It is clearly a matter of honor which is being presented: Fernán accuses Fortún of being disloyal to the Emperor by serving the King of France and by passing on to that King false rumors regarding the illegitimacy of the Emperor's daughter, Costanza. Fortún responds with a mentís, and a duel is arranged to take place at Fez. All of this occurs before any relationship between the rivals and Estefanía is suggested. As a result, when the love interest pertinent to the source story is finally introduced, it falls into place as part of the original rivalry, taking on a secondary importance in the development of the first two acts.

The presentation of this new honor conflict appears to repeat what has been observed regarding the structure of Los Comendadores de Córdoba, where Lope transforms a "simple" caso de honra into a much more complex examination of the honor problem through the incorporation

into the play of a multiplicity of preoccupations with honor. In La desdichada Estefanía, Lope has taken another well-known caso and, to a great extent, has made it subordinate to a different kind of honor conflict.

The dramatic structure of La desdichada Estefanía, moreover, develops as a cause-and-effect Continuum, a chain reaction set into motion by the original argument.⁶ The prospect of the duel gives Estefanía the opportunity to hold off any promise of marriage with Fortún: only, she says, if he clears his honor will she consent to marry him. Once at Fez, Fernán's challenge goes unanswered because he has inadvertently--by sounding a drum to announce his arrival--given a signal which precipitates the start of a revolution. This, in turn, prevents Fortún from entering the city, leaving him free to return unscathed to claim the hand of Estefanía. That Fernán himself is aware that his challenge has brought about his rival's success is evident from his reaction:

¡O, nunca tuuiera onor!
 ¡O, nunca noble naçiera,
 para que este desafío
 ocasionara mi ausençia! (1366-1369)

Even the conjugal honor conflict, the culminating point of the source story, is derived from the original rivalry: the successful revolution unwittingly begun by Fernán leads to a Moorish invasion and Fernán, always sensitive to the demands of honor, feels obliged to leave his new wife and accompany the Emperor into battle. That Fortun's actions are also a consequence of his conflict with Fernán may be seen in the following dialogue between Fortún and Olfos, his servant:

Olfo Di, Señor, ¿no me dezías
 que solamente querías
 la ynfamia desta muger,
 y luego pasarte a Françia
 a publicar la deshorrta
 de Rui de Castro?

Fortún En su onrra
 hize vn lanze de ymportancia,
 y con él ymaginé
 que me vengaua; . . . (2444-2452)

By his use of additional material, then, Lope has created a new focal point of action: the spectator is drawn away from what he knows to be the basic story and becomes involved in what seems to be a secondary conflict. This new conflict is one with which any Golden Age audience would be familiar: it is, in effect, a new caso de honra. Thus Lope provides his audience with two honor conflicts, one of which precipitates the other: If Fernán had never insulted Fortún's honor as a gentleman, the conjugal honor situation as it exists within the context of this play could not have been developed.⁷

Through his re-structuring of the source story Lope has given that story new depth. While the original tale narrates a tragic case of mistaken identity, Lope has carefully built his version around the consequences of a total preoccupation with honor. Estefanía will die because Fernán has trusted too much in appearances and also because both Fernán and Fortún can relate to events only as they reflect an honor-related situation. It is, in effect, the excessive concern for honor which brings about the tragedy in Lope's play. This is underscored by the ambiguity with which Lope ends the work. Fernán is neither condemned nor exonerated, but left to suffer, as Kennedy has observed, " . . . in that suspended position between crime and punishment, a Limbo from which he is not removed in this play."⁸

Thus Lope has transformed an anticipated chain of events--a familiar story--into a new mode of action which contains a multiplicity of possible meanings. The spectator, if he so chooses, can follow the lines of the anticipated action to its equally anticipated conclusion; or he can, following Lope's contributions to the story, gain new insights into the values which underlie the conflict. La desdichada Estefanía is, on the first plane, a dramatic presentation of a tragic error; but it is also, on the second, a play about men to whom honor is life itself, a story about what happens when honor is seen as the only motivation for one's existence and thus becomes a potentially destructive force which can lead men to irreversible and unjust deeds.

The action of another play with a tragic ending--El castigo sin venganza--is based on a story by Bandello,⁹ but here the ending of Lope's version is radically different from that of its source. In the Bandello tale the husband (The Marquis Miccolò of Ferrara), upon learning that his son has been having an affair with Niccolò's young wife, has the couple arrested, executes them after allowing them three days for confession and atonement, and has their bodies displayed publicly at the palace.¹⁰ In El castigo sin venganza Lope has the punishment conform to the secrecy dictated by the honor code: the Duke of Ferrara has his wife bound, gagged, and covered; he then orders his son to kill the "traitor" hidden beneath the cover; finally, he has his men kill his son for having murdered his wife.

In order to prepare the audience for this new desenlace, Lope re-builds the action of his source around a world in which honor plays a major role. This world, as Larson has noted, " . . . is one in which deceit is universal, in which mere appearance cannot easily be distinguished from reality, and in which even the simply apparent is obscured by a seemingly omnipresent darkness. Such a world will inevitably produce its own states of mind and its own modes of behavior."¹¹

The play as a whole is framed by the theme of appearances, as it begins with one illusion and ends with another. The opening words, "¡Linda burla!,"¹² spoken by the Duke, refer to the fact that he has disguised himself in order to seek out women on the eve of his marriage to Casandra. The Duke is thus established, from the very first scene, as one who plays with appearances.¹³ And in effect, throughout the work the Duke strives to maintain the fiction that he has resolved to behave honorably. Like the relatively minor illusion created by the Duke's disguise in the first scene, his marriage itself is designed to satisfy appearances; and it is, furthermore, the Duke's preoccupation with only the external consequences of his actions which enables the relationship between Federico and Casandra to develop.

When, in the third act, the Duke finally learns of his dishonor, he makes it clear that his greatest concern is for his reputation:

No es menester más testigo;
 confesaron de una vez;
 prevenid, pues sois juez,
 honra, sentencia y castigo,
 pero de tal suerte sea
 que no se infame mi nombre;
 que en público siempre a un hombre
 queda alguna cosa fea.

Y no es bien que hombre nacido
 sepa que yo estoy sin honra,
 siendo enterrar la deshonra
 como no haberla tenido;
 que aunque parece defensa
 de la honra el desagravio,
 no deja de ser agravio
 cuando se sabe la ofensa. (2744-2759)

In these lines the Duke is actually providing the audience with a résumé of the honor code's rules regarding vengeance. He knows that he has been dishonored; yet it is not his own awareness of the facts which produces the real dishonor but the possibility that this knowledge might be shared by others. The only solution, therefore, would be to make it appear that the actions which would dishonor him had never been committed, and the castigo he chooses is designed to achieve this objective. In deceiving public opinion, the Duke also deceives his victims, and his vengeance may thus be seen as the ultimate fiction perpetrated by a character for whom deceit has become a way of life.

Lope, then, has completely redirected the action of his source; the nature of the Duke's revenge is altered in order to make it comply with the honor code's demand for secrecy; but Lope also sets up this compliance with honor as a function of the Duke's own talent for deception, and this would tend to undermine the validity of the vengeance itself.

In Lope's dramatization of the stories of Estefanía and the Duke of Ferrara, the new emphasis placed on the way honor functions serves both to re-focus the thematic content of source material and to heighten the tragedy of an honor vengeance. In a number of other

plays, he uses similar methods to heighten the comic nature of a conjugal honor conflict. One such work is El castigo del discreto. The general lines of the caso de honra here are derived from another Bandello story, which narrates the humorous "revenge" taken by a Venetian husband to cure his wife of a desire to have an affair with another man.¹⁴ The Bandello version deals only with this potential threat to conjugal tranquillity. Lope, in converting this already comic tale into a dramatic presentation, adds a considerable amount of new material to the simple action provided by Bandello.

Lope's method of expanding the original story is essentially the same as that observed in the more serious plays: the combination of source-related action with new action which introduces additional perspectives from which the problem of honor can be viewed. The conjugal honor conflict taken from Bandello does not even materialize until the end of the first act and, by the time it does appear, the question of honor has already come to the fore in a number of different situations.

The play opens with a view of marital infidelity in the husband rather than the wife, as in the first scene Ricardo attempts to gain the affections of the beautiful and unmarried Ypólita. This is the first of a long series of "triangles" upon which Lope will build the action of this work; the sheer number of these contributes to the comic attack Lope will make in this conjugal honor play:

1. Ricardo-Ypólita-Casandra: the husband who ignores his wife and pursues an unmarried woman.

2. Casandra-Ricardo-Felisardo: the unfaithful wife: the original love and honor conflict as it appears in the Bandello story.

3. Ricardo - Ypólita-Leonelo: Leonelo considers his pursuit of Ypólita a matter of honor, and thus sees his honor at stake in Ricardo's courtship of Ypólita.

4. Felisardo-Ypólita-Leonelo: The same threat is posed for Leonelo by Felisardo, his new rival.

5. Felisardo-Ypólita-Alberto; Leonelo-Ypólita-Alberto: questions of family honor: it is up to Alberto to ensure that his sister is honorably courted and married (while these are not love triangles, the love-honor involvement of three characters warrants their inclusion here).

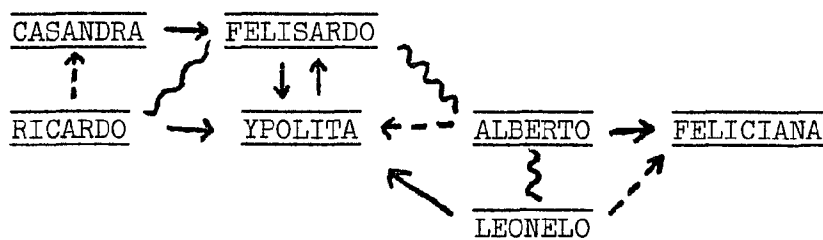
6. Alberto-Felíciana-Leonelo: a reversal of the above in which Leonelo is responsible for the honor of his sister, a widow, with whom Alberto is in love. This is a real conflict in the play, even though Felíciana never appears on stage.

7. Teodora-Pinauel-Roberto: the relationship among the servants of the principle characters which parallels the conjugal honor conflict.

8. Casandra-Felisardo-Ypólita; Teodora-Roberto-Inés: fictitious triangles used as the ostensible excuse for Ricardo's castigo.

9. Leonelo-Felíciana-Felisardo: another matter of family honor, existing only in the suspicions of Leonelo.

If all of this seems rather confusing, it is a tribute to Lope's dramatic skill that these intricacies of action and the confusion generated by them become a source of great humor rather than an obstacle to audience comprehension. Of even greater interest, moreover, is the fact that the combination of these "triangles" produces a dramatic world in which the characters are linked together by alternating preoccupations with love and honor which might be diagrammed as follows:



Love: _____

Honor: - - - - -

Code of honor among gentlemen: ~~~~~

Thus, if one considers the male characters in the play (with the exception of Felisardo and the servants) it will be seen that each is in love with one woman and may have his honor jeopardized by another.

A number of important consequences result from this type of structure. In the first place, there is a shift in the focus of the action provided by the Bandello story, as Ricardo's solution to his conjugal honor problem falls into place as just one component of a series of conflicts which culminates with the marriage of Felisardo and Ypólita. Ricardo's means of "avenging" his potential dishonor is highly unorthodox: pretending to be Felisardo, he makes an

appointment with his own wife and, still as Felisardo, punishes her with a sound beating. It is quite possible that Lope intentionally displaced such a resolution from the foreground of the action in order to minimize any hostile reaction from the audience.¹⁵

Lope's restructuring of Bandello's story also produces a parallel shift in the thematic content of the work. What is being presented here is no longer simply a "nuovo modo di castigar" but, through the incorporation of additional lines of action, the much broader question of how men deal with problems of honor. It has been noted that Ricardo, Alberto and Leonelo are all placed in the situation of being in love with one woman while their honor is bound up in the behavior of a different woman. This in itself might not be particularly unusual, were it not for the fact that an obsessive preoccupation with honor in these three characters is largely responsible for the chain of enredos around which the action is constructed. In each case, moreover, the preoccupation with honor is accompanied by some form of dishonorable behavior which further complicates the issues at hand.

Ricardo is extremely sensitive to any threat to his reputation, but his pursuit of Ypólita endangers the reputations of both Alberto and Leonelo and leads to his friendship with Felisardo; and the extravagant way in which he honors Felisardo for having saved his life is the direct cause of Casandra's interest in Felisardo.¹⁶

Alberto is obsessively preoccupied with the possibility of being dishonored through some indiscretion of Ypólita. This obsession becomes more and more ridiculous as the audience realizes that Ypólita

herself is perfectly willing--and able--to look after her own honor. At the same time, however, Alberto recommends that his sister marry Leonelo (whom he knows to be guilty of making false accusations against Felisardo) because he himself is in love with Feliciana, Leonelo's sister.

Leonelo, finally, is motivated throughout the work by his need to maintain an honorable reputation; but he wilfully damages the reputation of others--falsely accusing Felisardo of having killed one of his (Leonelo's) servants--in order to preserve his good name and gain the hand of Ypólita.

The caricatured concern for honor on the part of these three characters sets the stage for the final scenes of the play, in which the wholly innocent Felisardo is accused 1) by Casandra of betraying and beating her; 2) by Alberto of kidnapping Ypólita; and 3) by Leonelo of dishonoring Feliciana. And this leads to the ultimate consequence of Lope's additions to the Bandello story: an absurdly comic final scene in which all of the errors produced by so much concern with honor threaten disastrous consequences for Felisardo, the only truly innocent character in the play. In a serious honor play like La desdichada Estefanía, such a combination of errors resulting from the preoccupation with honor can have devastating consequences. In this comic play, however, the chain of error is broken before any damage can be done, and the way in which this occurs in El castigo del discreto is perhaps one of the most unusual aspects of the play. The happy ending here is achieved when one character--Ricardo--realizes that he himself must bear much of the responsibility for his endangered honor:

¡Cielos! ¿Qué lo estoy dudando?
 ¡Muerto soy! ¡La culpa fuý!
 Perdí mi honor, esto es hecho.
 Daréle mil puñaladas.
 Mejor fueran empleadas,
 pues fuý la causa, en mi pecho.
 Su yelo pude encender;
 segura Casandra estaua.¹⁷

The "discreet" punishment Casandra will receive is largely a consequence of Ricardo's recognition of his own guilt in the matter. Ricardo, of course, also realizes that he cannot commit a real honor vengeance on the strength of guilty intentions alone. Most husbands of the Golden Age theater, however, would be content to remain in the background until a real case of adultery develops, thus enabling them to proceed with a "justifiable" vengeance; but Ricardo, most atypical in this regard, effectively maintains his reputation by accepting the responsibility for his actions early in the play without having to resort to a brutal honor vengeance.

Further evidence of Ricardo's atypical discretion is his willingness to abandon his pursuit of Ypólita, and his offer to help Felisardo gain her hand in marriage. It is this resolve to behave honorably which will permit Ricardo, at the end of the play, to disentangle all of the enredos and restore the apparently threatened honor of all the other characters.

Lope, by rearranging the details of the original story in this way, has thus presented the problem of honor from a totally new perspective. A sharp distinction is made between the traditional view of honor as reputation and honorable virtue--which includes accepting the consequences of one's own actions. Bandello's husband is not responsible for his wife's inclination to infidelity; Lope's is, and

Ricardo's efforts to conquer appearances and set things straight in the final scene are at least as important as the way in which he chooses to punish Casandra. While the passion for reputation causes all of the problems, it is the rational decision to make reputation depend upon virtuous behavior which produces the happy ending with which the play concludes.

Thus Lope, once again, has restructured the source for a comedia in a manner that would suggest a remedy for the traditional obsession with honor. The customary preoccupation with honor as reputation is presented comically in an enredo which is disentangled when the protagonist recognizes his error and learns that "discretion is the better part of valor." This comic attack on the honor system resembles the more serious challenges observed in other works: in each case Lope brings honor to the foreground of the play's action and shows that it is the honor system itself which tends to produce serious--and potentially dangerous--errors in judgment.

Lope's technique of underscoring the honor theme in a source-related play is perhaps most vividly exemplified by El halcón de Federico. The source is a story from Boccaccio's Decameron¹⁸ which tells of a man who squanders his wealth courting a woman who does not love him until all that remains to him is a falcon. When she comes to visit him, he can only serve the falcon for dinner, and when she learns of this she decides to marry him after all. Lope's version contains all of the action narrated by Boccaccio, but there is one notable difference: there is no conjugal honor conflict in the

Boccaccio tale. The honor problem introduced by Lope involves the husband, Camilo, believing that his wife Celia is having an affair with Federico, the protagonist. Although his suspicions are unfounded, Camilo's belief that he has been dishonored drives him mad, and he eventually dies. His death makes it possible, years later, for Federico and Celia to marry.

In this work, then, Lope seems to be heeding his own advice in the Arte nuevo, adding a caso de honra to a familiar story in order to "move" more people. At the same time, however, Camilo is not presented as a sympathetic character, and it is his excessive fear of being dishonored which leads him to assume wrongly that his wife has been unfaithful.

Sometimes one may encounter in Lope's reworking of source material a change in a single element so basic to the source that it completely subverts the theme of conjugal honor within the context of the play. In two comedias, for example--El valeroso catalán and El más galán portugués, Lope rebuilds the original caso de honra in such a way that the wife is accused of adultery with a character whom the audience knows to be a woman in disguise. This type of change immediately lends to the action a humorous tone which the original version did not contain. Moreover, it also introduces a note of absurdity to the proceedings, since the audience knows what most of the major characters do not know: that a conjugal honor conflict could not possibly exist under the circumstances. This knowledge on the part of the audience transforms what in other plays might be seen as a

reasonable preoccupation with honor into a charade played out for pure entertainment. Furthermore, since honor is never really endangered, the spectator's attention may be directed toward the working of a system of values which relies heavily on appearances.

In El valeroso catalan the source material is once more largely relegated to the action of the third act.¹⁹ In the first two acts, Lope constructs his own version of the events leading up to the source-derived tale of the Count of Barcelona's defense of the Queen of Bohemia, who has been accused of carrying on an illicit relationship with a young gentleman of the court. In the original version D. Remón (the Count) does not know Isabela (the Queen), and defends her honor as a matter of principle. In the Lope version, Remón is in love with Isabela, and defends her even though she has rejected him and he is not entirely convinced of her innocence.

The major changes in this work are brought about through the creation of a new character, Clavela, whose presence re-channels the action as she undergoes a number of transformations during the course of the play.

At the beginning of the work Clavela is rejected by Remón, who is in love with Isabela. Later on, disguised as a man and calling herself don Juan, she tells Isabela that Remón is dead so that Isabela will agree to marry the King of Bohemia (instead of waiting for Remón). The new identity which Clavela takes on will lead to an apparent caso de honra as Isabela decides to take "don Juan" into her service as cup-bearer and her attentions to this young "nobleman" are misunderstood by others. Clavela later appears as a villano and as Rocabruna

(Remón's servant). Finally, in the last scene, she strips herself of her layers of disguise, showing herself first as don Juan and then as Clavela in order to prove definitively the innocence of Isabela. She is rewarded for her loyalty by Remón, who finally consents to marry her. By structuring his play around the changing identities of this new character, Lope is able to present the idea that honor based on appearances can lead to serious error.

A similar point is made in El más galán portugués. The original story here is of far more tragic dimensions than that of El valeroso catalán, as the wife in the earlier version (who may or may not be guilty of adultery) is actually killed in an honor vengeance by her husband, the Duke of Berganza.²⁰ In the Lope play, the part of the offending "man," "Mendocica," is again played by a woman in disguise: Lisarda, an unmarried woman attempting to recover her own lost honor. As in El valeroso catalán, the substitution of a woman for a man in a conjugal triangle transforms the tone of the caso de honra from serious to somewhat farcical. So great in fact was the impact of Lope's change that Menéndez y Pelayo, judging the play "Mala de todas veras, . . . " complained: "Tal es el cuento disparatado é insulso con que Lope echó a perder, por vanos escrúpulos . . . una leyenda trágica que, bien manejada, y dejándose llevar de las felices inspiraciones del romance, hubiera podido producir un drama tan patético, interesante y conmovedor" ²¹ But perhaps Don Marcelino was missing the point, for the changes made by Lope in this work are consistent with changes noted in other plays. The audience, aware from the start that

the suspected dishonor is based purely on appearances, is forced to recognize the danger inherent in relying on appearance as an indicator of honor. In this play, as in El valeroso catalán, the wife narrowly escapes death and is only able to win back her husband's affections when the true identity of "Mendocica" is revealed.

In the final act of El más galán portugués Lope presents what amounts to a direct confrontation between the action of his own work and the source from which it was derived. In a recapitulation of the Duke's attempted vengeance Ortuño, the servant loyal to the Duchess, informs her brothers of what has happened by reciting a version of the romance on which the play's story is based. As the romance begins, it recalls the action of the source, narrating the Duke's resolution to kill his wife and the circumstance that the Portuguese noblemen are unable to understand the pleas the Duchess has spoken in Spanish:

Cuando aquesto oyera el Duque,
fuego echando por la vista,
empuñado la su espada,
desenvaina la cuchilla.
Y como si fuera un moro,
para la Duquesa se iba;
la Duquesa, con las manos
parece se defendía,
aunque era de mármaol blanco
el rostro con celosía;
y viendo que la mataba,
á grandes voces decía:
"¡Valedme, mis escuderos,
los que traje de Castilla!"
Todos eran portugueses,
ninguno el habla entendía; (395a)

In the original romance versions of the story the Duke does carry out his vengeance, and anyone recognizing the romance would be immediately reminded of that fact. But here Lope's play breaks away

from the source. Continuing with his recital, Ortuño works into the old romance the action of the play itself:

no porque no la entendiesen,
 sino porque no querían,
 si no fuera un pajezuelo
 que llamaban Mendocica,
 que porque á doña Mayor
 con mucha lealtad servía,
 de ver el Duque con ella,
 celos el Duque tenía; (395a)

.

He then continues, describing Mendocica's defense of Mayor (the Duchess) and his own role in her escape. Thus, with one stroke, Lope has called attention to his departure from the original story and, at the same time, returned to the action of the play. Moreover, by incorporating the romance into his comedia Lope underscores the fact that his own version represents a radical divergence from the original. While the honor code is strictly upheld in the romance, the action of the play has been re-oriented so that adherence to the honor code would be inappropriate. The brutal resolution of the source thus serves as a point of contrast with Lope's comedia, and Lope demonstrates once again that the appearance of dishonor, contrary to the dictates of the honor code, should not be sufficient grounds for assuming that real dishonor exists and must be avenged. To make this point Lope has brought his play to the brink of a grotesque desenlace--in which a woman would have been the victim of a bloody honor vengeance for infidelity committed with another woman.

Lope occasionally used one of his own plays as the inspiration for another. El cuerdo en su casa, a comic honor play with a happy ending, contains a conjugal honor conflict which may be described briefly.

A husband, perhaps overly concerned with the acquisition of honor, is very much in love with his wife, but spends a good deal of time away from home. The wife sees two gallant nobles, nephews of the Bishop, riding past her window and is attracted to one of them. During one of the husband's absences the wife and her gentleman meet for a sumptuous dinner. In the midst of this dinner the husband returns home and finds another man with his wife.

To this point the play appears to recall the fundamental action of Los Comendadores de Córdoba.²² Around this honor conflict, however, Lope has constructed a play which deals primarily with the differences between the ways in which two characters--one a nobleman, the other a peasant--deal with honor.

Leonardo, the hidalgo, is not a soldier like the Veinticuatro of Los Comendadores de Córdoba, but rather a letrado. He does resemble the Veinticuatro, however, in his misplaced trust in his wife and in his belief that honor can be won through association with those who occupy a higher position in the social hierarchy. Mendo, the villano, sees honor more as something which must be protected, and is thus more concerned with any possible endangerment of honor than he is with the acquisition of greater honor (which would require even greater vigilance).

Both Leonardo and Mendo (and their respective wives, Elvira and Antona) are confronted with the same potential threat to conjugal honor, and each will react in a different way. Leonardo, moved by a desire to improve his own social status through his association with

the young noblemen, treats them as welcome guests in his home, thus giving Fernando ample opportunity to get close to Elvira. Mendo, acutely aware that honor is, by definition, a source of potential dishonor, is far more cautious, and refuses to allow the galanes to have anything to do with Antona.

As a result of these two very different attitudes toward honor, Leonardo, lured away from home on a hunting trip, is brought to the brink of dishonor by Fernando and Elvira. Unable to deal with such a situation, he asks Mendo to help him--and Mendo does so by deceiving Leonardo into believing that the man in his house was not Fernando but his servant, who had gone there to visit Elvira's maid.

While much remains to be said regarding this usual desenlace and Lope's use of irony in the work, it may be noted here that Lope's possible use of a serious honor play as the source of a comic work does suggest an unconventional attitude toward the Spanish system of honor. By transforming the brutal but equivocal triumph of honor in Los Comendadores de Córdoba into the farcical resolution of El cuerdo en su casa, he shows how the honor code can be satisfied by the cynical manipulation of appearances, by means of which dishonor may be hidden rather than avenged. El cuerdo en su casa does demonstrate the supremacy of the peasant in matters of honor; but it also, by its subversion of material which may have been borrowed from Los Comendadores de Córdoba, invites the public to laugh openly at the nobleman's obsession with honor.

Thus, while Lope's modification of the literary sources for his honor plays varies considerably from play to play, the attitude reflected by such changes is remarkably similar in each of the works examined. In every case, the triumph of honor--demanded by Golden Age audiences--is accompanied by insinuations against the honor code itself. In the chapter which follows, it will be shown that the desenlaces of a number of Lope's honor plays contain a comparable double-edged treatment of honor.

Notes to Chapter III

¹For a survey of Lope's historical and literary sources see Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. IV, pp. 24-28, and Hugh W. Kennedy, pp. 29-40. It is likely that audiences were already familiar with the story of Estefanía, since El pleito por la honra, a "sequel" to La desdichada Estefanía, was probably written somewhat earlier (see Morley and Bruerton, Cronología, p. 533). Kennedy also feels that audiences had had some previous contact with the story: "Assuming that La desdichada Estefanía was written after El pleito de la honra, Lope was faced with a situation he had revealed to his public via the first play. . . . (p. 66)" Whether the "sequel" was or was not written by Lope is of less interest to the present study than the probability that the story was dramatized before La desdichada Estefanía.

²Quoted from his Chronica del ínclito Emperador de España, Don Alonso VII . . . by Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. IV, pp. 26-28.

³La desdichada Estefanía, ed., J. H. Arjona (Valencia: Castalia, 1967), ll. 581-604. All quotes will be made from this edition.

⁴Ll. 1147-1158.

⁵Ll. 1588-1605.

⁶Kennedy seems to agree: "The play rapidly establishes honor as the force which paces its forward movement. Fernán Ruiz is initially involved with Fortún over a question of the latter's honor (or rather his lack of it)." Kennedy, p. 60.

⁷Kennedy expresses a similar view of Lope's use of the honor motive in his portrayal of Fernán: ". . . his total dependence on his sense of honor is what made the tragedy possible. It is the real departure point of the trajectory which, with the help of circumstances and other characters, constitutes the vein of irony which runs through the play. Over-zealous in protecting his honor, Fernán ends by killing the one person whom he loved most, and whose existence gave meaning and substance to his very honor (pp. 76-77)."

⁸Kennedy, p. 37.

⁹Novella I, XLIV: "Il marchese Niccolò terzo da Este trovato il figliuolo con la matrigna in adulterio, a tutti dui in un medesimo giorno fa tagliar il capo in Ferrara," in Tutti le opere di Matteo Bandello, ed. Arnaldo Mondadori, 4th ed., vol. I (Verona: Mondadori, 1966), pp. 516-524.

¹⁰According to Menéndez Pidal, Van Dam's assertion that Lope used as his source a Spanish translation of Belleforest's version of this story is only partly accurate. While certain details must have been taken from Belleforest, others could only have come from Bandello's original story. See "El castigo sin venganza. Un oscuro problema de honor," in El P. Las Casas y Vitoria (Madrid: Colección Austral, 1966) pp. 127-128.

¹¹Larson, Honor Plays, p. 135.

¹²El castigo sin venganza, ed. A. David Kossoff, (Madrid: Castalia, 1970), line 1.

¹³Larson holds a similar view. See Honor Plays, p. 133.

¹⁴Novella I, XXXV: "Nuovo modo di castigar la moglie ritrovato da un gentiluomo veneziano," ed. Mondadori, pp. 433-443.

¹⁵William L. Fichter has observed that " . . . despite the husband's success in preserving his honor, his claims to being discreet possibly did not seem justified in some minds--if we are to judge by the changes made in the title of the play. In a copy of Parte VII of Lope's comedias in the library at Parma, the last line, 'el castigo del discreto' has been crossed out and replaced by 'el castigo del mui necio.'" Fichter, p. 71.

¹⁶George Irving Dale feels that this "praise motif" was derived from an additional source, an anecdote appearing in the Abencerraje, and sees in the use of this "second source" the reason for the great differences between Lope's play and the Bandello story. We, on the other hand, believe that whatever the source of the "praise motif," its incorporation into the action of El castigo del discreto is just one aspect of Lope's re-structuring, and certainly not the motive for it. See "A Second Source of Lope's El castigo del discreto," Modern Language Notes, XLIII, no. 5 (May, 1928), 310-312.

¹⁷Ed. William L. Fichter, ll. 1280-1287.

¹⁸v, 9. Stories of Boccaccio (The Decameron) (London: published for the trade, n. d.), vol. 2, pp. 16-21.

¹⁹See Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. IV, pp. 42-69, for a discussion of the possible sources for El valeroso catalán.

²⁰See Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. V, pp. 111-123, for background on source material.

²¹Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. V, p. 123.

²²Similarly, the general lines of the action of La desdichada Estefanía are used as the basis for the plot of Los peligros de la ausencia (1913-1620), another comic honor play, in which the case of mistaken identity is resolved before any harm can be done.

Los Comendadores de Córdoba was included in the Parte II of Lope's comedias, the first edition of which was published in 1609, well within the time span (1606-1612) postulated by Morley and Bruerton for the composition of El cuerdo en su casa. One wonders if this fact might not narrow the period for dating El cuerdo en su casa. Although Lope apparently had no hand in the publication of Parte II, it was published by his friend Alonso Pérez, and it seems possible that Lope, inspired by its publication in 1609, experienced a renewed interest in Los Comendadores de Córdoba and, soon afterwards, set about incorporating a number of important aspects of that play into El cuerdo en su casa.

La desdichada Estefanía was published in 1619 in the Parte XII, a collection which Lope himself published. This year is also within the limits suggested by Morley and Bruerton for Los peligros de la ausencia, though they do think it more likely that the work was composed before 1618.

Chapter IV

The "perplexing" desenlace

It has been noted in an earlier chapter that honor plays rarely contained endings which openly contradicted the honor code. In a number of works, however, the desenlace does present some unusual variants on the conventional resolution of a caso de honra.

One of these has already been discussed: the source-derived resolution of the honor conflict in El castigo del discreto, in which the husband limits himself to beating his wife (while disguised as the man with whom she is infatuated) in order to teach her a lesson. While such a castigo would not directly undermine the honor code--since no real relationship has developed between Casandra and Felisardo--Ricardo's means of dealing with a threat to his honor is unusual within the context of honor in the comedia, as it serves to challenge one of the principles basic to the honor system: that death is the only appropriate means of preventing even a potential or apparent loss of conjugal honor.

A similar abnormality is presented at the end of El cuerdo en su casa. Leonardo, discovering a man in his house, runs to his neighbor Mendo to seek advice. The advice he receives, however, while confirming the notion that honor rests largely on reputation, directly contradicts the need for vengeance prescribed by the honor code. Mendo warns his neighbor:

Si voz matáis ese hombre,
 hacéis pública la ofensa;
 porque se engaña quien dice:
 "La sangre lava la afrenta."
 Tiempo os queda de venganza.
 Fiadme la honra vuestra; (583b)

Leonardo, unable to act for himself, accepts Mendo's offer:

¡Ay, Mendo; ay, sabio letrado!
 Hoy pongo en las manos vuestras
 mi honor. (583b)

The rejection of vengeance as a solution to a conjugal honor conflict is unusual in itself, but even more unexpected is the willingness of one character to allow another to manage his affairs under such circumstances; and this deviation from expected behavior is furthered by the fact that Leonardo, an hidalgo, places his honor in the hands of a man whom he considers lacking in honor because he is a villano.

The way in which Mendo restores Leonardo's honor represents, moreover, one of Lope's most outrageous resolutions of a case of conjugal honor. Although Mendo's solution does fulfill the "appearance demands" of honor, it is, in fact, a solution in appearance only, one which greatly undermines any notion of honor as a meaningful social or personal value: Mendo has Fernando hide and puts Mondragón (Fernando's servant) in his place, leading Leonardo to believe that what he had thought was a case of adultery was merely an affair between Mondragón and Leonor (Elvira's maid). This in itself would be an odd conclusion for an honor play, insofar as it really has not dealt with keeping up the social appearance of honor, but has ended on a simple note of deception: Leonardo is made to think that his honor has not been endangered.

Futhermore, after the deception of Leonardo has been accomplished, Lope carries his desenlace one step closer to total absurdity when Elvira, seeing that her name has been cleared, begins accusing Leonardo of having had the wrong opinion of her virtue:

¡Cuitadas de las mujeres!
 ¡Qué presto nos atribuyen
 los hombres sus pareceres!
 ¡Malhaya las que no huyen
 de sus infames placeres!
 ¡Estas las caricias son,
 y éste el triste galardón
 que de servirles medramos:
 siempre sin honra quedamos;
 siempre con mala opinión! (585b)

Leonardo is thus forced into the ridiculous position of having to apologize to Elvira for his suspicions:

La culpa, Elvira, tuvieron
 estos mozos. Por tus ojos,
 que cesen ya los enojos;
 que nunca yo lo creí. (585b)

Many of Lope's honor plays contain comic elements. El cuerdo en su casa, however, goes beyond the limits of the usual comic treatment of a caso de honra. In most of the comic plays, the caso itself is merely apparent, and the conflict dissolves as the characters realize that their suspicions are unfounded and that, in many instances, they have been victims of a case of mistaken identity or deliberate deception. In El cuerdo en su casa there is a complete reversal of this normal plot structure. Here it is the loss of conjugal honor which is real, and it is the solution which deliberately perpetrates a case of mistaken identity so that it may appear that honor has been restored. While many honor play protagonists manipulate appearances to deceive others, in this play it is only the husband who is

deceived by appearances: as far as the audience is concerned, Leonardo has not regained his honor but rather has unwittingly allowed himself to remain permanently dishonored.

Two of Lope's earliest honor plays, Las ferias de Madrid and Los embustes de Fabia, also contain unusual resolutions of honor conflicts. Both share with El cuervo en su casa the fact that a guilty wife is not punished for her infidelity, but these plays depart even further from the honor code in that the husbands themselves are killed so that the wife may remain with her lover.

Donald McGrady, in his excellent article on Las ferias de Madrid, has stressed the importance of examining the total structure of a play (rather than merely the caso de honra and its resolution) as a means of arriving at a better understanding of Lope's intentions. He notes that the "background" action of the play--the humorous vignettes portraying various occurrences at the ferias--have a far more important function than merely lending "local color" to the proceedings:

These incidents lend a light-hearted tone to the action; they also imply that the gentry--who supposedly are the preservers of honor--are worthless people By satirizing these guardians of honor who do not scruple at petty theft and who can think of nothing more elevated than clothes, prostitutes, and destructive fun-making, Lope prepares the terrain for a burlesque treatment of genteel honor in the main action.¹

Lope, in fact, does much more here than satirize his characters when he portrays them as involved in dishonorable actions. He also shows, by their own words, the great discrepancy which lies between their actions and their preoccupation with maintaining an honorable reputation. Near the beginning of the first act, for example, the

squire Juan Francisco is offended by the fact that his mistress addresses him simply as "Juan Francisco:"

Quítanme el Paredes,
el Mendoza y el Solís.
En otras casas me honraban:
llamábanme todo el nombre.²

He then explains:

Huélgase el hombre de oír
lo bueno de su linaje;
siempre el bien hablar se estima. (585a)

This "noble" sentiment, however, stands in contrast to what Juan Francisco really wants from his mistress: four reales.

Against the play's background of comic encounters, it would be difficult to project a serious, much less catastrophic, desenlace. Moreover, as the caso de honra begins to unfold, the audience realizes that the lovers, Violante and Leandro, are the most honorable characters in the play, while the husband, Patricio, is a singularly unsympathetic character and is himself guilty of marital infidelity. This too would seem to preclude the likelihood of a traditional honor vengeance.

By setting the comic milieu of the fair and the sincerity of the lovers against the poetetically violent resolution normally associated with a caso de honra, Lope prepares the audience for an unconventional desenlace. As McGrady has observed:

The comic ending does not come unannounced . . . but is carefully prefigured by the use of a sportive setting, jocose minor characters, much light incident, and jocund language. This is not to say that the antiheroic ending becomes inevitable as the play progresses. From the middle of Act II, when Patricio discovers his wife's infidelity and resolves to slay the lovers, until the end of the play, Lope uses a counterpoint technique which suggests the possibility of a conventional tragic ending.³

At the end of the play, Lope adds a note of suspense through the introduction of a new but important character. In the final act, Patricio enlists the help of Belardo, Violante's father, to assist him in his vengeance. As a character, Belardo reflects the difficulties which arise from the Spanish obsession with honor, as he frantically wavers from one position to another in an attempt to decide how best to maintain his honor as a father. First he offers to carry out the vengeance himself:

No padre quiero ser, sino enemigo
que de su sangre la paterna mano
bañaré más contento que aquél día
que la casé para desdicha mía. (621a)

This is the reaction an audience would expect from a character who finds himself in such a situation. But Belardo's resolve falters, as he begins to doubt the truth of Patricio's accusation:

No ofendas a Violante noble y casta,
que para serlo ser mi hija basta. (621a)

Belardo then accuses Patricio of dishonorable conduct:

¡Ah, Patricio, Patricio! Que con ella
hiciste aqueste indigno casamiento
enamorado y loco por tu amiga,
que, por ventura, a tal maldad te obliga. (621a)

Later, knowing that Violante does have a lover, Belardo decides that he, too, wants to die:

No digo que no la mates;
mas que a mí también con ella.
Aquesa espada me acabe;
que pues soy el padre yo
que tu deshonra engendró,
no poca culpa me cabe. (622a)

After Patricio insults him for his indecisiveness, Belardo becomes even more confused:

Con esa espada, que tiene,
 como cuchillo de esposo,
 filo agudo y poderoso,
 a ti matarle conviene.
 Anda, no tengas temor;
 ninguna pena te aflija,
 tú matarás a mi hija
 y yo mataré al traidor. (622b)

While Belardo is now unwilling to kill his daughter, he still seems to approve of the necessity for an honor vengeance. Throughout all of this the audience is given absolutely no hint as to whether or not such a vengeance will ultimately take place; and when Belardo does finally reach the decision to act, he chooses a wholly unexpected solution: the death of Patricio instead of the lovers:

Mas muera quien hoy deshonra
 hija, suegros, padre y madre.
 Aqueste es hecho de padre
 que sabe de amor y honra. (622b)

The killing of Patricio represents an ingenious new approach to meeting the demands of the honor code. Belardo explains:

Si yo a mi hija mataba
 como adúltera y lasciva,
 dejaba deshonra viva
 que para siempre duraba.
 El honor ha de vivir.
 Es mujer, y pudo errar;
 y yo padre, y perdonar;
 y éste mortal, y morir.
 El irme será mejor;
 quien me culpare, él se aflija;
 que yo, sin matar mi hija,
 he defendido mi honor. (622b)

Belardo then disappears from the scene, allowing la opinión to conclude that Patricio has been killed by either masked pranksters at the fair or a rival for the love of his mistress.

McGrady has said of Belardo's final speech: "This discourse can only be considered a parody of the conventional code of honor;

the last four lines are clearly directed toward the audience, in anticipation of protests against the antiheroic outcome."⁴ The term "parody," however, may be misleading. While parody generally serves as its own end, Belardo's speech makes the audience aware of an important aspect of the honor code: the fact that the need to maintain honor at all costs may lead to surprising consequences and, further, that the demands of the honor code can sometimes be manipulated in such a way that a person may use honor as the rationale for committing an otherwise unjustifiable act.

The honor code, it should be recalled, functioned as a set of regulations by which Spanish society controlled the behavior of its members. In this play, Spanish society is portrayed as being zealously vigilant of honor but disinclined, for the most part, to behave honorably. The killing of Patricio, then, would have a double-edged dramatic function. On the one hand, it would break the hold of such a society by allowing the lovers to continue their relationship without endangering anyone's honor. On the other hand, however, Belardo's use of the honor code as the excuse for Patricio's death would serve to comment ironically on a society which defines itself by its adherence to a code of behavior which has more appearance than substance. The fact that the disconcerting solution to the honor problem in this comedia is the work of a character named Belardo, the best known of Lope's literary pseudonyms, may be especially significant, and will receive further consideration.⁵

The resolution of an honor conflict through the death of a dishonored husband also occurs in Los embustes de Fabia. What

distinguishes this play from other works with unconventional endings is the fact that, while the play does have comic moments, it is not essentially a comic play.⁶ Peter Podol has described this work as "Lope's only serious drama in which the basic approach to the honor problem is blatantly non-conventional."⁷

Another major difference between Los embustes de Fabia and Las ferias de Madrid lies in the characterization of the husband. While Patricio is not a character who invites audience sympathy, Catulo, the Roman senator and husband of Fabia is indeed an honorable man--whose only failing seems to be his excessive love for an undeserving wife. Catulo is not a particularly strong character, and he does seem surprisingly ignorant about what is doing on around him, but his ignorance is the result of Fabia's deceit, her expertise as an embustera, rather than Catulo's lack of intelligence.

Fabia's embustes are an essential component of the play's structure and desenlace. At the beginning of the play, Catulo sees the servant of Vitelio, Fabia's lover, leaving his house after having delivered a letter to Camila, Fabia's maid. Catulo is immediately suspicious, and accuses Camila of conspiring against him. The audience, at this point, knows only that a letter has been delivered, and that it is from Vitelio, but it is not clear that the letter is for Fabia (nor it is yet known that they are lovers). Unwarranted suspicions are not uncommon in honor plays, and when Camila and the other servants try to convince Catulo that he is in error, the audience might be inclined to believe that Fabia is being unjustly accused:

Catulo	¡Por Júpiter, que se huyó el mozalbillo, Eritreo.

Eritreo Que te has engañado creo,
 que ni huye ni te vió.
 Catulo Mis ojos ¿engañarélos?
 Eritreo Puedes engañar tus ojos,
 pues los cubres con antojos.
 Senador[*sic*] ¿de qué antojos?
 Eritreo De tus celos,
 que hacen la letra grande,
 como se suele decir.⁸

It is only when the servants converse in an aparte that the audience realizes that Catulo's suspicions are not unfounded:

Eritreo (¿Calla! ¿No tienes temor?
 Camila No, porque su mucho amor
 me ha quitado la vergüenza;
 quiere bien a mi señora:
 sufrirá que le azotemos.
 Aurelio ¡Que hace de hacer extremos!
 ¡Sin duda, mueres ahora!
 Camilo ¿De aquesto te maravillas?
 ¡Déjale, Aurelio, enojar,
 que ella le sabe ablandar
 con dos falsas lagrimillas!) (77a)

Now that the audience has some insight into the character of Fabia, there will be little surprise when Fabia decides to have Catulo killed as an alternative to his killing her. This is a rare, perhaps unique instance in which Lope may be suggesting that one marked for sacrifice by the honor code may have other thoughts on the matter.

Fabia enlists the help of Lelio, a soldier who is in love with her, promising that she will marry him if he kills Catulo (her real intention, however, is to marry Vitelio). Catulo learns of the plot and has his servants tell Fabia that he has been killed. Seeing what has apparently happened to Catulo, Vitelio changes his mind about marrying Fabia:

¿Cómo pretendes, cruel,
 ser a Vitelio fiel,
 puesto que bien me has querido,
 habiendo muerto un marido
 tan honrado como aquél? (86a)

Suddenly finding herself abandoned, Fabia would seem to experience a reversal of feelings:

No lloro al amigo vivo;
ya lloro al marido muerto. (86a)

Within a dozen lines, however, she has decided to shift her attentions to Lelio--the man she thinks has killed Catulo, but who has now been hired by Catulo to kill Fabia. But this second planned assassination does not take place either, as Catulo decides that his love for Fabia is greater than his sense of outraged honor, and he stops Lelio at the last moment.

In the second and third acts Catulo (and possibly the spectator as well) is lulled into believing that Fabia has reformed. She "proves" her good faith by setting a poisoned glass of wine before Catulo and then stopping him from drinking it. At the conclusion of the third act, Fabia gives what appears to be the ultimate proof of her good faith. When the Emperor Nero tries to take Fabia for himself, Catulo has no recourse but to commit suicide; and Fabia, appearing to prefer death to life with Nero, takes some of Catulo's poison and falls beside her husband's body. While it seems as if Catulo, through his suicide (and Fabia's) has finally been able to redeem his honor, there is one more embuste left to be revealed, for as Vitelio mourns her loss, Fabia rises and confesses that her "death" has been just another trick, and that she is now free to remain with him.

In Los embustes de Fabia the audience too falls victim to a number of embustes. The normal expectation that the action will conclude with some form of poetic justice is completely disregarded at

the end of the play. Moreover, as Fabia's final deception is brought home to the audience it is obvious that any change in her character has been in appearance alone; yet the spectator, as the play concludes, is expected once again to believe in a "new" Fabia, who swears to a suddenly trusting Vitelio:

En esa muerte perdí
la vida que ya pasé,
y en la nueva que saqué
otra salgo para ti.
Ya murieron mis costumbres;
otra soy, y siempre tuya. (110b)

Thus, after being shown on numerous occasions that Fabia, no matter what she says, is not to be trusted, the audience is now asked to take Fabia's new-found good intentions at face value. This is indeed an unusual ending for an honor play, one which makes the audience itself the victim of the ultimate embuste, as Lope taunts his public with a desenlace that thoroughly undermines the honorable death of Catulo.

The setting of Los embustes de Fabia deserves some consideration. While suicide in the name of honor may have been acceptable in Classical Rome, it would have been unheard of in Golden Age Spain. Moreover, by setting his caso de honra outside Spain, Lope may be consciously attempting to avoid audience hostility in the face of an honor conflict which is resolved with the utmost cynicism. While Catulo's last act is one that would preserve his honor,⁹ he himself can reap no benefit from it, and it is the guilty Fabia who gains the most by his death.

Furthermore, Catulo's final tribute to honor is set against the background of a world in which honorable actions seem particularly inappropriate. It is a world much like the one depicted in Las ferias de Madrid, but lacking the charm and sense of good humor displayed there.

Honor, in this world, is subordinated to cleverness, just as the honorable death feigned by Fabia is undermined by her "resurrection" so that she may continue her life as embustera. In the world portrayed in Los embustes de Fabia honor is a luxury attained at the cost of one's life, while a skillful avoidance of such encumbrances as honor is the key to success.

The elimination of a conjugal honor conflict through the death of the husband occurs in a number of other works: El halcón de Federico, La hermosa Alfreda, La resistencia honrada y Condesa Matilde, and El galán escarmentado. The last two are worthy of special mention. In La resistencia honrada, a loyal wife refuses to yield to the attentions of an amorous king. When her husband is killed in battle, defending the life of this very monarch, the wife is forced into the position of having to marry the King, since the honor code is no longer an obstacle to the King's pursuit of her. It is not a happy ending, and compliance with the demands of honor is used here to condone a dishonorable objective. The widow has no desire to marry the King, but with her husband dead and no masculine honor to be maintained, she no longer has any reason for rejecting the King's attentions.

El galán escarmentado bears some similarity to Las ferias de Madrid in that it too presents a case of conjugal honor resolved by a father-in-law killing his son-in-law. However, while in Las ferias de Madrid the potentially tragic outcome of the caso de honra constitutes the major line of action, appearing against the comic ambiente of the ferias, in El galán escarmentado the principal action--the search by Celio (the galán of the title) for a woman to love--gives the entire

play a comic, almost picaresque tone, greatly overshadowing the very serious honor conflict which is confined to portions of the second act. A further unusual feature of the caso de honra in this play is that it resembles those normally found in the comic honor plays, in which no real threat to the husband's honor exists except in his own suspicions. But while in an ordinary comic honor play such problems are resolved without bloodshed, in El galán escarmentado the husband's suspicions lead not only to his death but also to the realization of what he had erroneously suspected.¹⁰

Julio, the unfortunate husband, is not a sympathetic character but neither is he, like Patricio in Las Férias de Madrid, a philanderer. If he is guilty of anything it is a guilt shared by the majority of comedia husbands: an overly zealous preoccupation with honor. When Julio finds a packet of love letters written by Celio to his wife Ricarda (letters written long before their marriage), he immediately assumes the worst and prepares to avenge his honor. But what would have led to a confrontation with Celio over the question of conjugal honor leads, instead, to a confrontation with Tácito, his father-in-law: Julio's lineage is impugned, he reacts with anger, and Tácito stabs Julio to death in a treacherous embrace of "reconciliation." Tácito, by deceiving the authorities into believing that Julio had killed his wife, is eventually exonerated. Leaving for later consideration the suggestion that as a converso Julio has no honor,¹¹ he is one more character who falls victim to his obsession with honor, in this case not only conjugal but also with regard to his blood purity.

Honor conflicts are also used as secondary lines of action in two of Lope's vidas de santos, El rústico del cielo and El santo negro Rosambuco. In these and other religious works Lope's resolution of a conjugal honor problem is not in accordance with the dictates of the honor code, and may thus serve to indicate his attitude regarding the compatibility between honor and morality.

In El rústico del cielo the matter of conjugal honor appears very briefly. A husband returns home after an absence of more than a year, only to find his wife caring for a new-born infant. Although he is told that the child is an orphan placed in his wife's care by Brother Francisco (the play's protagonist), the audience knows that it is really the wife's child, and that the husband's suspicions are therefore entirely justified. In this play, however, an honor vengeance--no matter how appropriate it might be--is simply unacceptable. Not only is the honor code deliberately ignored, but it is the saintly protagonist himself who disregards the demands of honor: Brother Francisco convinces the husband that the wife's story about his having given her the child is true, and he berates the husband for his lack of charity in not wanting to take such a child into his home. The husband, completely fooled, begs to be allowed to keep the child as his own:

¡Hermano, por solo Dios,
que nos le deje á los dos
si acaso su dueño es muerto;
que yo le tendré por mío!¹²

The wife is let off with only a lecture from Brother Francisco, her former lover is shamed by the saint into joining a religious order, and the entire incident appears as just another of those miracles wrought by the protagonist. The traditional idea of honor is not so much

ridiculed here as it is supplanted by a higher value, the observance of a truly Christian morality.

In El santo negro Rosambuco, the prevention of an honor vengeance brings about the conversion of the saint himself. The entire first act of the comedia is taken up with those questions of worldly honor which often appear in honor plays: conflicts involving conjugal honor, the honor of a single woman and the matter of honor among gentlemen are all built up around a case of mistaken identity occasioned by the fact that two women, one married and the other single, have changed clothes. The audience is aware that in each case the perception of honor offended is founded on appearance rather than reality.

The conjugal honor conflict is resolved at the end of the first act. Lesbio, convinced that his wife Laura has dishonored him, is resolved to avenge his honor with her death, and tells his new slave Rosambuco that he is about to see an example of a "honroso castigo."¹³ As Rosambuco, who has refused to abandon his own religion and convert to Christianity, watches, Laura prays to a statue of San Benito, swearing her innocence and asking the saint for absolution. When Laura finishes her prayer, the statue raises its hand and blesses her. Lesbio, seeing the miracle, is finally convinced that Laura has told the truth and the vengeance is avoided. At the same time, this example of Divine intervention has a profound effect on Rosambuco:

¡Oh, soberano Benito,
digno de inmortal corona,
por vos nueva vida gano!
Mahoma es ya bien yo asombre. [sic. "quien?"]
¡Muera su Alcorán tirano!
Benito ha de ser mi nombre;
¡Señor, yo he de ser cristiano! (373a)

The miraculous prevention of Lesbio's vengeance demonstrates to Rosambuco the omnipotence of the Christian God, and the black slave goes on to become not only a Christian but a saint who also performs miracles. As in El rústico del cielo, then, Lope has set up a situation in which the honor code is directly contravened by behavior which responds to Divine rather than human law. In both works, moreover, the consequence of this triumph of Christian morality is the salvation of souls.

These ideas are expressed even more emphatically in Lope's two autos sacramentales dealing with conjugal honor, La adúltera perdonada and La locura por la honra.¹⁴ Although these cannot be classified as honor plays, the conjugal honor problem is used as the structure for these two autos, whose real purpose is the celebration of the Eucharist. The honor-related action would no doubt attract the attention of the public; but in dealing with Salvation and with the question of who will partake of the Body of Christ, Lope permits himself the most explicit and most thorough denunciation of the honor obsession and the barbaric un-Christian behavior to which it leads.

In both autos the wife is temporarily distracted by one who threatens her honor. The husband is first inclined to avenge his dishonor by killing the wife, but is dissuaded from vengeance because this would be incompatible with Divine law. The only solution is forgiveness, for the pursuit of honor is no virtue in the realm of God.

In La adúltera perdonada, the husband's decision to avenge his lost honor is upheld by la Justicia, who advises compliance with the honor code even though the wife has taken refuge in the Church:

No goce la inmunidad
de la Iglesia aquesta vez;
la cabeza le cortad:
vos propio seréis juez
en vuestra causa; piedad
no ha de haber a tal ofensa.¹⁵

But justice is a human value, and the wife's cause is defended by the Church itself, who wins the battle for the soul's salvation with the aid of Penitence and the Eucharist.

In La locura por la honra the husband arrives at "la casa de los locos," inhabited by la Honra del Mundo, la Confianza humana and el Amor propio, and presided over by el Mundo, to whom the husband directs Lope's strongest invective against honor:

No quiero tus honras vanas,
ni la ambición a que aspiras
noches, tardes y mañanas.
¿Por qué solamente miras
las vanidades humanas?
Que si yo soy el Sosiego,
¿cómo me puedo casar
con honra del mundo ciego,
ni vivir en paz, ni estar
juntos el hielo y el fuego?
Honra, ¿tú no ves que dura
poco tiempo tu placer,
y que toda tu locura
viene después a tener
su fin en la sepultura?
¿Para qué vives hinchada,
haciendo descortesías,
malquista de gente honrada,
pues cuanto alcanzar porfías
viene a resolverse en nada?
¿Quieres ver, Honra, quién eres;
que estás en otro, no en ti,
pues la adoración que quieres
te han de dar otros?¹⁶

At the end of this auto it is Christ Himself who saves the guilty wife, taking her confession and returning her to her husband.

Lope's use of the conjugal honor motif in these autos is of considerable interest for a number of reasons. From the point of view of the didactic effectiveness of the auto itself, Lope employs the familiar structure of the honor play in order to elucidate the fundamental principles dramatized by the auto sacramental. The conjugal honor conflict in the autos is resolved not according to the worldly principle of vengeance, however, but by means of the holy sacraments of Penitence and Communion.

According to Bruce W. Wardropper, Lope's only objective in his use of an honor conflict as the basis for the action of an auto is to emphasize the great difference between the allegorical world of the auto and the "real" world of the comedia:

Es evidente que este argumento sacramental sigue de cerca el esquema de la comedia profana. Se trata de una situación típica del pundonor, con la seducción y la venganza de costumbre. El hecho de que el intento de desquite se frustre antes de que el Esposo pueda llevarlo a cabo no hace más que subrayar la diferencia entre la moralidad seglar de la comedia y la sobrenatural del auto. No se duda de la moralidad de ejecutar venganza; sólo es el milagro de los sacramentos el que evita que se derrame sangre.¹⁷

There is a possibility, however, that this evaluation of Lope's use of the conjugal honor theme is incomplete. While Wardropper refers only to Lope's use of a secular theme to clarify a religious principle, it may also be the case that Lope, in these autos, was simultaneously using the religious principle to comment on the social reality illustrated by the honor theme. The avoidance of vengeance (even in some instances in which the wife is guilty) is not limited to the autos

and other religious plays but is, in fact, fairly common in the resolution of Lope's honor plays. Moreover, while the principle of vengeance is not often directly criticized in the comedias, there are a number of plays in which the morality of the preoccupation with honor is called into question. Certainly the theme of honor as a social necessity has been contrasted with the theme of virtue as a moral value in several works already cited in this study; and the reference (in La locura por la honra) to the fact that honor unjustly resides in the opinions of others ("que estás en otro, no en ti") is so reminiscent of the well-known "Honra es aquella que consiste en otro" of Los Comendadores de Córdoba that it cannot be ignored.

Thus Lope's autos involving conjugal honor conflicts may be understood on two distinct--and opposing--planes. In their specific function as autos sacramentales, these works borrow secular elements of dramatic action in order to illustrate profound religious principles. At the same time, however, in their function as theater, they use the traditional principles of the auto to undermine the morality of the most popular dramatic motif of the Golden Age: the honor code.

In these plays, then, the "perplexing" desenlace is brought about in one of two very different ways. In works with religious themes, there is simply an outright rejection of the honor code as a set of rules under which men ought to live. In purely secular works, however, such rejection would not be acceptable to Golden Age audiences. Thus, in comedias such as El castigo del discreto, El cuerdo en su casa, Las ferias de Madrid, Los embustes de Fabia and others, Lope

manages to challenge the validity of the honor system in a different way: by resolving a caso de honra through a cynical compliance with the honor code which serves to demonstrate how even strict adherence to the demands of honor may have unexpected consequences.

To the evidence already presented that Lope was not an "establishment spokesman" for the honor presentation that moved his comedia audiences, one may now add the further evidence that may be obtained from an examination of the ironical and equivocal techniques employed by Lope in his conjugal honor plays. This will be dealt with in the following chapter.

Notes to Chapter IV

¹McGrady, pp. 37-38.

²Ac.N. V, p. 585a.

³McGrady, pp. 41-42.

⁴McGrady, p. 41.

⁵See Chapter V, pp.

⁶Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the play does not appear to be comic in its conception. It is, however, a problem play, and could conceivably have been presented as farce rather than as serious drama.

⁷Podol, p. 453.

⁸Ac.N. V, p. 76a.

⁹Peter Podol states: "His death results from his ultimate compliance with another demand of the honor code: a man dishonored by his monarch must take his own life since it is not possible for him to avenge himself." Podol, p. 454.

¹⁰As noted in Chapter III, p. 108 of this study, this is also the case in El halcón de Federico.

¹¹See Chapter VII, pp.

¹²Acad. V. p. 260b.

¹³Acad. IV, p. 371b.

¹⁴Lope also wrote a comedia with the same title, and it will be discussed in Chapter VI.

¹⁵Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 158, p. 332.

¹⁶Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. 158, p. 225.

¹⁷Introducción al teatro religioso del siglo de oro (Salamanca: Anaya, 1967), pp. 278-279. Wardropper is referring specifically to La adúltera perdonada.

Chapter V

Irony and equivocation in the conjugal honor plays

Throughout his honor plays Lope made considerable use of irony and equivocation as means of questioning the nature, function and ethical validity of the Spanish system of honor. Simply defined, irony involves saying one thing and meaning another, while equivocation is saying something in such a way that it can convey two distinct meanings. Both are techniques commonly found in the theater, as the audience takes pleasure in sharing with the dramatist some knowledge or nuance of meaning of which the characters themselves remain ignorant. In Lope's honor plays, however, they may have an additional function: satisfying the vulgo's obsession with casos de honra while, at the same time, challenging both the honor code and the taste of many Spanish theatergoers.

The ironic use of recurring motifs is one way in which Lope questions the honor code while appearing to uphold it. Thus an idea essential to the Spanish concept of honor is frequently reiterated in a play, only to be invalidated by the action of the play itself. One such motif is the notion that "seeing is believing." It is common, in honor plays, for a character to seek visual evidence of his dishonor (or impending dishonor) before deciding to avenge the agravio he suspects. The desire to confirm one's suspicions in order to avoid

committing an unjust act would normally be an admirable one. In a good number of works, however, the need to ver con los ojos is presented ironically, so that what is seen is misinterpreted (usually because a character is overly preoccupied with honor) and this leads to the very errors the character originally sought to avoid.

Plays utilizing this motif include both comic and serious works. In some instances, the misinterpretation of appearances is the result of a character's own inclination to fear for his honor. In Los pleitos de Ingalaterra and La corona de Hungría (the second is a refundición of the first¹) the Queen is being pursued by an admirer, but rejects all his attentions. When the man pretends to possess a letter proving that the King is in love with another woman, she takes the letter, is embraced by the man, and his cuff becomes entangled in her collar. The King, entering at this point, takes the embrace he sees at face value, cries out "¿qué es esto que ven mis ojos?,"² and immediately plans to avenge his dishonor. The vengeance is only averted through the efforts of servants loyal to the Queen, and it is not until the man involved defends the Queen's honor--two acts and twenty years later--that the King is finally convinced that what he saw was not what he thought it to be.

In El halcón de Federico, the ver con los ojos motif is the culmination point of an extremely complicated enredo, and leads to more than one misunderstanding. What is "seen" here does not involve a man and a woman, but rather two women. Celia, the wife of Camilo, is loved by Federico who, in turn, is loved by Julia, a courtesan. Celia has

reason to suspect that her husband is involved with Julia, and goes to Julia's house to find out the truth. At the same time, both Federico and Camilo are watching Celia, and each draws his own incorrect conclusions from the meeting of the two women. Federico assumes that Celia now loves him, and that she is jealous of Julia:

Federico: Julia, lo que he visto creo.
 Julia: ¿Qué has visto?
 Federico Que vino aquí á pedirte Celia celos.
 Julia ¿Y por quién son sus desvelos
 Federico ¿No está claro que por mí?³

While Julia is able to disabuse Federico of his illusions, Camilo is not so fortunate. His fear that Celia and Federico are lovers is apparently confirmed by Celia's presence at Julia's house, and he assumes that Julia has been acting as intermediary:

¡Celia en cas [sic] de Julia! ¿á qué?
 ¿Esta es amistad honrada
 de una mujer que estimada
 de toda Florencia fué?
 En cas de una cortesana
 Celia! ¡Mi temor es cierto!
 ¡Sin honra estoy, yo soy muerto!
 ¡Oh mujer falsa y liviana! (464a, b)

Camilo's misinterpretation of appearances, brought on by his belief that whatever is seen must be true, leads him to assume erroneously that he has lost his honor, and brings on the madness which eventually kills him.

In El más galán portugués the Duke suspects a caso de honra based on his wife's attentions to her page, who is really a woman in disguise. His continual misinterpretation of appearances leads him to believe that his eyes have provided him with real evidence of an affair between his wife and the page, Mendocica:

Mendocica en el jardín,
 y Mendocica en la mesa,
 Mendocica á la Duquesa
 si se le tuerce el chapín;
 Mendocica en todo, en fin,
 y que yo no tenga celos:
 ¡quitadme los ojos, cielos,
 y dejádmelos sentir;
 que mal se pueden sufrir
 tan espantosos desvelos! (383b-384a)

The intent here is essentially comic, since the audience knows that Mendocica is really a woman. Nevertheless, the honor code's demand for constant vigilance is, through the humor of the situation, shown to confirm erroneous suspicions.

The most tragic consequences of the ver con los ojos motif are drawn in La desdichada Estefanía. As Hugh Kennedy has noted with regard to the presentation and resolution of the honor conflict in the third act, "Lope develops this material into a body of references to los ojos, el ver, and the engaño they involve"4

The first to "see" proof of Estefanía's infidelity is not Fernán but his two squires, Bermudo and Ximeno. They see Fortún, Olfos and Isabel, and draw what they assume is the logical conclusion:

Bermudo	¿q̄ más claro testimonio? Dos onbres he visto alli. (11. 2032-2033)
Ximeno	¡Ay del onor quando sale en manteo la mujer! (11. 2045-2046)

Ximeno's assumption has a particularly ironic twist, since it is the manto which leads him to believe in Estefanía's guilt: he has no way of knowing that the cloak he knows to be that of his mistress is being worn by Ysabel, and he is thus deceived in what he sees.

Fernán, upon hearing the accusations of Bermudo and Ximeno, is not as inclined to believe in ajenas opiniones as many comedia

husbands. Fernán refuses to believe rumors: he will believe, he says, only what he can see:

. . .

	por̄ en razón de creher de su virtud, no ay dezir: los oýdos han de oýr, q̄ los ojos han de ver.
Bermudo	¿Y si vieses con los ojos alguna noche . . . ?
Fernán	¡Ay de mí!
Bermudo	Dos personas juntas, di, ¿juzgarás q̄ son antojos?
Fernán	¿Con los ojos?
Bermudo	Si, señor. (11. 2237-2245)

As Fernán accuses the squires of conspiring against him, the notion that "seeing is believing" is again stressed:

Fernán	¿Quánto os dan por este enredo?
Ximeno	Q̄ lo dixе a Bermudo.
Bermudo	¿Esto dudas?
Fernán	Esto dudo; luego ¿dudarlo no puedo?
Bermudo	No, señor, si lo has de ver . . .
Fernán	¿Verlo con los ojos?
Bermudo	Si. (11. 2269-2274)

. . .

Fernán	Pues silencio, q̄ llegamos. En fin, lo tengo de ver.
Ximeno	Con los ojos lo verás. (11. 2279-2281)

When Fernán finally does "see," of course, he is completely taken in by appearances and proceeds to avenge himself on Fortún and the innocent Estefanía. The implication here is that even those who insist on such proofs may easily be deceived. Fernán relies on the notion that "seeing is believing," an idea which, though not peculiar to the honor code, seems to form an integral part of it, and he is incapable of suspecting that what is seen may, for various reasons, be misinterpreted.

It is the nature of the honor code itself, in all of these works, which turns the need to ver con los ojos into an ironic motif.

While honor is often based on reputation and opinión, it welcomes external evidence which would confirm rumors. Normally, the idea that what is seen must be true would be an acceptable one. In these works, however, Lope has set up situations in which the visual evidence requires qualification before it can be correctly interpreted. The obsessive fear of losing honor, however, would seem to preclude one's spending time to verify the facts. In this sense, the need to maintain honor is counterbalanced by the implication that the very processes involved in complying with the honor code can often lead to acts of great injustice. Such acts might be averted if the honor code itself did not demand that immediate action must be taken when honor is thought to be threatened. Furthermore, Lope may also be questioning the validity of trusting opinión when what is seen cannot even be trusted--particularly when an exaggerated sensitivity to the possibility of suffering dishonor distorts everything one sees.

This idea is developed even more fully in those works in which the ver con los ojos motif is combined with the deliberate manipulation of appearances in order to create a suspicion of dishonor. In La inocente Laura, for example, the villain of the work devises an elaborate scheme through which (a) a husband sees "proof" that his wife is unfaithful and that her "lover," the Duke, is planning to have him killed; (b) the Duchess is convinced--also by visual evidence--that her husband and his "mistress" are planning to have her killed; and (c) the King is led to believe that the Duke (his brother) is a traitor.

Each of these characters, accepting without question the notion that "seeing is believing," is then forced to take some action on the

basis of this false evidence. An unjust honor vengeance is committed by the husband, who stabs his wife and leaves her body in the woods where, after his departure, she is found and saved by a group of peasants.

At the end of the play, the husband, Duke, Duchess and King all realize that they have been deceived. The guilty party is punished and husband and wife are reunited. The happy ending, however, does not alter the fact that Lope's play amply demonstrates the fragility of honor and the susceptibility of those concerned with it to the deceptive manipulations of others. The ironic repetition of the idea that what is seen (or heard) must be true only serves to underscore how easily those obsessed with honor and the code that governs it can be misled into suspecting the loyalty of their closest friends and relatives.

Similar presentations of the ver con los ojos motif may be found in Los embustes de Celauro, La discordia en los casados, El valeroso catalán and Ursón y Valentín. An interesting variation of the idea that "seeing is believing" can be observed in Los embustes de Fabia. While appearances are most often manipulated to cause a character to suspect that he is in danger of losing honor, here it is precisely the contrary that is being demonstrated. It will be recalled that Fabia manages to regain her husband's confidence by "saving" him from the poison she herself prepared for him. Fabia thus feigns a virtuous act that leaves the unfortunate Catulo convinced of his wife's loyalty. As in El cuerdo en su casa, the husband's sense of honor is made to rest on deception: Fabia has saved Catulo's life, but only to mislead him, and his belief

in what he has seen keeps him from taking actions which would have made his suicide unnecessary.

The similarly ironic use of another recurring motif occurs in several plays, most notably El valeroso catalán. This is the notion, essential to the rules of conjugal honor, that women are by nature weak and should not be trusted. Within the context of these plays, the implied meaning of this commonplace is proved wrong, and Lope alternates the expression of woman's weakness with the demonstrated fact that some women, on the contrary, have both the desire and the strength to maintain their own honor.

At the beginning of El valeroso catalán, the servant Rocabruna tells Remón, his master:

Que es locura considera
el querer maravillarse,
siendo una mujer mudarse,
o porque un hombre se muera.⁵

This idea is repeated by Remón who, upon learning of Isabela's marriage with Enrique, cries out:

¡Mal haya el hombre que en mujeres fia! (p. 418b)

The audience is well aware of the injustice of these words, as Isabel has only promised to marry Enrique because she believes Remón to be dead. The motif is repeated once again as Remón decides to let Isabela see him:

Posible es que si me viese,
mi rostro no conociese.
No me espanto, que es mujer,
y un amante desdichado
es retrato en contador,
que sólo tiene valor
para contar lo pasado; (p. 420a)

Even when Isabela tells Remón that her marriage with Enrique is now a matter of honor, he persists in his condemnation of her weakness:

¡Ah, traidora! ¡En fin, mujer! (p. 422b)

This refrain is later picked up in the words of Lotario, one of the noblemen who accuses Isabela of infidelity:

. . . que Isabela es mujer,
y que no es mujer honesta. (p. 428b)

Later on in the play, when Remón learns of Isabela's predicament, he does not know what to believe, even after Clavela herself assures Remón of Isabela's innocence:

Yo lo creo; pero temo,
que una flaqueza en mujer
suele á veces vencer
de la virtud el extremo. (p. 439b)

Each time this idea is repeated, the audience is forced to realize that, while it may hold true in certain situations, it is thoroughly inappropriate here, a work in which both female characters are particularly strong. It is also of interest, in this regard, that the notion of woman's inconstancy, a most frequent source of the dramatization of honor problems in the comedia, is wholly undermined in this work. It is men's belief in the fickleness of women which causes all of the problems here, and the active participation of the woman herself is needed to set matters straight.

In El castigo del discreto this motif is incorporated into a sonnet. In the final act Alberto, Ypólita's brother, bemoans the difficulty of maintaining family honor:

No por guardada la muger se puede
tener segura; que en el agua escriue
quien de cuydado y zelos se apercibe,

que mayores sucessos le concede.
 Y assí es razón que de su industria quede
 burlado el que su gusto le prohíbe;
 que es animal que en confianza viue,
 y, en queriéndole asir, el viento excede.
 La priuación que a la mujer destruye,
 alguna vez su perdición ordena
 y a desatinos su flaqueza atiza:
 que mientras más la aprietan más se huye;
 porque es como tomar puño de arena,
 que por qualquiera dedo se desliza. (ll. 2864-2877)

P. N. Dunn has described this sonnet as "a single sustained dramatic irony"⁶ which demonstrates Alberto's jealous and suspicious nature. The sonnet, he says, "is also ridiculously inappropriate to the person to whom it is applied (Ypólita) and therefore fits nicely into a comedy where the notion of honour is brought to the point of burlesque."⁷

One might go even further than Dunn to assert that the sonnet contributes to this burlesque view of honor by using an equivocal presentation of one of the accepted principles of the honor code, i.e.: that women are so weak and perverse that they are easily incited to do precisely what vigilance seeks to avoid. Such a complaint, under other circumstances, might be completely valid; but here, as the audience cannot help but perceive, it is unjustified. Alberto, finding that Ypólita has left home, immediately seizes on what appears to be a sign that she has done something dishonorable. The truth, however, is that she has only gone to the house of a (female) friend. Thus Ypólita, contrary to what Alberto believes, is not the woman described in the sonnet. It is Alberto's exaggerated attention to the signs of a threat to his honor which leads him into error, causing him to misjudge

his sister's character and to assume that her actions have dishonored him. Again, the one obsessed with honor becomes the victim of his own obsession.

Irony is also evident in Lope's use of this motif in El testimonio vengado. Here, a son who is about to accuse his mother falsely of adultery because she refuses to allow him to ride his father's favorite horse says:

¿Qué me detiene el honor
de reina, ni el justo amor
de padre, para creer
que es en efecto mujer,
y capaz de todo error?⁸

The sentiment expressed here is entirely inappropriate to the circumstances, since the Queen's error is of the speaker's own invention.

A similar point is made in La desdichada Estefanía, La corona merecida (in which a wife causes her entire body to be scarred rather than submit to the dishonorable attentions of the King), El halcón de Federico and La inocente Laura. In each of these plays the implications of the frequently repeated "es mujer" are directly contradicted by the actions of the women themselves, and the astute spectator might be led to ponder on a code of behavior based on a "truism" whose validity is thus undermined.

Another type of irony found in several honor plays involves Lope's presentation of honor as a peculiarly Spanish preoccupation. In El caballero del milagro, the action is built around a set of characters of different nationalities. While the conjugal honor conflict is of minimal importance in this work, the concept of honor in general is an important motivation, and characters from different nations are shown

to have very different ideas about honor and its relevance to their own lives.

The protagonist, Luzmán, is a Spaniard, and for him and the other Spaniards in the play honor is of vital importance:

. . . Luzmán salió de España,
cosa que a procurar honor esfuerza,
y ya sabéis la presunción que tiene⁹
el villano más vil que de allá viene.

Luzmán's concern with honor generally revolves around the question of social status and lineage. The fact that he is not of noble birth provides him with his one objective in life:

que solamente gusto,
y para serlo muero,
de parecer a todos caballero. (p. 165b)

Luzmán is determined to acquire the appearance of honor, and he attempts to accomplish this by taking an honorable name:

Mirad que don Luzmán he de llamarme,
y aun quiero de una casa antigua honrarme. (p. 165b)

Considering the name of Lope's protagonist and his preoccupation with lineage, a comment on this name might be in order here. Luzmán appears to be a variant of Guzmán, but while Guzmán derives from Godomán, or descended from the godos (i.e., the true Spanish nobility), Luzmán may reflect the character's desire to lucir, to appear noble.

Filiberto is a character who represents the French view of honor in this work. He is not nearly as bound up with honor problems as his Spanish counterparts. When Luzmán lures away Filiberto's companion, Beatriz, Filiberto expresses, with some humor, the idea that honor is only one of the "possessions" taken from him by Luzmán:

Yo sé que con mil causas me enemisto
 con hombre que la vida me ha quitado,
 la honra, el gusto, la opinión y fama,
 y, últimamente, una francesa dama. (p. 158a)

Later on in the play, when Filiberto is convinced by Luzmán's servant Tristán that Beatriz is being used by an alcahuete, Filiberto feels the dishonor, but as a Frenchman, his love for Beatriz comes first:

Y si esta casa no abraso
 es solo porque deseo
 cobrar mi bien. (p. 169b)

The Italian view of honor is represented by a number of characters. Otavia and Isabela are two other women who have been deceived by Luzmán. Otavia, who throughout much of the work is presented as being in love with Luzmán, finally--upon realizing the true nature of Luzmán's character--decides to marry a poor Italian, Deofrido, who has none of Luzmán's outward graces, but is at least honest and genuinely devoted to her.

Isabela, the young wife of an old but very wealthy Italian, Patricio, shares with her husband a rather off-hand view of honor. Luzmán tricks Isabela into noticing him by staging a scene below her window in which he defends her good name. Isabela reacts accordingly:

¡Oh, español aficionado
 al honor de la mujer! (159b)

The honor he has supposedly defended, however, is undermined by the reward she will give Luzmán:

Entra, español bien nacido,
 y casa y alma te doy,
 que a quien defendió mi fama [sic]
 será de mi casa dueño. (161a)

Thus the caso de honra in this work is built upon a fairly cynical view of honor: a woman who repays honor defended with honor surrendered.

This play contains, perhaps, the most unusual of all resolutions to a caso de honra, and this is related to Lope's presentation of the Italian reaction to what would be, among Spaniards, a serious threat to conjugal honor. Patricio knows why his wife has brought Luzmán into their home, but he also finds Beatriz there, and is attracted to her. Both Isabela and Patricio are satisfied with the situation, and Patricio seems wholly disinclined to behave in the manner of an outraged husband, since his own inclinations are essentially the same as those of his wife.

Of all the "national" reactions to an honor problem, only that of the Spaniard is presented as problematic. The Frenchman is concerned but forgiving; the Italian is amusingly amoral; but the Spaniard lives by a code of honor which forces him to be constantly preoccupied with his own opinión while at the same time encourages him to defame the reputation of others. Furthermore Luzmán, as the primary exponent of Spanish honor in the play, is the only character punished for his misdeeds, and his downfall stems directly from his pursuit of honor.

Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, in his notes to the Academia edition of this comedia, notes that its original title was El arrogante español. Cotarelo suggests that Lope changed the title because it did not really apply to the character: " . . . hubo de reflexionar Lope que su Luzmán nada tenía de arrogante en lo moral, aunque lo fuese en lo físico, y, para evitar equívocos, lo rebautizó definitivamente."¹⁰ A study of the

presentation of the honor theme in this play, however, suggests a very different reason for changing the title. Combined with the rather uncomplimentary presentation of the Spanish preoccupation with honor, the original title may have suggested a little too much direct criticism of a very Spanish system of values. Furthermore, Luzmán is morally arrogant, and perhaps Lope did not want to be too emphatic about the connection between this moral arrogance and the Spanish view of honor.

The protagonists in La contienda de Diego García de Paredes y el Capitán Juan de Urbina are, like Luzmán, Spaniards exiled in Italy. They further resemble Luzmán in that they are presented early in the play as little better than common ruffians who, as Spaniards, are obsessively preoccupied with the idea of honor. Paredes had to leave Spain because of an incident which suggests that a petty offense to his honor was extravagantly avenged:

Mi venida á Italia fué
porque á tres hombres maté
sobre interés de un caballo. (470b)

Urbina, moreover, sees the honor obsession inherent in the fact that he is a Spaniard:

Que soy español, y tengo
mil honras, y en cada una
mil Españas. (472a)

Act One ends with a direct application of the protagonists' overwhelming preoccupation with honor: Paredes kills a Captain of the Pope's army for having criticized Spanish patriotism (patriotism inappropriate under such circumstances, since Paredes and Urbina are fighting on the Pope's side), then kills the soldiers assigned to guard him by the Pope's

general and flees. The insinuation that the (Catholic) Spaniard kills those in the service of the Pope who would criticize loyalty to Spain seems in itself ironic.

As the second act opens, however, the situation has changed, and both Paredes and Urbina have achieved great honor among the Italian forces. Nevertheless, after hearing a gooddeal of praise for the protagonists, the audience is soon shown that if their opinión has changed for the better, their behavior--which might be described as brutality in the name of honor--has not. Urbina becomes involved in a dispute with another soldier--Salcedo--over which of the two should speak first in the presence of the Marqués de Pescara. Salcedo claims that his rank and lineage entitle him to speak first, while Urbina says that his own valor on the battlefield gives him greater honor as a soldier. The dispute ends with a mentís from Urbina (since Salcedo has offended his lineage), a slap from Salcedo and, in consequence, the stabbing of Salcedo by Urbina. A touch of irony might be noted in the fact that the Spaniard, for whom the honor of lineage is of greater importance than the honor derived from virtue, takes the contrary view here in order to protect his own honor.

By the time the matter of conjugal honor is introduced, therefore, the audience has already acquired a good deal of insight into Urbina's attitude toward honor and his very direct means of maintaining it. The conjugal honor conflict is limited--as concerns the play's action, at least--to the second act, and Urbina's violent reaction to the news of his wife's infidelity is another indication both of his

general attitude toward honor problems and of how he will deal with this particular situation. He is given the news by Lucrecia, the wife of the man who is having an affair with Urbina's wife. Before dealing with his wife and her lover, Urbina, following the honor code's demand for secrecy, must first resolve the problem of Lucrecia--

Urbina	Qué, ¿ya no tengo honra?	
Lucrecia		No.
Urbina	Ni tú vida. (485a)	

--and he kills her. Thus Lucrecia becomes the first victim of Urbina's honor vengeance.

Following the death of Lucrecia, Urbina further avenges his dishonor by killing his entire household in a vengeance somewhat reminiscent of that of the Veinticuatro of Córdoba (though Urbina, unlike the Veinticuatro, never seriously questions the nature of honor before carrying out his vengeance). Thus the same Urbina who had challenged Salcedo's contention that honor resides more in reputation than in merit, is now seen to be very much concerned with his own reputation.

This is not, however, the only perspective from which honor is presented in this work. While Urbina is occupied with his honor vengeance, the Marqués de Pescara rejects a very great honor--an offer to become King of Naples--because he refuses to be disloyal to Carlos V:

Yo sirvo al César, al divino Carlos,
 á Carlos, hijo de Filipo de Austria,
 á Carlos, nieto de Fernando quinto:
 he recibido de él muchas mercedes,
 y nombrarme yo ahora rey de Nápoles
 es hacerle traición. (489b)

The Marqués' view of honor is based more on a concern for honorable behavior than on any desire to elevate his own status or increase

his opinión. This view of honor is further reinforced by a letter which the Marqués receives from his wife, in which she agrees that it would be improper for him to accept the offer. With this contrasting view of honor the second act is brought to a close.

At the beginning of the third act, the audience is informed that the Marqués de Pescara has died, and thus begins the contienda referred to in the play's title, as both Paredes and Urbina plead their cases for the opportunity to "inherit" Pescara's arms--and thus greater honor. A secondary line of action which runs through the final act is related to Urbina's honor vengeance, as his wife's brother seeks to avenge his sister's death by killing Urbina. While Urbina is able to outwit his brother-in-law, the original vengeance does become an important motif in the contienda itself, which takes the form of a debate rather than a battle.

As each man speaks, praising himself and maligning his opponent, it becomes obvious that both Paredes and Urbina, though from slightly different perspectives, see their honor only in terms of opinión, thus emphasizing the difference between them and the Marqués de Pescara. Paredes argues that Urbina is of low birth and has been involved in some very disreputable activities (the embustes which make up a large portion of the first act); while he too was involved in the same activities, he at least is of noble birth:

Mas no podrá, que si acaso
de mi virtud duda hubiere,
la nobleza de mi sangre
me las presenta y ofrece.

. . .

El que nunca tuvo armas,

por armas se desvanece:
 ¿cómo quiere las mejores
 quien ningunas mostrar puede? (498a)

While Paredes is proud of his own acts of violence, he accuses Urbina of cruelty in avenging his conjugal honor, and suggests that Urbina's wife may have been innocent (although Lope has made it clear that she was not).

Urbina, in his argument, presents what seems to be an opposing point of view. He is not ashamed of his lineage, but proud to be one who by his deeds will be the founder of a distinguished line:

No es menos gloria el ser yo
 el primero de mi casa,
 pues ser postrero en la suya
 le da á Paredes ventaja. (500a)

He defends the wounding of Salcedo on the grounds that it did not adversely affect his reputation, and says that his vengeance was not cruelty but justice:

Castigar á los culpados
 no es crueldad, cómo él me infama
 pues por miedo del castigo
 tanto respeto me guardan; (501a)

While the arguments of the two contenders seem diametrically opposed to one another, a closer examination of the concept of honor upon which each is based reveals that both Paredes and Urbina--whom Lope has shown to be similar in character from the very beginning--actually share an identical view of honor: honor resides in reputation, and anything that can be seen to increase or maintain this can be used as further evidence of one's right to honor. Thus both those who claim lineage and those who claim personal virtue (valor) as the source of honor succumb to the demands of la opinión.

But it is the arms of the Marqués de Pescara that the two men are arguing over, and just in case the audience is unable to perceive the fact that honor, for the Marqués, rested on very different grounds, Lope has the judges of the contienda make this point clearly in their decision:

¡Que no se den las armas á ninguno! (501b)

In this way, the idea of honor on a more ethical plane is reinforced at the end of the play. Lope thus rejects the generally accepted view of honor presented throughout most of the work. In the final lines, he ironically addresses his audience in such a way as to indicate that his protagonists, whom he describes as feroces, are no match for the original bearer of the arms:

Pues tú mismo, Marqués, las armas goces,
y si fuere mejor darlas á alguno,
juzgue el Senado cuál de estos feroces:
que, dando fin, su autor no determina
si serán de Paredes ó de Urbina. (501b)

Thus there is a distinction drawn between honor in the traditional sense of reputation and honor in the sense of virtue. The two protagonists are presented throughout the play as being engaged in the acquisition or defense of honor through disreputable, dishonorable and brutal means. It is always the result which is seen as important, the effect the action will have on each man's reputation. In contrast with this generally accepted view of honor, the Marqués de Pescara rejects a kingship and the honor that would accompany it because of what he considers to be the dishonorable means required to achieve it. While this very different view of honor enters only briefly in the play's

action, its importance is emphasized as the comedia ends, and the honor truly deserved by the Marqués is judged to belong to him alone. Thus adherence to the traditionally Spanish view of honor is called into question, as those who live by its dictates are shown to be less worthy of reward than those who endeavor to live according to a more ethically oriented concept of honor.¹¹

Further irony directed at the honor code as a Spanish phenomenon may underlie the following passage from Porfiar hasta morir:

Entre todas las naciones
tiene el español valor,
fundado todo su honor
en ajenas opiniones;
y en estas satisfacciones,
que en fin de la honra son,
en que estriba su opinión
aunque fundada en mujer,
veo que debe de ser
la más honrada nación.¹²

While such a view of Spanish honor constitutes an accurate and seemingly favorable definition of the honor code, within the context of the play it is shown to lead to disastrous consequences. The poet Macías (the protagonist) is killed because he refuses to stop reciting love poetry to Clara, the wife of Tello. Everyone knows--even Tello--that no real dishonor is intended, but Macías' death is the only means of removing a real threat to Tello's opinión. As the play serves to demonstrate the problems which may arise from the Spanish obsession with honor, the lines cited above may well be an ironic reference to the nature of Spanish honor.¹³

It has been noted that in Los Comendadores de Córdoba Lope presents the honor obsession from a number of different perspectives.

The juxtaposition of multiple preoccupations with honor often produces conflicts from which ironic situations may arise. In Ursón y Valentín each character's obsession with his own honor is brought into conflict with similar obsessions in other characters. These conflicts generate the action of the whole play, which moves along as a chain reaction in which one preoccupation with honor sets off a new and qualitatively different honor preoccupation in another character.

Uberto is in love with the Queen. When she, defending her own honor, rejects him, he sees himself dishonored by her rejection, as he tells his servant Rolando:

¿No soy yo el Gobernador
de Francia, y aunque señor
dijera, digo verdad?
Pues ¿qué mayor cualidad?
¿qué mayor punto de honor?¹⁴

The Queen's offense to Uberto's honor brings with it a need for vengeance, and Uberto will accomplish this by causing the King to feel the loss of his own honor, accusing the Queen of adultery with another nobleman (who never figures in the play's action). The King, in turn, in order to restore his lost honor, must take vengeance on the Queen. Thus the conjugal honor conflict in this play develops in a sort of vicious cycle: the fear of losing honor passes from one character to another until it returns to destroy the Queen, who started the cycle by defending her honor against Uberto.

In El testimonio vengado Lope presents a similar conflict between different obsessions with honor. In this work there are really two protagonists: the Queen, falsely accused of adultery by her own sons, and Ramiro, an illegitimate son of the King who, ignorant of his

parentage, is living in exile among peasants. Furthermore, within the general scheme of the honor play there is a third "protagonist"--the King, whose conjugal honor is threatened.

The Queen, left in charge of the household by the King, under his specific instructions refuses to allow her son García to ride the King's favorite horse. García, who wants to improve his reputation by being seen riding the horse, considers his mother's decision and the actions of the groom (under the Queen's directions) a personal affront. To avenge the offense he feels he has suffered he will accuse his mother of adultery with the groom.

While García's overly zealous concern for opinión is directly related to the dissipated and superficial life he and his brother Gonzalo lead in the court, their half-brother Ramiro is presented in just the opposite light. Living the life of a simple labrador, he extolls the virtues of the countryside and the honest simplicity of its people:

¿Adónde está la verdad
sino entre la pobre gente?
que la mentira insolente
siempre reina en la ciudad. (607a)

The question of the Queen's honor becomes Ramiro's concern when the Queen is exiled to the country for a year, during which time she must enlist a gentleman to defend her honor against her sons' accusations.¹⁵ The Queen has always resented Ramiro, the King's first-born illegitimate son; but when Ramiro learns the truth about his own birth and the Queen's plight, he immediately offers to come to her defense, and the Queen begins to appreciate her step-son's character:

Reina Hijo, que no lo siendo, me das honra,
 ya que los que lo son me la han quitado,
 Dios te bendiga y guarde.

Ramiro Eso me honra,
 y hoy de nuevo me habéis vos engendrado.

Reina Mi hijo sea no más él que me honra. (619b)

The contrast between Ramiro's virtuous honor and García and Gonzalo's reliance on honra-opinión is brought into even sharper focus when Gonzalo expresses the brothers' anger with the King for allowing Ramiro to defend their mother:

 . . . yo esperaré mejor
 con espada y lanza en mano,
 pues vuelves por un villano,
 habido en bastardo honor. (623a)

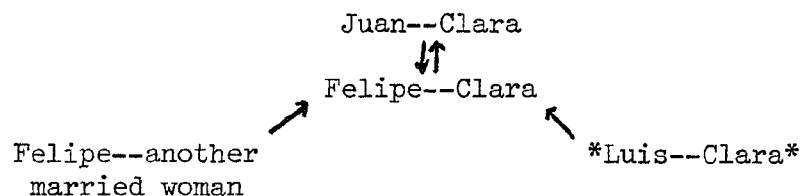
The brothers see the need to fight with a villano as demeaning, despite the fact that Ramiro, too, is the Kings's son. Lope's irony here is worth noting. On the one hand he satisfies the rustic plebeian in his audience in presenting Ramiro as a virtuous labrador; on the other he touches the sensitive question of the insufficiency of lineage (so frequently claimed by the rustic in matters of Old Christian blood purity) by presenting the legitimate sons as morally inferior to the illegitimate Ramiro.

The play ends with Ramiro's victory. The brothers confess their falso testimonio and the Queen declares Ramiro to be her own son, thus making him the legitimate heir to the throne.¹⁶

In these plays, then, the conjugal honor theme serves as a point of departure to present other kinds of honor problems. The portrayal of different characters preoccupied with different aspects of honor would no doubt please Golden Age audiences. Yet by allowing these various concerns to interact, Lope subtly demonstrates one major

failing of the honor code: the fact that the obsession with honor of each individual necessarily comes into conflict with the similar obsessions of others; and such conflict often leads to the fabrication of further honor conflicts. Thus a circular pattern may be observed whereby an effort to restore or maintain honor involves the endangerment of the honor of another person, which must also be maintained, and so on ad infinitum.

The ironic notion that the honor preoccupation itself may lead to the endangerment of a man's honor is presented from a different perspective in one of the comic honor plays, En los indicios, la culpa. The structure of multiple conjugal honor conflicts in this comedia may be diagrammed as follows:



Juan's fear that his honor is in jeopardy is based on his suspicion that Clara and his friend Felipe are lovers. Such suspicion is entirely unwarranted, and is derived from Juan's inclination to make assumptions on the basis of appearances. The signs which he believes point to his dishonor have their origin in two additional casos de honra: an affair between Felipe and a married woman in Barcelona which has come to an end before the commencement of the play's action, and a real threat to Juan's honor from another friend, Luis, who is in love with Clara. Luis, angered by Clara's rejection of him, informs Juan through an anonymous letter that a relationship exists between Felipe and Clara. Since such

an accusation cannot be dismissed without further investigation, Juan looks for indicios which would prove (or disprove) it. He misinterprets what he sees, and is thus led to believe in the truth of the accusation while, at the same time, his attention is distracted from the real threat to his honor posed by Luis' designs on Clara. Felipe's affair in Barcelona is also misinterpreted, as Juan believes that the married woman Felipe refers to is really Clara.

Thus a man's excessive vigilance in matters of honor is shown to be a potential cause of dishonor, since Juan's erroneous suspicions serve to mask the true danger. There is further irony in the fact that none of these conflicts would have developed if Juan had been told immediately about Luis' advances toward Clara; but she does not do so (and swears Felipe to secrecy as well) because, knowing of Juan's tendency to jump to the wrong conclusion where his honor is concerned, she fears the consequences of such a revelation.

At the end of the play, Felipe breaks his vow to Clara: he informs Juan of Luis' duplicity, thus enabling Juan to remove the real threat to his honor. By averting an unjustified honor vengeance and by presenting the action with humor (through a series of comic enredos and the antics of Gonzalo, the play's gracioso), Lope forces the spectator to recognize both the absurdity inherent in the Spanish preoccupation with an honor code so dependent on appearances and the danger of an honor obsession which may actually facilitate dishonor.

In a number of other works, Lope makes equivocal references to the honor code by setting up dialogues in which various views of honor

are discussed. The Spanish honor obsession is rarely criticized directly, but the presentation of alternate views does serve to challenge some of its basic tenets.

In El cuerdo en su casa, Lope builds a good part of the play's action around conflicting notions regarding various aspects of honor. Leonardo's excessive concern for reputation may be seen from the beginning of the work. His attempts to impose his views on his neighbor Mendo reflect the idea that a man may acquire honor by imitating the customs of others:

Quien ser honrado procura,
Mendo, a los que ya lo son
ha de imitar. Pues tenéis
hacienda, es bien que intentéis
serlo en la ajena opinión. (558b)

Mendo's resistance to Leonardo's arguments provides the opposing view:

Señor, si trigo o dinero
o cebada os importare,
aquí estoy, como no pare
en hacerme caballero.
Porque labrador nací,
y labrador moriré. (555a)

The principal action of the play is presented from this double perspective, with Lope apparently favoring the point of view expressed by Mendo. In addition to the dialectic presentation of the honor question, moreover, much of the play's first act is structured around a series of dialogues which present conflicting opinions regarding matters of life, love and honor. The themes of these dialogues may be outlined as follows:

1. Pastoral life: the play opens with a group of peasants who give three versions of the beatus ille theme. Peasant life is presented first as a burden:

La vida, Mendo, contiene
un mismo fin, que es el vivir;
que en el sabio, hasta morir,
con el más rudo conviene. (550a)

3. Appearance and virtue: Antona and Sancho, Mendo's wife and father, discuss the problem of appearances as they relate to conjugal honor. Sancho advises Antona not to dress so well, because it could lead to unfortunate consequences:

No te espantes porque así
te riña por tantas galas;
no por tenerlas por malas,
sino es porque suelen ser,
en una honesta mujer
de los pensamientos alas. (550a)

Antona, however, sees no danger, as true virtue is more important than appearances:

No daré ocasión,
así Mendo os honre,
que por perseguirme
me desmatrimonio;
que no está en galas,
cintas y listones
la virtud del alma,
por quien él me adore. (551b)

4. Conjugal honor: Antona's view of her own conduct is put to the test as Lope introduces material derived from Los Comendadores de Córdoba. Her servant Inés wants her to come to the window to watch the nephews of the Bishop as they ride by, but Antona refuses. Inés insists that no harm will come from looking, but Antona does not want to take the risk:

Nunca te fies del ver,
porque es portillo la vista
por donde el amor conquista
la más hermosa mujer. (552b)

The striking contrast between Antona and Elvira will be demonstrated later on when Elvira does watch the young gentlemen ride by and is attracted to Fernando.

5. Marriage: Leonardo and Mendo narrate the circumstances of their marriages, each of which has its own special quality: Leonardo's is one of convenience and family obligations,

Querría el padre casarme,
y querría más su hacienda,
y aguardaba que yo mismo
se la pidiese sin ella;
mas viendo que le obligaba
la afligida parentela
(que con los ojos ajenos
juzgan de su mal las penas),
dióme de su intento parte,
dióme parte de su hacienda
y casóme con Elvira
con gran regocijo y fiesta. (553a)

while Mendo's is one of love and individual effort:

Mudé vida, tengo hacienda,
tengo labranza y ganados,
y aunque, a Dios gracias, no tenga
necesidad, todo es poco,
pues no puedo hacerla reina.
Pero lo que no le doy
en oro, granas y telas,
le doy en alma y regalos,
joyas de mujer que es buena. (554b)

6. Hidalgo vs. villano: Leonardo and Mendo discuss the merits of becoming an hidalgo. Leonardo sees it as a necessity, while Mendo has no desire to change his way of life (see quotes, p. 169 of this study).

7. Conjugal honor--hidalgo vs. villano: Fernando and Enrique, the "Comendadores" of this play, argue over which kind of married woman it would be easier to conquer. Fernando, who likes Elvira, says the

wife of a laborer is easier to court, while Enrique, who prefers Antona, thinks that the wife of a letrado can be more easily won:

Fernando	Pues un simple, un ignorante, ¿no es más fácil de engañar que quien puede penetrar por muralla de diamante?
Enrique	No; porque un hombre discreto, docto, entendido y letrado, es siempre más confiado, es más seguro y secreto. Reniega de un labrador zafio, rústico y grosero; que al sol la pondrás primero que alguna falta en su honor. (556b)

8. Appearance vs. common sense: Leonardo wants Mendo to adopt customs befitting an hidalgo, but Mendo prefers to continue as he is. In Leonardo's view, appearances are all-important:

Si esto no aprendéis de mí,
siempre seréis carbonero.
Comprad un jarro de plata
y una copa, pues podéis. (559b)

For Mendo, however, common sense prevails:

¿Para qué? Si en vidrio veis
que es más limpia y más barata.
Nunca a mis padres les ví
beber que, por maravilla,
en vidrio; que una escudilla
o un corcho que viene aquí
era su regalo todo.
Pues no soy yo más honrado;
si hay sed, y vengo cansado,
dondequiera me acomodo. (559b)

In the second act, words are translated into actions, as Leonardo and Mendo are seen reacting differently to similar situations. Each character, for example, has to deal with the presence of one of the Bishop's nephews in his home. Leonardo, easily flattered and eager to associate with those of more noble lineage, is completely fooled. He

allows Fernando to engage in conversation with his wife while Mondragón, Fernando's servant, occupies his full attention.

In contrast to that of Leonardo is Mendo's reaction upon learning that Enrique (who has approached Antona under the pretext of wanting to purchase Mendo's horse) is hidden in his house. Having already observed Fernando's surreptitious attentions to Elvira, and naturally suspicious of the two galanes, he simply escorts Enrique to the street:

. . . quiero yo que aqueste entienda
que no ha de entrar aquí, pues yo le he visto;
porque con ver que entiendo lo que pasa,
apenas osará mirar mi casa. (569b-570a)

These two characters are again contrasted in a scene in which each meets Fernando and Enrique in the street. Mendo is far from honored by the fact that the young noblemen tip their hats to him:

Comedimientos fingidos,
descomedimientos son.
Nunca tuve por valor
que el hidalgo y caballero
me quite, padre, el sombrero
para quitarme el honor. (571a)

Leonardo, on the other hand, sees the two noblemen as sources of honor:

Sin brazos nadie subió;
sin amparo nadie vió
su fortuna en alta parte.
¡Grande ventura he tenido
en que aqueste caballero
honre mi casa! Hoy espero
ser honrado y preferido. (571a)

These differing attitudes come into direct conflict when Leonardo suggests that Enrique be made godfather to Mendo's child:

Leonardo	Don Enrique, este sobrino
	del Obispo, mi señor,

es hombre de gran valor:
 hacedle [sic], Mendo, padrino;
 que, con este parentesco,
 os dará la mano en todo.
 Mendo ¡Yo estuviera, dese modo,
 galán, por mi vida, y fresco,
 dándole ocasión a él
 para entrar a paso llano
 a hacer el hijo cristiano
 y la mujer infiel; (571b)

Throughout his presentation of these contrasting views, Lope never explicitly indicates his preference for one over another. However, the ultimate deception of Leonardo at the play's conclusion makes it quite evident that Leonardo's obsession with honor has brought about his own dishonor.

Moreover, the peasant's notion of honor in this work deserves further comment. Mendo refuses to become involved in the pursuit of honor because he perceives the acquisition of honor as leading to its own endangerment. That his cautious approach to honor is effective is demonstrated by his success in warding off the attentions of Enrique. His "restoration" of Leonardo's conjugal honor at the end of the play also points to a cynical attitude toward honor, as Mendo uses the principles of the honor code to deceive Leonardo and thus repay him for his meddling.

While discussions regarding honor constitute a major element of the action of El cuerdo en su casa, a number of works contain discussions which are tangential to the action but which do suggest that the Spanish obsession with honor is, at best, debatable as a governing social principle.

In La bella malmaridada, the Italian Count Escipión, who is in love with Lisbella (the malmaridada of the title), is instructed by his servant Mauricio in the Spanish way of honor, and finds it bewildering because it demands behavior which differs greatly from the Christian principles of morality:

Mauricio	El marido, si lo fuera, [agraviado] acá se usaba en España matar a la hembra el varón.
Conde	Pues esa misma razón por igual a los dos daña. Los que se juntan en uno, siendo por mano de Dios, el daño será en los dos, igual lo fuera en el uno.
(Mauricio)	Siempre el hombre es preferido en esto y en lo demás.
Conde	¿Qué razón para eso das?
Mauricio	No más que ser el marido.
Conde	Luego la ley de la tierra ¿difiere de la ley del Cielo?
Mauricio	Como de ese Cielo al suelo.
Conde	Pues ¿yerra en todo?
Mauricio	Sí yerra. Mas ven acá: ¿Dios no manda que al que me dé un bofetón que le sufra otro?
Conde	Es razón de Dios, en sus leyes anda.
Mauricio	Pues el mundo es de otra suerte, que me manda que le mate, y como de esto no trate quedo infame hasta la muerte. ¹⁷

While the point is made that the honor code must be obeyed if one is to survive in Spanish society, it is also made clear that Spanish honor is incompatible with God's will. Even though most members of the audience might agree with Mauricio's notion that the ley del cielo is simply different from the ley del mundo, some might also be moved to ask themselves why this need be so.

In El animal de Hungría there is a similar opposition between the law of man--again, with regard to honor--and the law of God. Early in the play Teodosia, a Queen who has been unjustly accused of infidelity and forced into exile, expresses the radically unconventional view that vengeance should not be undertaken by man, but should rather be left to the will of God:

Quien deja a Dios sus venganzas
tales esperanzas tenga,
que nunca sucede bien
a quien vengarse desea.¹⁸

At the end of the play Rosaura, Teodosia's niece (who has been raised in complete isolation from human society), also insists that vengeance should be God's prerogative rather than man's, even if that man happens to be a king. When the King wants to kill Felipe, a young man who has killed another man while defending Rosaura's life, Rosaura tells the monarch:

. . .
que una vida que da Dios
no se ha de quitar así.
Vos daréis oro y divisa
de honra al que queráis honrar;
vida no, porque eso es risa;
pues lo que no podéis dar
no lo quitéis tan aprisa. (453b)

When the King replies with a more conventional view of honor and his own role in society, Rosaura persists:

Rey	Dios quiso que hubiese muerte para castigar la culpa. Yo firmo lo que es razón; y el Rey, a la imitación de Dios, da premio y castigo.
Rosaura	Yo no sé leyes; mas digo que es injusta inclinación. (453b)

By putting such words into the mouth of an innocent, Lope may be attempting to avoid any possible accusation that these are his own views.

Ignorant of the ways of society Rosaura, perhaps, may be excused for her rejection of honor. But while the audience might interpret her words in this way, Lope has also managed to convey the idea that the honor code contradicts Divine law.

The need for vengeance is also rejected at the end of El galán escarmentado, when Ricarda says:

La venganza es argumento,
en el hombre, de bajeza,
y el perdón, de la nobleza
y del buen entendimiento. (152b)

Lope's careful placement of such sentiments is in evidence here, too: the vengeance to which Ricarda refers is not a blood vengeance in the name of honor, but Celio's rejection of her in exactly the same way she rejected him when she was engaged to marry Julio. Furthermore, the audience knows that Celio has every intention of marrying her. Thus Ricarda's lines criticize vengeance without appearing (in the context of the scene) to make a direct attack on the honor code itself.

Lope uses a similar technique to question the validity of la opinión. In Los embustes de Celauro the protagonist Lupercio, arguing with his father, questions the old saying that the voice of the people (i.e., la opinión) is the voice of God:

Lupercio	¿Quién te ha dicho que me caso?
Gerardo	El pueblo, que es voz de Dios.
Lupercio	No es su voz en cualquier caso, ni es el pueblo un hombre o dos, o una calle por quien paso.
Gerardo	¿Cómo no?
Lupercio	Pruébolo.
Gerardo	Di.

Lupercio Si aquel que me envidia a mí
 lo dice de malicioso,
 voz de Dios y de envidioso
 no puede ser.¹⁹

The idea that public opinion can often be more a function of envy than of truth is demonstrated later on in this work when Lupercio himself is deceived by the envious Celauro into believing that his wife Fulgencia has been unfaithful to him.

In El castigo sin venganza, contrasting views of public opinion are presented by a single character, the Duke of Ferrara. At the beginning of the first act, the Duke seems to disdain la opinión when his servant suggests that a head of state ought to find out what his subjects think of him. The Duke replies:

. . . el vulgo no es censor
 de la verdad, y es error
 de entendimientos groseros
 fiar la buena opinión
 de quien inconstante y vario,
 todo lo juzga al contrario
 de la ley de la razón. (ll. 150-156)

Less than a hundred lines later, however, the Duke shows himself to be quite concerned with la opinión when he refuses to attend the performance of a comedia, fearing that he might hear some uncomplimentary truth about himself:

Basta que oí del papel
 de aquella primera dama
 el estado de mi fama;
 bien claro me hablaba en él.
 ¿Que escuche me persuades
 la segunda? Pues no ignores
 que no quieren los señores
 oír tan claras verdades. (ll. 226-233)

It is, of course, this second view, this obsessive preoccupation with the opinions of others, which will motivate the Duke's actions

throughout the play, eventually leading him to carry out a castigo sin venganza.

At the beginning of Del mal lo menos there is a discussion of still another aspect of the honor code: the mentís. In the following dialogue Juan, the protagonist, tries to explain to his servant Monzón the true nature of the mentís and why it must be avenged, while Monzón questions why the mentís should be considered such a serious affront in a society in which everyone lies:

Monzón	¡Qué terribles leyes son las del mundo! Por un tris ha de haber luego un mentís y al mentís un bofetón.
Juan	El bofetón es afrenta terrible, y determinada a un mentís, bien ordenada al decir que un hombre mienta; porque es la infamia mayor, y la mayor calidad de un noble tratar verdad.
Monzón	Loco está el mundo, señor; porque si el mentir afrenta, ¿cómo tantos hombres mienten?
Juan	Porque está en que los afrenten que un hombre la afrenta sienta.
Monzón	De suerte que el daño obliga, para que se satisfaga, no que la infamia se haga, sino en que el otro lo diga. Miente el que trata la dama del amigo y la mujer; miente el que le viene a ver y a sus espaldas la infama; . . . miente el que calla y ofenda lo que era razón que alabe; miente el que humilde nació y blasona de ser noble: . . .
Juan	No pensé que hoy acabaras; que en materia de mentir mucho se puede decir.

Monzón Píntanle al mundo dos caras;
 y si está tan recebido [sic]
 el mentir como decía,
 ¿por qué es afrenta el mentís?
 Juan Porque anda el mundo fingido
 y sólo decirlo obliga
 al que lo quiere encobrir, [sic]
 que todos quieren mentir
 y que nadie se lo diga.²⁰

In Juan's final lines Lope points out the irony which underlies life in a society dominated by the honor code: since such a society functions as a lie, anyone who tries to reveal that fact is committing an offense, both to the individual being challenged and, by inference, to the society itself. This humorous exchange of views is transformed into action when, at the end of the play, the King saves his own reputation--and greatly increases Juan's--by arranging a marriage for Juan which is made possible by a lie: the King's fabrication of a letter from the King of Spain in which Juan is said to be nobly born. Since no one would be so bold as to offend the King with a mentís, the society where truth consists of unchallenged fictions is shown to be successful in accomplishing its objectives.

The dialogues cited here have a dual function. On the one hand, they confirm the audience's obsession with honor by indicating that such is the way society operates. On the other hand, however, they also contain ideas (that vengeance is contrary to God's law; that public opinion is untrustworthy; that fiction under such circumstances is more acceptable than fact) which, if heeded, would suggest that there is something wrong with a society which functions in this way.

More explicit in their criticism of the honor system are the invectives against honor which appear in a number of plays. All contain a direct challenge to the honor code. Moreover, many of them function ironically within the play itself. In Los embustes de Fabia, Catulo, Fabia's husband, utters the following brief invective just as Lelio, acting under Catulo's instructions, prepares to kill Fabia:

¡Ay, honra, seas maldita,
que sufres tanto rigor! (87a)

Catulo, a most unusual comedia husband, seems to take his own words seriously, and prevents the killing from taking place. This disregard for the demands of honor, however, will later prove to be Catulo's undoing. His failure to act in the name of honor will lead to a situation in which he must commit suicide in order to prevent himself from being publicly dishonored by the Emperor. The compassion which caused him to spare Fabia's life is thus of little use in a society in which the maintenance of honor is an absolute necessity.

In El perseguido, the following speech is pronounced by Arnaldo, a man whose wife has told him that another man has tried to seduce her:

¡Qué peligrosos enojos
son los que causa el honor!
En qué parte de la tierra
distinta ó inhabitable
la fe del hombre se encierra?
Pues ya el mundo miserable,
todo es traición, todo es guerra.
¿Adónde está la verdad,
la lealtad, el amistad?
Pero subieronse al cielo,
que las echaron del suelo
la mentira y falsedad.²¹

Arnaldo declares here that real human virtues such as trust, honesty and loyalty are incompatible with the value system required in a world

in which honor takes precedence above all other considerations. In such a world, it is suggested, betrayal is more common than loyalty, and truth has been supplanted by falsehood.

This invective has a double meaning within the play. The husband believes that Carlos, the protagonist, has attempted to seduce his wife. The audience, however, knows that it is the wife herself who has fabricated this story in order to punish Carlos for his rejection of her. Thus, Carlos has been a loyal and honest friend--it is, in fact, his own ethical conduct which has provoked the false accusation against him. Arnaldo's realization that the preoccupation with honor can lead to "peligrosos enojos" is critical in this work, as he refuses to take the accusation at face value before ascertaining all of the facts, an insistence that leads to the discovery that it is his wife who is really guilty.

In Ursón y Valentín the King inveighs against the conflict between love and honor from which honor must inevitably emerge victorious:

No llares a mi furor,
de la honra y del amor:
y, ¡cómo abrasáis los dos!
amor, ríndete, ¡por Dios!
que ha de vencer el honor.
Quisiera, siendo posible,
dulce amor, que tú vencieras,
pero el honor es terrible,
y hame mandado que mueras,
puesto que fuera imposible. (432a)

Here the desire that love be the stronger force yields to the recognition that a man's first obligation is to his reputation, and that the demands of honor must be observed. The audience, however, knows that the Queen is innocent, and the invective, therefore, functions ironically,

suggesting that the obsession with honor can lead to unjust and inappropriate actions.

In La vitoria de la honra Valdivia, the offended husband, declaims:

¡Ah, Dios! ¡Quién fué aquel
que el honor del hombre puso
en la mujer, y dispuso
que la limpiase el acero?²²

This question, frequently asked in the comedia, must be viewed as ironic when its context is considered; for it is Valdivia himself, acting on his fear that his wife may dishonor him, who drives her to infidelity.²³

Similarly, in La inocente Laura, Roberto, Laura's husband, having been deceived by a false accusation, acts to avenge his honor. Here the denunciation of honor is proclaimed after he has stabbed his wife:

¡Ay, honor, fiero enemigo!
Maldiga el cielo tu nombre,
pues no hay hombre a quien no asombre
que el honor pudiese hacer
que flaquezas de mujer
fuesen infamias de un hombre.²⁴

But the audience knows that Laura is innocent. Furthermore, it is Roberto's own obsession with honor which causes him to ignore Laura's plea that he not leave her and to believe that Ricardo, her accuser, because of his noble lineage, must be an honorable man. Thus it is not Laura's weakness but the honor obsession itself which leads Roberto to his vengeance.

On two other occasions the origins of the honor code are questioned in invectives which are ironic both in function and in content. In La contienda de Diego García de Paredes Urbina says:

¡Ay honra, que introducida
 fuiste en el mundo, de alguno
 que no la dejó a ninguno,
 porque la tuvo ofendida!
 ¿Qué bárbaro pudo hacer
 que de quel bien, en que cabe
 tanto bien, tenga la llave
 una mudable mujer?
 ¡Que esté sin culpa el varón
 sirviendo su patria y rey
 y que le alcance esta ley,
 de la infamada opinión! . . . (487a)

Almost identical terms are used by the Duke in El Castigo sin venganza:

¡Ay, honor, fiero enemigo!
 ¿Quién fue el primero que dio
 tu ley al mundo? ¡Y que fuese
 mujer quien en sí tuviese
 tu valor, y el hombre no!
 Pues sin culpa el más honrado
 te puede perder, honor,
 bárbaro legislador
 fue tu inventor, no letrado.
 Mas dejarla entre nosotros
 muestra que fuiste ofendido,
 pues esta invención ha sido
 para que lo fuesen otros. (11. 2811-2823)

Both characters lament the fact that a man can be without guilt and still lose honor because of a woman. It has already been noted, however, that while their wives are guilty of adultery, these two characters are themselves far from blameless.

The notion that honor was invented by an ignorant and barbarous "ofendido" so that others could be offended is ironic in itself. If honor was born out of ignorance and envy, why should it be considered el bien más alto by an entire society? Why, furthermore, should anyone go to such great lengths to protect something which has such base origins?

In each of these plays, the husband complies fully with the honor code by committing a particularly brutal vengeance which unsuccessfully seeks to hide the fact that any offense has taken place. It may be worth noting, in this regard, that this may represent further irony on Lope's part, demonstrating that the honor code is as flawed in its application as it is in its origins.

In La desdichada Estefanía, Fernán denounces honor when he is finally "shown" that Estefanía is guilty:

¡Oh, casa de infamia llena,
 ¿una muger que no es buena,
 puede aniquilarla más!
 ¿Sirben esos blasones
 en mil dorados pabesses,
 esos luzidos arneses,
 y esos colgados pendones?
 ¿Sirben esos roeles
 de los Castro, sienpre honrrados,
 ya de la infamia manchados,
 de aquellas manos crueles?
 ¡Arcos honrrados, pluguiera
 a Dios que aquí mismo día,
 sobre mí y Estefanía
 vrā. máquina cayera! (ll. 2282-2296)

In addition to the fact that Estefanía is innocent, Fernán's reference to the honor of his lineage is highly equivocal. He complains, first, that a family whose reputation rests legitimately on heroic deeds may be suddenly destroyed by an offense to the conjugal honor of one of its descendants. Thus even the honored dead may suffer the consequences of dishonor. In the last four lines of his speech, however, Fernán also suggests that the very trappings of this family honor are a weight that can kill.

While the fragility of honor is frequently mentioned in the invectives, this theme is dealt with at length in Peribáñez through the use of a metaphor:

¡Oh caña, la del honor!
 Pues no hay tan débil caña
 como el honor a quien daña
 de cualquier viento el rigor.
 Caña de honor quebradiza,
 caña hueca y sin sustancia,
 de hojas de poca importancia,
 con que su tronco entapiza.
 ¡Oh caña, toda aparato,
 caña fantástica y vil,
 para quebrada sutil,
 y verde tan breve rato!
 Caña compuesta de nudos,
 y honor al fin dellos lleno,
 sólo para sordos bueno
 y para vecinos mudos!
 Aquí naciste en Ocaña
 conmigo al viento ligero:
 yo te cortaré primero
 que te quiebras, débil cana. --²⁵

The image is a striking one, and most graphically describes an aspect of honor which appears, but is rarely defined, in many of Lope's honor plays. That honor is fragile, like a single reed at the mercy of the elements, is an essential part of the honor code; but this is not all: honor is hollow, and like the reed has no life-giving sap (sustancia) running through it. Its weak and hollow stalk supports no beautiful leaves, as do the stems of other plants.

The image continues to build in intensity. Honor is unreal, toda aparato, fantástica. Like the reed it is a lowly sort of object, short-lived and seemingly destined to be broken. Spaced along its length are numerous knots, or obstacles which, once perceived and transmitted to others, can present grave difficulties. Only those incapable of

perceiving such obstacles, says Peribáñez, are safe from honor's grasp (the sordos and those blessed with vecinos mudos).

This is very different from the other invectives. It contains the most elaborately developed criticism of honor based on a single poetic image. It is also the only occasion on which the honor code is challenged by a villano. These observations may serve to bring into focus the multiple ironies of the speech. For some members of the audience, Peribáñez' eloquence might be seen to confirm the villano's supremacy in matters of honor (the inherent honor of the cristiano-viejo rustic is referred to frequently in the work). Seen in this regard, however, it must be noted that it is the villano himself who most devastatingly challenges the validity of the honor code. Other members of the audience--those who would have the villano possess less honor than the noble--might see in Peribáñez' complaints evidence of his ignorance; yet at the same time it is this peasant who describes more clearly than any other of Lope's characters the nature of honor and the problems it generates.

The invectives against honor in Lope's honor plays thus serve a number of purposes. All point out the agony of being obliged to live according to the demands of honor. In addition to this, some of them reflect ironically on the play's action, while others deal ironically with the nature of honor itself. While the honor code is ultimately upheld in these plays, Lope's inclusion of such invectives would suggest that he, at least, had some serious questions regarding the Spanish obsession with honor.

A special brand of irony which appears throughout Lope's literary production is his use of a literary persona: a character bearing the name of Belardo (or another of Lope's pseudonyms) whose obvious purpose is to represent the author himself. S. Griswold Morley has described these characters as follows:

When one speaks of a character representing Lope, one does not mean, at least I do not mean, merely that the figure expresses a thought that Lope entertained or could have entertained; if that were all, one could find Lope in every column. What does a dramatist do but put his own thoughts, evil or noble, into the mouths of his imaginary personages? Were they not his own thoughts, he could not write them. No; in seeking for "pseudonyms of Lope" one must ferret out definite concrete allusions to his own life . . . ²⁶

For the purposes of this study, however, Morley's criteria are at once too broad and too narrow. That a character shares some biographical detail with his creator is of little interest if he says or does nothing of significance within the play. On the other hand, a character bearing the name Belardo, though presenting no biographical information whatsoever, might be a key figure in a comedia. Morley himself reminds his reader that Belardo was "a name that . . . meant no one but Lope to his contemporaries."²⁷ In this sense, the audience, even without biographical cues, might be inclined to pay special heed to the words and actions of any Belardo. For these reasons, the present study will consider the portrayal of any character going under one of the pseudonyms cited by Morley who contributes anything of interest to one of Lope's honor plays.

The best known Belardo in any of these works is the character who appears in Peribañez. The automatic identification of Belardo with Lope has led many critics to attempt to derive from the details

given by Belardo an accurate date for the composition of the play. Courtney Bruerton, in his review of such criticism, takes a rather cynical view of these attempts: "In the play Belardo is also called a leñador. If it should be discovered that Lope amused himself in 1616 by chopping wood, should we assume that this comedia must have been written in 1616-1617?"²⁸ Bruerton further asserts that "it is rash to assume that details which may have to do only with characters and plot must have autobiographical import as well."²⁹ Going beyond details indicated by Bruerton it should be of interest, then, to see how Belardo functions as a character within the context of Peribáñez to see if, as Lope's personal "representative," he has anything to contribute to a study of Lope's presentation of the honor theme.

The brief appearances of Belardo in Peribáñez are limited to three scenes in the third act.³⁰ The first of these portrays the arming of Peribáñez by the Comendador and can be viewed, as Noël Salomon has pointed out, as parodic in nature.³¹ Salomon, who feels that Lope has cleverly inserted in the comedia an ironic comment on the awarding of an hábito de Santiago to Rodrigo Calderón,³² notes how Lope achieves a subtle ambiguity in Peribáñez by developing an idea simultaneously along two different planes of action. Thus the scene in which Peribáñez is armed can be viewed both as a rustic parody in which the peasants are the subject of ridicule, and, at the same time, as an ironic comment on the structure of Spanish society--by showing the old-Christian peasant as superior to the new Christian nobleman.

The function of Belardo in this scene is of particular interest if we see the scene as having the ambiguous structure suggested by Salomon. When the Comendador agrees to arm Peribañez, Belardo says to his companion:

Híncate, Blas, de rodillas;
que le quieren her hidalgo. (ll. 2546-2547)

Even these seemingly straightforward lines have a dual function. In the first place, they underscore the seriousness of what is about to occur, albeit ironically, by reminding Blas--and the audience as well--that this is a solemn and formal ceremony. Belardo's use of the rustic pronunciation her for hacer, however, in the following line, diminishes the solemnity of the occasion as it reminds the audience that these are only, in fact, peasants.

When Blas asks Belardo,

Belardo, vos, que sois viejo,
¿hanle de dar con la espada? (ll. 2550-2551)

Belardo replies:

Yo de mi burra manchada,³³
de su albarda y aparejo
entiendo más que de armar
caballeros de Castilla. (ll. 2552-2555)

Belardo's lines lend to the scene an equivocal note of humor which makes it difficult to consider the scene on a single plane. On the one hand, the audience is well aware that, as far as personal merit is concerned, Peribañez is not unworthy of honor. On the other hand, Belardo reminds them that, as far as outward appearances are concerned, there is something highly unorthodox about the whole ceremony, in which Peribañez and his companions are transported into a world of formal honors in which they are entirely out of place.

The next appearance of Belardo is the one which has received so much critical attention because of the autobiographical details which Lope may or may not be presenting. It is not the intention of this study to attempt to ascertain the meaning of "tres dieces y un nueve (l. 2345)" and "Esos y otros tres (l. 2346)" or the possible implications of the fact that Belardo describes himself as sacristán (l. 2341). What is of interest, however, is the critical confusion generated by these references. While the critics dispute whether Belardo gives Lope's age as forty-two or sixty-nine, one wonders if the real clue about Lope's attitude toward these "autobiographical" details might not be contained in two subsequent lines,

Cuando la Cava nació
me salió la primera muela. (ll. 2350-2351)

or in Belardo's assertion that

yo sé escribir sin leer,
que a fe que es gracia bien nueva. (ll. 2360-2361)

As Lope's alter ego, Belardo does provide significant information about his creator, but it is not information about his life or his age. Belardo is, in fact, revealing Lope at his most playful, as a creator of deliberate ambiguity and confusion, refusing to let himself be taken seriously and providing his audience with a few moments of comedy at his own expense. And this Belardo is very much in keeping with the Belardo of the earlier scene: the cynic who injects into a scene of utmost solemnity a voice of irreverent humor.

Later on in the same scene, Belardo appears again in a brief dialogue with Inés. This follows two other dialogues of a similar

nature. The first presents Casilda's farewell to Peribáñez--in a mock courtly style--and her parting gift to Peribáñez of a listón negro, which Peribáñez sees as an evil omen. The second dialogue, between Blas and Costanza, is a parody of the first. The third, also parodic, seems to have as its sole purpose a further indication that Belardo is a pseudonym for Lope:

Inés	Traedme un moro, Belardo
Belardo	Días ha que ando tras ellos, mas, si no viniere en prosa, desde aquí le ofrezco en verso. (ll. 2446-2449)

It might be noted that the aspect of Lope with which Belardo identifies himself here is not Lope's life but his art. This is fully in keeping with the image of Belardo presented in his previous appearances.

Belardo's final appearance marks the departure of Peribáñez with his troop of peasant soldiers. Belardo's first comment refers to the peasants' observation of the group of noble soldiers marching past:

¡Que piensen estos judíos
que nos mean la pajuela! (ll. 2460-2461)

These lines relate to the words uttered by Costanza, who describes these soldiers as

La compañía
de los hidalgos cansados. (ll. 2452-2453)

As Joseph H. Silverman has pointed out,³⁴ the term cansado, as it is used here, has the same meaning as Belardo's reference to judíos; and this, in turn, can be seen reflected in Salomon's interpretation of the term burra manchada (see above, n. 33). Belardo's later lines, which bring the scene to a close, provide a further uncomplimentary view of these hidalgos, whom he describes as cowards:

Ya los vi a todos huir
cuando corrimos el toro. (ll. 2476-2477)

These words, however, also serve to remind the audience of the opening scenes of the play and the running of the bull which brings the Comendador to Peribáñez' house. In those early scenes, the Comendador is portrayed as a brave, not cowardly, nobleman, and it is this very bravery on his part which causes him to be injured. Thus Belardo's comments again lend a subtle ambiguity to the scene. On one plane, the admiration in which the nobility is normally held is undermined by the implication that their blood is not so pure as that of the villanos. On another plane, however, by reminding the spectator, albeit indirectly, of the Comendador's earlier behavior, the audience is prevented from simply dismissing the Comendador as a cowardly hidalgo cansado.

Thus, throughout the play, Belardo-Lope has a specific dramatic function. He is the cynic, the minor character who generates ambiguity by questioning what others blindly accept. As Peribáñez receives his arms, Belardo reminds the audience who he is; when Belardo seems to be giving real information about Lope, he then steps back and laughs at the spectator for believing him; when the peasants see the nobles as cowards, Belardo provides a subtle reminder that they cannot all be seen in that light. Belardo, then, is not so much the Lope who lives outside his work as the Lope who is present in every one of his plays: controlling everything and, at times, using his alter ego to suggest that things are not always so simple as they appear to be.

This view of Belardo is borne out by an examination of his appearance in a number of other honor plays. In Ursón y Valentín,

Belardo is a peasant whose views on everything are filtered through a lens of cynicism. In Act I he intervenes in a lovers' quarrel to present a far from idealistic view of love which, he says, feeds on appearances:

Y es que, como el hombre mira
sólo al balcón del deleite,
el alma cubre de afeite,
y el corazón de mentira. (433b)

His own experience in love, continues Belardo, has taught him that insincerity is a necessity:

Si lisonjeo la hermosa,
la vendo como el amigo,
y en lo mismo que digo
estoy sintiendo otra cosa.
Solicito que me quiera;
y si la vengo alcanzar,
ya tengo lleno el lugar
de que es muy necia y muy fiera. (434a)

In the second act (which takes place some twenty years after the first) Belardo vents his cynicism on the King's impending arrival:

¡Al Rey, que me trabuca
la ropa y cuanto tenga?
¡Bien dormiré cuando cansado venga!
Estése en su palacio
y déjeme en mi choza. (451b)

It might be noted that the word cansado appears in this speech with reference to the King himself, adding to this peasant's cynical view of royalty a possible note of outright disdain.

Finally, in the third act, upon learning that the woman he has been protecting for the past twenty years was really the Queen in disguise, Belardo reacts in a completely unexpected manner:

Bien se lo tengo servido:
una reina he mantenido
a costa de mis dineros,

y he criado un infanzón
que me ha comido mi hacienda. (463b)

While the major action of this play glorifies the virtues of loyalty, fidelity and compassion for one's fellow man, Belardo's commentaries serve to inject a note of comic pragmatism into the proceedings. This decidedly anti-idealistic tone, in turn, provides the audience with what amounts to an outsider's view of the action, a view which, through humor, tends to look somewhat askance at the noble deeds being carried out by the major characters.

In El piadoso veneciano, Lope even presents a cynical view of himself, not, this time, through the words of the peasant Belardo, but through a description of him given by his daughter Silvia:

Es tentado de leer,
y aunque es hombre labrador,
se desvanece á dotor
y precia de bachiller.³⁵

Lope seems to make his appearance under two different pseudonyms --Belardo and Fénix--in the third act of La inocente Laura. Fénix, a truhán, is not a separate character, but rather a disguise assumed by Laura, who has narrowly escaped being killed by her husband. Belardo, a peasant, accompanies Fénix in the role of servant. In the following lines, the cynical tone of other Belardos is easily discernible as this Belardo describes his life as a poet:

Belardo	Yo le he sido en mi lugar casi por toda mi vida; pero es oficio endiablado.
Laura	¿Cómo?
Belardo	Después que he pensado una cosa nunca oída, sale al paso un murmurante de gorra y aun de bonete y da desde una hasta siete con más voz que un elefante. (364b-364a)

It is of some interest that the characters Belardo and Fénix appear in the same work, but it does seem more likely that the name Fénix is to be understood here more in its mythological context (as one who has been resurrected) than as still another desdoblamiento of Lope.

Belardo appears in El valeroso catalán as a court jester with a fondness for low humor, as can be seen in this discussion of the English origins of the new Queen, Isabel:

Lucinda	Y ¿de dónde es natural?
Belardo	De las Ingles, me han contado.
Lucinda	Según eso, habrá escapado de algún peligro sin mal.
Belardo	Su padre es el Rey inglés, inglés o inglesa es la dama: de mala parte se llama, no sé ¡par Dios! si lo es. (425b)

Here again, the exalted position accorded to royalty is undermined by the words of Belardo.

In La bella malmaridada, Los embustes de Celauro and La corona merecida Belardo, quite literally, plays the fool. In La bella malmaridada he appears as an incredibly slow-witted escudero who is easily tricked into conspiring against his mistress. In Los embustes de Celauro, the Belardo character is a thoroughly ridiculous peasant who refuses to get married unless his bride is dressed to his liking. Even with this paradigm of rustic humor, however, Lope manages to introduce a note of cynicism. When asked if he knows what marriage is, Belardo replies:

Un buen día, cena y baile, y aun sé que cierto fraile dijo que era sacramento.
Pero lo que fuere, sea; cuando el hombre tiene amor, nunca escoge lo mejor, que no hay ojos con que vea. (123b-124a)

La corona merecida portrays Belardo as a villano who wants to spend all of the village resources on a celebration welcoming the new Queen. He gives as his reason the view that the reputation of the whole village will suffer if an appearance of wealth is not feigned:

Regidor,
cumplir cosas del honor
no es lo que la hacienda acaba.
Esta reina es extranjera:
¿qué escribirá de nosotros
á su tierra, si vosotros
la tratáis desa manera?
Y ¿es bueno que de un lugar
que cien vecinos encierra,
se diga en Inglaterra
que no sabemos gastar
ni empeñar lo que topamos,
cuando y más nuestra haciendas?³⁶

The idea that the town's reputation in England is at stake can only be viewed as irony (although Belardo himself does not intend it as such). With all of the importance he attaches to appearances, in any case, Belardo, when he finally appears before the Queen, can be seen for what he really is: an ignorant peasant giving an extremely rustic welcome to a royal personage who will not think twice about him or his village.

In Don Lope de Cardona, the Belardo character has a somewhat different function. Here he appears as a fisherman who, after rescuing the protagonist from drowning, speaks to the King on his behalf. According to A. W. Bork, Lope is using Belardo in this play to present his own defense of the Duke of Sessa, who had recently been banished from Madrid.³⁷ If this, in fact, is the case, it is not surprising that Belardo here shows none of the cynical attributes of Lope's other Belardos.

Lope's most striking use of Belardo is in Las ferias de Madrid. Morley, on the basis of his autobiographical criteria, claims that

Belardo here does not represent Lope.³⁸ But studying Belardo from the perspective of the play itself, one finds that the Belardo of Las ferias de Madrid bears a number of functional similarities to the Belardos of other plays. The Belardo figure, it has been noted, is used to portray a cynical point of view which is often at variance with the general view of things presented throughout the rest of the work. He is something of an iconoclast, which he may hide behind the mask of a fool. In Las ferias de Madrid Belardo at first upholds the traditional view of conjugal honor and the role of the father of an adulterous wife. Then, however, he suggests a number of non-traditional solutions to the problem, and finally arrives at the most unconventional realization that the death of the offended husband will protect his honor better than the death of the guilty wife.³⁹ This cynically pragmatic solution of an honor conflict is very much in keeping with the attitudes expressed by other Belardos with reference to other, less controversial matters. More a real character than the other Belardos, in Las ferias de Madrid he fulfills his function with actions as well as with words, and the death of Patricio at the end of the play is one of the most cynical comments on the honor code presented in any of Lope's honor plays.

One might conclude, finally, that Belardo, in general, is the ironic character par excellence. Going under a name known by the audience to refer to his creator, Belardo indirectly offers to the perceptive spectator or reader a number of humorous hints as to Lope's own attitudes and views. While his role is usually a minor one, he is

generally instrumental in presenting the action from a new perspective, thus offering an additional plane on which the work may be understood.

In La vitoria de la honra, a servant named Lope--not Belardo--has a fairly large role in the play's action. In the first act he suggests that his master's love-at-first-sight reaction to a married woman is more typical of the comedia than it is of real life. Near the end of the play Lope, hiding from an avenging husband with a Moorish servant named Dorotea (another intriguing choice of names), reminds his companion of the fate of the entire household in Los Comendadores de Córdoba. Here in a sense, there is an instance of Lope as playwright stepping out of his play for a moment to remind his audience of another play he has written. Lope (the character) is the ultimate pragmatist who, after losing his master in an honor vengeance, escapes further retribution by becoming the loyal servant of the victorious husband. Here the essential cynicism behind his behavior puts him in the same league as the Belardo characters studied.

While Lope did use a number of other pseudonyms in his honor plays, none appears with the frequency or functional consistency of the Belardo characters. In the first act of El animal de Hungría, Lope appears as a barber named Pablos who tells a group of villanos why he has decided to give up writing comedias. Pablos here is all Lope, and his long speech bears no relation whatever to the action of the play. In El valeroso catalán, in addition to the Belardo character, there is also a servant named Carpio who expresses pride in his lineage:

Carpio soy, y de una aldea,
de gente pobre aunque hidalga; (409b)

Such other Lope personae, then, do have dramatic functions within the plays, but these are generally different from those of the Belardos. Any use of a pseudonym within a play almost inevitably has ironic possibilities, but Lope's use of names other than Belardo does not generally seem to have a particularly ironic function within the context of the specific action developed in these works. The ubiquitous Belardo is, on the other hand, a distinctly ironic character who, attracting the audience's attention by bearing his author's best-known pseudonym, proceeds to contribute as a character to the complexity of the play itself with incisive remarks and, in the case of Las ferias de Madrid, decisive actions.

Finally, Lope has given several of his honor plays ironic titles. In El valeroso catalán it is not Remón (the catalán of the title) around whom the action of the play is developed, but rather Clavela, the character who inadvertently causes and later resolves the caso de honra. The protagonist might be valeroso, but it is not so much his valor which is emphasized as it is the valor and perseverance of Clavela. Furthermore, it will be recalled that this is one of the works in which Lope makes ironic use of the "es mujer" motif. Thus the title, by ignoring the woman and praising the man, may be suggesting that Golden Age audiences, in their overwhelming approval of the honor code, might not be willing to accept an honor play whose title gives the woman a major role in the resolution of an honor conflict.

In the final lines of El más galán portugués, Lope himself suggests that the play's title is inappropriate as the Duke says:

Pues llamalda injustos celos,
y no Duque de Berganza. (401b)

This may be the closest Lope comes in a comedia to an explicit challenge to the obsession with honor, for here the suggestion is that the play is not about the Duke of Berganza but rather about the ever intrusive injustos celos of an honor obsessed character--whose "identity" is marked by his obsession rather than his name.

Explicit irony may also be seen in the title En los indicios, la culpa, a play in which the signs of guilt are all the result of deliberate deception and an obsessive preoccupation with appearances.⁴⁰

Finally, the Duke of Ferrara's castigo sin venganza has been shown to be a true vengeance according to the principles of the honor code. It has also been demonstrated that even the Duke's intention that the vengeance be seen as a castigo does not hide the real motive behind his actions. This particular title has, in fact, provoked a good deal of critical disagreement, ranging from the notion that Lope really intended to call the play La venganza sin castigo to various attempts to explain why the Duke's vengeance was really not a vengeance.⁴¹ The irony in the title lies in the fact that it points to its own inaccuracy in order to comment on an honor system which must be upheld by a vengeance which does not seem to avenge and requires a deception which does not succeed in deceiving.

Lope's ironic and equivocal presentation of honor is often accompanied by a number of techniques in characterization which also serve to challenge the honor code and its acceptance by Golden Age audiences. In the following chapter, a number of such techniques will be examined.

Notes to Chapter V

¹See Richard W. Tyler, A Critical Edition of Lope de Vega's La corona de Hungría (Estudios de Hispanófila, no. 20, 1972), pp. 23-24, 34. Diego Marín based his detailed comparison of versification in the two works on the fact that one was a refundición of the other. See Uso y función de la versificación dramática en Lope de Vega (Valencia: Castalia, 1962), pp. 85-89.

²Ac. N. VIII, p. 501b.

³Acad. XIV, p. 463a.

⁴Kennedy, p. 37.

⁵Acad. VIII, p. 406a.

⁶"Some uses of sonnets," p. 214.

⁷Dunn, "Some uses of sonnets," p. 215.

⁸Acad. VII, p. 605a.

⁹Ac. N. IV, p. 149b. The significance of peasant honor and Lope's attitude toward it will be discussed in Chapter VII.

¹⁰Ac. N. IV, p. x.

¹¹The notion of honor in this play and in El caballero del milagro is presented less with regard to conjugal honor than with regard to other aspects of the honor problem. While the present study is limited to conjugal honor plays, different types of honor must be discussed insofar as they may shed some light on Lope's general attitude toward honor in these works. The conjugal honor theme, we feel, should be considered as only a part of the Spanish honor obsession, and should not be seen as separate from other honor considerations.

¹²Acad. X, 102b.

¹³This play will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI.

¹⁴Obras de Lope de Vega, Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. XXIX, p. 422a.

¹⁵Why Gonzalo goes along with the accusation is never explained beyond the fact that the two are very close and share the same view of life and honor.

¹⁶This is accomplished in a curious ceremony in which Ramiro is "reborn" as the Queen's son. This ceremony was not of Lope's invention, but appeared in a number of earlier versions of the story. Menéndez y Pelayo assumes that Lope based his action on the version found in the Crónica General. See Menéndez y Pelayo, vol. III, pp. 342-355 for more detailed information regarding source material.

¹⁷Ac. N. III, p. 632a.

¹⁸Ac. N. III, p. 424b.

¹⁹Ac. N. XII, p. 96b.

²⁰Ac. N. IV, pp. 441b-442a.

²¹Acad. XI, p. 458b.

²²Ac. N. X, p. 436a.

²³This play will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI.

²⁴Ac. N. XII, p. 358a.

²⁵Ed. Alonso Zamora Vicente, 2^a edición (Madrid: Clásicos Castellanos, 1969), ll. 2622-2641.

²⁶"The Pseudonyms and Literary Disguises of Lope de Vega," University of California Publications in Modern Philology, 33, no. 5 (1951), p. 423.

²⁷Morley, p. 422.

²⁸"More on the Date of Peribáñez," Hispanic Review, XVII (1949), p. 37.

²⁹Bruerton, "More on the Date of Peribáñez," p. 37.

³⁰These "scenes" are those numbered by Zamora Vicente (in his edition of the play) II, V, and VI of Act III.

³¹" . . . la signification du passage de l'adoubement dans Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña est pleine d'ambigüité et l'intention en est à quelque degré parodique." "Toujours la date . . .," p. 623.

³²It is on this basis that Salomon fixes the date of the play between the autumn of 1612 and December of 1613. See "Toujours la date . . .," p. 643.

³³Salomon sees the reference to the burra manchada as another reference to the questionable lineage of Rodrigo Calderón. See "Toujours la date . . . ," p. 622-623.

³⁴"Los 'hidalgos cansados' de Lope de Vega," Homenaje a William L. Fichter, pp. 693-711.

³⁵Acad. XV, p. 554a.

³⁶Acad. VII, p. 566b.

³⁷"Lope's Don Lope de Cardona; a Defense of the Duke de Sessa [sic]," Hispanic Review, IX (1941), 348-458.

³⁸Morley, p. 431.

³⁹For the pertinent quotes from Las ferias de Madrid, see Chapter IV of this study.

⁴⁰More will be said of this title in Chapter VII.

⁴¹See Menéndez Pidal, "El castigo sin venganza," pp. 143-148.

Chapter VI

Characterization

One aspect of Lope's portrayal of character in many of his honor plays contributes to the general undermining of the honor code which has been noted thus far. This involves the creation of a number of characters whose function within a play is at variance with their anticipated role in a drama de honra. Such characterization is particularly evident in Lope's presentation of kings in his honor plays. It can also be found in several works in which audience sympathy is directed away from the offended husband and focused instead on the offender of that husband's honor. Finally, in one play, La locura por la honra, Lope creates one character whose disruptive function within the work is never perceived by any of the other characters, thus making the play's resolution extremely problematic.

It is a generally accepted idea that the King occupies a special place within the Golden Age concept of honor. As Américo Castro has stated: "Este carácter especial del rey, de fuente suprema de honor y del más honorable de los hombres, se encuentra en la base del sistema social sobre el que se funda la concepción de la honra" ¹

Francisco Ruiz Ramón, however, in his description of the general characteristics of the comedia, has observed that the role of the King is somewhat more complex:

La persona del rey es enfocada desde un doble punto de vista: como cargo en que se reúnen el poder y la majestad, fuente y raíz de todo poder y de todo honor, fundamento de la justicia y del orden. Su misión dramática es premiar o castigar, permaneciendo por encima del caos humano y, por tanto, por encima de la acción. Su insignia es el cetro. Hay en él un destello de divinidad, pues de Dios recibe su realeza, que impide mirarlo a los ojos y turba a quienes a él se aproximan. Pero también es visto como tirano, es decir, como personaje en donde chocan conflictivamente el cargo y la personalidad. Poder impersonal y pasión personal se enfrentan introduciendo el desorden y el mal. El hombre, víctima de la injusticia y la pasión del rey, no puede, sin embargo, levantarse contra él. Solo Dios puede castigarle. La solución normal, sin embargo, es el arrepentimiento del rey. Arrepentimiento necesario que vuelve a instaurar el orden roto.²

One would expect, according to this definition, to encounter within any group of comedias a fairly even distribution of wise and impetuous Kings, characterized by Ruiz Ramón as rey-viejo and rey-galán.³ A survey of the forty-three honor plays, however, reveals an intriguing fact: of the twenty-three plays in which a King is one of the characters (including the Emperor Nero in Los embustes de Fabia and the delfín of France in La locura por la honra), in no play is the King portrayed as an exemplary character: eight plays portray the King himself as the offender in a caso de honra⁴, eleven others present a King committing a serious error in judgement⁵, and in the four remaining works⁶ the King is not a major character and has little effect on the outcome of the action.

While Ruiz Ramón notes that the conflict generated by the presentation of the King as an offender of honor is usually resolved through the King's own decision to behave honorably, this is not the case in a number of Lope's honor plays. There is even one play, El príncipe despeñado, in which an offending King is killed in an honor vengeance.

This work is of particular interest to the present study because Lope has the husband display an unconventional attitude toward conjugal honor and because the right of an unjust King to rule is called into question.

Using a double line of action, Lope combines a caso de honra with a dispute over royal succession. Martín, the protagonist, opens the play proclaiming the crowning of a new King: "Sancho es rey."⁷ Martín has been instrumental in awarding the throne to Sancho (a relative of the recently deceased King) because the King had died without officially declaring the succession of his unborn child. Martín cannot recognize the rights of this child, he says, because they are not outwardly apparent:

¿Por fe
de aquello que no se ve,
un reino tengo de dar? (122b)

This reasoning is, in part, conditioned by one of the basic premises of the honor code: it is impossible to determine the legitimacy of the child, Martín says,

Que es fe en pecho de mujer,
vivo engaño y verdad muerta. (122b)

The action of the play, from this point of departure, traces the changing views of Martín with regard to both this aspect of the honor code and the idea that the King, as primary symbol of honor, is immune from vengeance. Martín's support of Sancho, at the beginning of the play, is contrasted by his brother Remón's support of the Queen and her unborn child. As the play progresses, it becomes obvious that Remón, motivated by his faith in the Queen and his loyalty to the

dead King, is in the right, and that his "treason," bitterly condemned by Martín at the beginning of the play, was a necessary outcome of his staunch adherence to the principles of virtue and justice.

At the beginning of the play, Martín supports Sancho because he believes his cause to be just, and not for any personal interest. When, for example, Sancho asks Martín,

Querría hacerme bienquisto.
¿a quién debo, don Martín,
hacer merced? (124a)

Martín replies:

Señor, haced bien á todos;
que por diferentes modos
a todos honra debéis. (124a)

It is this belief in the King's obligation to be worthy of his rank (rather than the notion that a king may do what he pleases) which conditions the changes undergone by Martín throughout the work and enables him to resolve a threat to his conjugal honor in a particularly unconventional fashion.

The honor conflict itself does not materialize until the second act, when Sancho sees Blanca, Martín's wife, and immediately wants her for himself. He justifies his intention to seduce another man's wife by citing his right, as King, to do whatever he wants:

¿Qué dudo yo de gozar
esta famosa mujer?
Si yo soy Rey sin poder,
¿de qué me sirve reinar? (139b)

Having thus proclaimed the King's right to dishonor others, Sancho sends Martín off in pursuit of Remón. Martín, at this point, still sees his brother as a traitor:

Yo castigaré al tirano,
de ambición injusta ciego: (140b)

In these lines Martín is expressing more than his loyalty to Sancho as King: he is, in effect, indicating his own personal code of behavior which, later on in the work, will be applied equally to the King himself.

That Sancho sees himself as being under no obligation to honor other than the maintenance of his own reputation may be seen in the seduction scene. On entering Martín's house, he tells the portero:

Mira bien
que me va mi honor también
en que no digas mi nombre. (142a)

The King's use of this principle of the honor code to legitimize his actions becomes even more apparent when Sancho tells Blanca, just before seducing her, that Martín's honor will not be offended unless she tells him what has happened:

Calla, y no des á entender
tu deshonor ni mi furia;
que la injuria no es injuria
mientras calla la mujer.
La honra del Conde está
en tu lengua: esto es sin duda. (145b)

The final act of El príncipe despeñado traces the consequences of the King's assault upon Blanca and the realization, on the part of Martín, that this King is not worthy of his loyalty. When Martín returns home, he finds his entire household in mourning, and asks Blanca who has died. Not heeding the King's advice that she remain silent, Blanca tells Martín exactly what has happened and then offers her life for his honor. But Martín rejects this traditional solution

to an honor conflict, and swears that only the guilty King will be punished:

¡Oh mujer casta y honrada
sobre cuantas han nacido,
esto por disculpa basta!
No quiera el cielo que seas
nueva Lucrecia de España;
que yo tengo honra que puede
tomar más justa venganza. (150a)

The King's seduction of Blanca has thus led Martín to the realization that his brother was right about the succession; and he now swears to rectify his original error by seeing to it that the Queen's child is crowned King.

Sancho, attempting to ensure Martín's loyalty, names him Condestable, but Martín is not swayed by this new honor. Finally reunited with his brother, Martín throws the King off a cliff, feigning a hunting accident as the cause of his death. Martín's speech, as the King's body is brought into his house, is filled with irony,

Esta es, famosos navarros,
mi casa antigua y solar,
más en valor singular
que en edificios bizarros.
No pensé yo que viniera,
si ella tuvo algún valor,
á darle este nuevo honor
don Sancho, desta manera
Yo [no] pensé que aquesta honra
me hiciera desta suerte;
pero aunque sea en la muerte,
el Rey, caballeros, honra. (157b)

and in a final ironic gesture, Remón has the body laid out on Blanca's own bed.

The death of the King is accompanied by a complete reversal on the part of his "loyal" subjects, who now dissociate themselves from

him as quickly as possible. His death, they say, must be a punishment from God:

no debía de reinar
Sancho con justa justicia. (158b)

It might be argued that the illegitimacy of Sancho's succession to the throne would have made Martín's vengeance more acceptable to a Golden Age audience. It should be noted, however, that it is only when Martín realizes that Sancho is not living up to his obligation as King that he denies Sancho's right to be King. Thus the notion that the monarch is immune from honor vengeance is challenged in this play.

While this is the only honor play in which an offending King is punished for his misdeeds, there are a number of works in which the King's pursuit of a married woman either succeeds or goes unpunished. In La hermosa Alfrede, a husband whose wife has run away with the King goes mad and dies, thus enabling his wife and the King to marry. In La resistencia honrada y Condesa Matilde, a loyal wife refuses to acknowledge the attentions of the King. When her husband is killed in battle, defending the life of this very monarch, the wife is forced to marry the King. In both plays the death of the husband eliminates the honor conflict and makes the King's dishonorable objectives legitimate according to the rules of the honor code. Thus Lope avoids portraying the King as a true source of dishonor while at the same time the King's assault on conjugal honor is ultimately successful.

In another play, La locura por la honra, the heir to the throne of France is allowed to go free and vengeance is taken on the guilty

wife alone. The honor code's prohibition of vengeance against a monarch is thus upheld, but this leads to the madness of the protagonist.

A King comes close to having a husband murdered so that he may possess the wife in La corona merecida. He eventually decides not to seduce the wife, but only after she has mutilated her body in order to convince him that she is a leper.

One play in which the King does repent of his own accord is La batalla del honor. This is the only comic honor play in which a King constitutes a serious threat to conjugal honor. It was not well-received during Lope's day, and Henryk Ziomek suggests the possibility "that the unfavorable light shed upon the King in La batalla del honor, showing him as an immoral donjuanesque adventurer, was responsible for the suppression of further presentations of this play."⁸ In this comedia de capa y espada a good deal of comic confusion is generated by disguises and extremely complicated enredos. The King of France, in his pursuit of Blanca, the wife of Carlos, the King's Almirante, is himself the source of much of this confusion with his attempts to gain Blanca's affections without damaging Carlos' reputation.

Near the beginning of the play, for example, the Almirante, seeing the King near his door, pretends to be an officer of the law in order to question the King without admitting that he is suspicious of the King's intentions. The King, who knows that he is talking to Carlos, first pretends to be courting Carlos' sister, Estela, and then announces that he himself is Carlos, guarding his own street against intruders. Each man knows who the other is, but each continues to mask his own identity in order to save face.

Later on in this act, the King asks Henrique, his privado, to help him stage an argument over Estela in order to allay Carlos' suspicions. Henrique, however, really is in love with Estela, and prefers not to identify himself lest some harm come to his own reputation:

¿Y es bien,
si conoze el almirante
mi voz, q̄ de mi se espante,
y pierda mi honor tambien?9

In order to protect Henrique's good name, the King pretends that his rival for Estela's hand is not Henrique but Arnaldo, a neighbor of Carlos, who has thus far not figured in the action. This false revelation introduces a secondary honor problem with which the already harried Almirante must now contend: the endangerment of his honor through his sister.

Arnaldo too becomes a victim of the King's maneuverings. At the beginning of the second act Carlos, still preoccupied with his sister's honor, accuses Arnaldo of endangering his reputation by not courting Estela openly. Arnaldo has never met Estela, but is flattered by what he believes is Carlos' suggestion that he become her official suitor. Arnaldo's ignorance of what is going on around him is a source of humor throughout the second and third acts.

Carlos' attempts to protect his honor are unsuccessful because the King has the power to get what he wants. He corrupts Carlos' household, bribing the servants to place symbols of the monarchy throughout the house. These symbols, which would normally be seen as signs of honor, become for Carlos an indication of his dishonor:

¿Q̄ quiere significar
 q̄ hasta en los manteles vea
 cifras del rey donde lea
 su placer y mi pessar?
 Si pones flores parezca
 q̄ formas vna corona
 q̄ mi deshonor pregona
 y mil sospechas me ofrezca; (ll. 1249-1256)

When Carlos dismisses the servants who have conspired against him, the King "honors" Carlos by naming him cazador mayor and provides him with a new servant who is really a spy for the King.

Near the end of the play, Carlos decides that the only way he may be able to thwart the King is by making Blanca unattractive to him. But when Blanca, under his instructions, appears before the King dressed in rags, the King uses this as an excuse for removing Blanca from her home claiming that, by having her dress in such a way, Carlos has dishonored his wife:

Tanta pobreza no parece onesta.
 A la ffe, Carlos, q̄ no ha sido onrrosa,
 aunq̄ discreta, en ocasion como esta,
 la respuesta ni el traje. (ll. 2527-2530)

After this final blow Carlos, realizing that there is nothing he can do, feigns insanity in order to avoid having to admit that he has been dishonored.

The comic mood of La batalla del honor necessitates avoidance of an unhappy ending. Lope accomplishes this by having the King undergo a change of heart as, at the last moment, he decides to marry Estela. Carlos' sanity and his honor are thus restored, and the only characters left to suffer are Estela's suitors, Henrique and Arnaldo.

Thus Lope's presentation of the King as an offender of conjugal honor varies greatly from play to play. A number of similarities within

this group of plays, however, are worthy of note. In the first place, the notion that the King is the primary source of honor is thoroughly undermined in each work. It is of particular interest, in this regard, that none of these plays is set in contemporary Spain. La batalla del honor, La locura por la honra and La resistencia honrada all take place in France; La hermosa Alfreda is set in Dalmatia; the remaining two plays do take place in Spain, but both are based on specific historical sources: the action of La corona merecida is set in the XIIIth century, while that of El príncipe despeñado occurs in the XIth.¹⁰ By dissociating the action of all of these plays from life in Golden Age Spain, Lope may be attempting to avoid any complaints from his public regarding his unfavorable portrayal of the Kings.

Moreover, each of these Kings uses the principles of the honor code to excuse his dishonorable behavior. In particular, the notion that no dishonor exists as long as the offended party remains unaware that his honor has been jeopardized is repeated in most of these works. In La hermosa Alfreda and La resistencia honrada the death of the husband is also used to transform the King's pursuit of a married woman into the legitimate courtship of a widow.

Finally, in only one of these plays--La batalla del honor--does the King repent of his actions and even this, it has been suggested, was necessitated by the humorous tone of the play.

In these works, then, Lope portrays the monarch not as a symbol of honor but as an individual possessing both a unique power to dishonor and an apparent immunity from vengeance. The fact that the honor code is upheld in all of these works serves to focus attention on the fact

that the honor code can be used to endanger as well as to maintain honor.

In another group of honor plays, the King is portrayed as a husband who suspects that his honor has been offended. In most of these works the King appears as an essentially comic figure whose obsession with conjugal honor leads him to misinterpret the facts. One of the most interesting and entertaining of these is Del mal lo menos. In this play don Juan, a poor Spaniard of dubious parentage, exiled from Spain over a matter of honor, falls in love with Casandra, the cousin of an Italian King. In the process of keeping their interest in each other a secret (because don Juan is socially beneath Casandra) Casandra asks the Queen to speak to the King in Juan's behalf. The Queen's apparent interest in Juan, however, leads the King to believe that it is she who is interested in Juan, and thus begins the caso de honra.

The King's obviously unwarranted suspicions turn him into a comical figure as he misinterprets everything that is going on around him. When, for example, Juan tells the King about his reasons for leaving Spain (an affair with a married woman) the King, rather than being relieved that Juan's attentions are occupied elsewhere, takes this as further evidence that the married woman is really the Queen. In declaring his decision, at the end of Act II, to have Juan killed, the King points out that the rigidity of the honor code may require vengeance even when suspicions are not confirmed:

Ahora bien, el hombre muera,
que es razón de Estado clara,
no porque el honor repara

en que ofenderme pudiera,
 mas sólo porque ha ofendido
 a un rey la imaginación
 y a un ángel en la opinión
 con que de quien es me olvido. (458b)

In the final act, the King attempts to kill Juan, but fails. Juan thinks that the King's hostilities toward him are related to his courtship of Casandra and the matter of his questionable family background. When he tells the King that he is in love with Casandra, the King is relieved of one honor conflict only to be plunged directly into another: the question of Casandra's marriage to a man who is not her social equal. In his resolution of this second honor conflict, however, one can discern a cynical approach to the question of honor when it no longer relates to one's own conjugal situation. Thus the King explains the play's title:

Mal es que aquéste en España
 tan humilde a gozar venga
 todo lo mejor de Italia;
 pero, en fin, es menos mal
 que se case con Casandra
 que no que en mi propio honor
 tan obscura mancha caiga. (467a)

The King implements this decision by manufacturing a false lineage for Juan. He pretends to have received a letter from the King of Spain:

Esta carta me escribe el Rey de España,
 y dice que es don Juan pariente suyo. (471a)

Once Juan's nobility has thus been established, the King names Juan his Almirante and awards him the hand of Casandra in marriage.

In this play, then, the King reacts to two distinct honor problems in two very different ways. In the first two acts, paranoiacally concerned about his own conjugal honor, he makes error after error

and comes close to killing an innocent man. In the final act, faced with a problem of family honor, he uses his rank to adjust appearances in order to avoid his own embarrassment, upholding the honor code by means of a lie. Thus Lope points out two weaknesses of the Spanish honor system: the danger of error brought about by the need for an excessive preoccupation with honor and, at the same time, the ease with which an honorable reputation may be created through the fabrication of a new lineage. The fact that this play is set in Italy may indicate Lope's cautious approach to any question of dubious lineage in Spanish society.

Most of the other plays showing the King as a mistakenly suspicious husband are those in which the wife is unjustly punished but, for various reasons, not killed, as the result of a suspected agravio. These generally include those plays presenting an honor conflict largely from the point of view of the woman.

The presentation of the King in this group of works¹¹ follows a fairly straightforward pattern. The King is persuaded--usually by a combination of his own suspicions and a false accusation brought forth by some envious party--that the Queen has been unfaithful to him.¹² In some cases he orders the Queen killed, but she manages to escape with the aid of a loyal servant. In others, he sets a time period for her to prove her innocence. In each play the action traces the efforts of the Queen in exile--often with the aid of a child exiled with her--to prove her innocence and be returned to her husband and her former status. In all of these works it is the King's readiness to believe in the weakness of woman and his overly zealous concern for honor which

lead him into error. In none of these plays is there ever any doubt on the part of the audience that the Queen is wholly innocent of any accusation of infidelity.

One example should suffice to show how Lope portrays the suspicious King in such plays. In Los pleitos de Ingalaterra the King is humorously shown to be in error through the use of a sonnet. Having just seen what he believes to be proof of his wife's infidelity, he assumes that her recently born twin sons are not his, and sees his own situation as one comparable to those of the tragic heroes of antiquity:

¿Para qué se lamentan por historias
 Píramo, triste, ni el sangriento Edipo,
 pues que yo a sus desdichas me enticipo [sic]
 en la mitad del curso de mis glorias?
 Borren de hoy más sus trágicas memorias.
 Estampa soy de las desdichas tipo,
 porque yo de sus penas participo
 y no de sus grandezas y victorias.
 Angeles, perdonad que vuestra madre
 me hace vuestro Herodes tan sangriento,
 que intento semejante desvarío.
 En el dolor parezco vuestro padre;
 pero, a ser Salomón, mi entendimiento
 supiera de los dos cuál era el mío. (506a)

The audience knows that what the King has thought to be an embrace between the Queen and another man was not what it appeared to be, and that the Queen has behaved in a perfectly honorable fashion. Thus the King, in this sonnet, is expressing a wholly erroneous view of himself, his wife and his sons. This King is no Oedipus, who was undone by Fate (rather than his own errors). It is the King's own adherence to the principles of the honor code--his readiness to trust appearances and his unwillingness to believe in a woman's virtue--that leads him into this error.

One consequence of this type of characterization is that the stature of the King is reduced in all of these works. There is little evidence of the wisdom that one would attribute to the monarchy, while there is often included a scene presenting the rustic wisdom of some elderly peasant. The Queen, furthermore, is presented as a very strong character, willing to go through years of suffering, awaiting the moment to prove her innocence. Thus while the King, misled by his excessive preoccupation with honor, uses the power of his rank to commit (albeit unwittingly) an unjust act, the Queen must rely on her own strength of character to see her way through the numerous difficulties which befall her.

In these works, then, Lope suggests that a number of the basic tenets of the honor code are open to question. First, the view of the King as a symbol of wisdom and justice is negated by the presentation of the King as a fairly weak character, easily led into unjust actions by the manipulation of others. Second, the idea that honor is el bien más alto, an attribute which must constantly be guarded to be adequately maintained, is shown to present certain problems: the excessive preoccupation with honor is seen as the cause of error, and the unjust steps taken in order to maintain honor can be seen as a direct consequence of the hysteria brought about the constant preoccupation with appearances. The King, in these works, always finds it easier to believe in the accusations of others than to believe in his wife's professed innocence. An attempt to ver con los ojos, rather than revealing the true nature of the situation, generally leads the King even

further from the truth. It is the belief in the outward signs of honor and the need to maintain an honorable reputation which causes such error, and thus it is the honor code itself which leads the King to act in a manner not befitting his position.

Finally, the view of the woman in these honor plays is of some interest. As noted in an earlier chapter with reference to El valeroso catalán and other works,¹³ the conventional view of women as essentially weak beings is presented ironically in all of these works: it is the strength of each of these women which carries her through to a successful desenlace, while it is the contrasting weakness of the King which causes all of the problems.

The remaining plays present the King in his role as observer and eventual justiciero with regard to a caso de honra. The role of the King in each of these plays is limited, however, and the justice he dispenses at the end of the play is of little consequence to the play's action. In La desdichada Estefanía, the King chooses not to sit in judgment of Fernán, even though Fernán has killed the King's own daughter. In El más galán portugués, the King of Portugal does support the wife's contention of innocence, but it is not until this innocence is proven beyond a doubt (and without the help of the King) that her husband is willing to forgive her. In Porfiar hasta morir, the King admires both Macías and Tello, and his royal presence contributes nothing whatsoever to the outcome of the action.

The portrayal of the King in Peribáñez is somewhat more complex. In the first act of the play, the King is presented from two very different perspectives. First he is seen directly by the audience,

reviewing the festivities in Toledo and praising two regidores of that city for their efforts in recruiting men and money for his military campaign. In the following scene, the King is presented indirectly through the admiring eyes of the women of Ocaña:

Casilda	¿Que son	
	los reyes de carne y hueso?	
Costanza	Pues, ¿de qué pensabas tú?	
Casilda	De damasco o terciopelo.	(ll. 986-989)

This view of the King as a mere mortal, however, is transformed into a more idealized view as the women watch the King leave:

Inés	¡Hola! El Rey se va.	
Costanza		Tan presto,
	que aún no he podido saber	
	si es barbirrubio o taheño.	
Inés	Los reyes son a la vista,	
	Costanza, por el respeto,	
	imágenes de milagros;	
	porque siempre que los vemos	
	de otra color nos parecen.	(ll. 997-1004)

Thus the tangible world of the peasants is perceived as being far removed from that of the King, who is transformed from a being of carne y hueso to a symbol of some intangible force.

The King does not appear again until the end of the third act, where he is told of the death of the Comendador and is called upon by Peribáñez to judge his case. Once again, he is presented from shifting perspectives. First he appears as monarch, making plans for the military action in Granada. Then, with the entrance of the Queen, he becomes, during a brief scene, husband and father, as he and the Queen talk about their young son. Finally, upon learning that the Comendador has been killed by a villano, he takes on the role of justiciero, resenting the death of the Comendador as an assault upon his own royal honor:

¿Así de mi justicia tiembla España?
 Dad un pregón en la ciudad, os ruego,
 Madrid, Segovia, Talavera, Ocaña,
 que a quien los diere presos, o sea muertos,
 tendrán de renta mil escudos ciertos. (ll. 2967-2971)

The Queen then comments ironically on the King's offer which will, she says, insure justice through intereses creados:

Confiad que tan presto se descubra,
 cuanto llega la fama codiciosa
 de oro prometido. (ll. 2976-2978)

When, in the final scene, Peribáñez appears before the King, it is only because of the Queen's intervention that the peasant is not immediately killed:

Rey	Matalde, guardas, matalde.
Reina	No en mis ojos. --Teneos, guardas.
Rey	Tened respeto a la Reina.
Per.	Pues ya que matarme mandas, ¿no me oirás siquiera, Enrique, pues Justiciero te llaman?
Reina	Bien dice: oíde, señor. (ll. 3022-3028)

Thus it takes both the Queen and Peribáñez to change the King's mind. After hearing Peribáñez' story, the King first asks the Queen for her opinion. When she declares that Peribáñez' action " . . . no es delito, / sino valor" (ll. 3104-3105), the King himself finds it necessary to alter his own view of justice, although he still sees Peribáñez as something of an enigma:

¡Cosa estraña!
 ¡Que un labrador tan humilde
 estime tanto su fama!
 ¡Vive Dios, que no es razón
 matarlo! Yo le hago gracia
 de la vida Mas, ¿Qué digo?
 Esto justicia se llama. (ll. 3105-3111)

The King has thus bowed to the Queen's view of justice and presented it as his own. Once such a judgment has been made, he confirms the rank given to Peribáñez by the Comendador and rewards Casilda--as Peribáñez had requested--with the money promised for the capture of the killer. Peribáñez' response--

Con razón todos te llaman
don Enrique el Justiciero. (11. 3123-3124)

--can thus be seen as an ironic comment on the King as justiciero, since he arrived at his just solution more through the suggestions of others than through his own decisiveness. Even this King, as Lope reveals, is of carne y hueso.

In Lope's conjugal honor plays, then, the King is nowhere presented as his rank would seem to dictate. In some plays he uses his position--and the honor assumed to go along with it--to deprive others of honor. In other plays he is seen to be as susceptible to the pressures of the honor code as any other comedia husband. Finally, even in those works in which he is called upon to judge the actions of those involved in an honor conflict, his decisions are either ineffectual or dependent on the opinions of others.

In depicting a society whose entire social structure is based on an honor code which, in turn, is built upon the concept that the monarch himself is the symbol and the source of all honor, Lope has gone to the very roots of honor and shown them to be weak. The lack of a single monarch in these plays who exhibits the traits of strength, wisdom, and an active commitment to justice, removes, in a sense, the very basis for honor, and the honor code is left to stand more as an autonomous

social force which can lead to undesirable consequences than as a valid basis for the regulation of social behavior.

The reversal of anticipated roles is not limited to Lope's portrayal of Kings. It is also used most effectively in a number of works in which the antagonist (i.e., the offender of honor) is portrayed as a more sympathetic character than the protagonist (i.e., the defender of honor).¹⁴ When such reversals are used, it becomes difficult for the audience to approve wholeheartedly the actions taken by the protagonist in order to recover (or maintain) his honor. It is significant that each of these honor conflicts is resolved by means of an honor vengeance. Such a resolution would have a far greater impact on a Golden Age audience than a desenlace in which vengeance is somehow avoided: the audience would have no cause to complain that the honor code is not being complied with, but at the same time it is demonstrated that such compliance can produce undesirable results.

Las ferias de Madrid is the earliest of these plays and differs from the others in the nature of the vengeance which is taken. Here the killing of the husband rather than the lover would seem to be a satisfactory resolution of a conflict in which the husband is portrayed as a thoroughly disagreeable character. However, it has already been demonstrated¹⁵ that the very unconventionality of this vengeance may be challenging some of the principles underlying the Spanish system of honor.

In the other plays to be discussed, it is not the protagonist but the antagonist who is killed in what would normally be a perfectly

acceptable vengeance which upholds both the rules and the spirit of the honor code. In La vitoria de la honra, there is some ambiguity about who is supposed to be the play's protagonist (in the sense of the major character of the play). From the perspectives of the honor code and the outcome of the action itself, the protagonist should be Captain Valdivia, the wealthy indiano and husband of Leonor. Throughout much of the play, however, the protagonist would seem to be Antonio, the young Sevillian nobleman who falls in love with Valdivia's wife.

These two characters could be described as exact opposites. Antonio, a pampered but charming young man who lives with his family, has had no need to fight for honor. Having received many honors--including a cross of Santiago--through the efforts of his father, he is not obsessed with honor and therefore does not seem to understand the importance of honor in the lives of others. Valdivia, on the other hand, has had to fight for everything he now possesses. He has been a soldier in Flanders and finally achieved a position of great honor in America. In contrast with the romantic Antonio, Valdivia cares only for his honor, the fragility of which is of constant concern to him.

Valdivia is so obsessed with the potential endangerment of his honor, that he suspects an honor problem long before it materializes. It is, in fact, his excessive preoccupation with honor which eventually leads Leonor to be unfaithful to him. But while this trait, in other Lopean husbands, becomes the cause of their own destruction,¹⁶ in Valdivia the overwhelming passion for honor ultimately triumphs, as the play's title suggests.

Valdivia is extremely careful about the manner in which he maintains (and finally avenges) his conjugal honor. Instead of acting in complete secrecy, he takes into his confidence Don Pedro, Antonio's father, warning him that his son is offending Valdivia's honor and, if not stopped, will have to be killed. Don Pedro is portrayed as a character caught between the two antagonists. He loves his son, and would do anything to protect him, but he also understands Valdivia's concern. When Don Pedro is unsuccessful in keeping Antonio away from Leonor, Valdivia resorts to the traditional honor vengeance and kills the two lovers. Don Pedro, having been forewarned by Valdivia, is confused over what action he should take: he wants to kill his son's murderer, but he also knows that, according to the honor code, Valdivia's actions (however calculating they might seem) are justifiable.

Moreover, Don Pedro's own honor is at stake when Valdivia, after committing his vengeance, pleads his case publicly. Once the facts of the case are known to others, Don Pedro himself finds it necessary to save face. He does so by rewarding Valdivia with the hand of his daughter Ana in marriage.

The problem in this work is that Antonio is portrayed as an extremely likable character. His devotion to Leonor, which ultimately leads to the death of both characters, is presented more as a consequence of his immaturity and romantic inclinations than as a particularly evil character trait. His death cannot be viewed by the audience as totally satisfactory, nor can the death of Leonor, who has been forced into an affair with Antonio as much by Valdivia's almost pathological behavior as by Antonio's own persistence. Thus Lope's character

portrayal in this work poses a real dilemma. The vitoria de la honra with which the play ends is not a satisfying victory. Had Lope intended to present it as such, he would have portrayed his major characters in a very different manner: Valdivia would have been more human, Antonio more arrogant, and Leonor more seductive. As it stands, La vitoria de la honra may disturb the audience's approval of honor vengeance by forcing the spectator to develop a favorable opinion of a character whose death becomes necessary according to the demands of the honor code.

A similar dilemma is posed in Porfiar hasta morir, although here there is no doubt that the poet Macías, the antagonist in the honor conflict, is the protagonist of the play. Macías resembles Antonio in La vitoria de la honra in that he seems unable to comprehend the fact that his actions are leading to a serious caso de honra which will have to be dealt with according to the honor code. He is different from Antonio, however, in the fact that at no point does he attempt, or even desire, to lure Clara into an illicit relationship. Macías' love for Clara is a purely "literary" love, limited at all times to the poetic expression of his emotions.

Similarly, Tello, Clara's husband, is very different from Captain Valdivia. He is not a truly obsessive character, nor is he portrayed as being particularly unsympathetic. The worst one can say of Tello, in fact, is that compared with Macías he seems rather bland. As a husband, however, Tello cannot ignore Macías' "poetic" courtship of Clara:

¿Es bien que en Córdoba canten
 los niños claras canciones
 de Clara, que á los varones
 de prudencia y honra espanten? (97a)

The matter of conjugal honor in Porfiar hasta morir thus revolves solely around the question of reputation. While Tello never really suspects that Clara might be capable of dishonoring him, his concern over Macías' attentions to Clara are valid. As the Maestre tells him:

Que tienes mucha razón,
 y yo lo escucho con pena;
 porque en la mujer más buena
 puede haber mala opinión,
 de que hay tantas ofendidas;
 que muchas hay lastimadas
 en el honor, siendo honradas,
 porque fueron perseguidas; (97b)

Macías, however, finds such a notion of honor incomprehensible, as his total involvement with his art comes into conflict with the real world which surrounds him:

¡Oh confusión de mi amoroso engaño!
 ¡Esto faltaba sólo á mi tormento!
 ¿En qué puede ofender mi pensamiento
 la hermosa causa de mi eterno daño?
 ¡Oh ley cruel! ¡Oh injusto desengaño!
 ¿Que aun no quiere que sienta el mal que siento?
 ¿Qué honor puede quitar mi entendimiento,
 con cuyos versos mi esperanza engaño?
 Mandarme que no quiera es la violencia
 mayor que puede hacer á mi sentido,
 y en presencia del bien sufrir ausencia;
 que estando, como estoy, de amor perdido,
 aumentará el amor la resistencia;
 que para largo amor no hay breve olvido. (98b)

P. N. Dunn claims that "this sonnet shows how far gone Macías is,"¹⁷ and that it provides ample evidence that Macías is the victim of self-deception:

The limitations of the speaker's understanding of his own condition are shown, not through his dealings with others --for then we, the audience, might also be deceived--but in his distortion of objective concepts: justo, injusto, engaño, desengaño, entendimiento. The audience knows well enough what these words mean to notice the deception which Macías is practising on himself by his false use of them. At this one point in the play Lope gives us the logical and linguistic evidence on which to judge Macías, and marks out the great gulf between Macías' disjointed view of things, and the reasonable, moral scheme to which his words properly refer.¹⁸

Dunn's interpretation of the function of this sonnet makes sense if the play is to be seen from a single perspective: as a work upholding the validity of the "reasonable, moral scheme" of the honor code. If, however, the play is viewed from another perspective--one which admits the validity of a very different code of behavior--the sonnet (and with it, the entire characterization of Macías) takes on additional meanings.

Macías' love for Clara, from the very beginning, is defined in literary terms. This can be seen in the reaction of Nuño, Macías' servant, to Macías' announcement that he is in love:

Macías	¡Ah, cielos, que me entró el amor con celos!
Nuño	¡Qué propio amor de poeta! No hay sangre á amor tan sujeta. (82a)

Even the King sees Macías' feelings for Clara in this light. Admiring Macías' love poems, he tells the Maestre that all of this literature would have been lost if the Maestre had allowed Macías to marry Clara:

Porque amor en posesión no desea, y no hay materia que sea para los versos mejor que un amante desdeñado ó en esperanza del bien. (91a)

Even within the context of the conjugal honor conflict, Tello seems to recognize the fact that Macías intends to commit no real action which would compromise his honor. It is the unfortunate reality that honor is inextricably linked to reputation which forces Tello to take his revenge. It is not so much, then, that Macías is deceiving himself as it is that he is operating on a very different plane from those around him.

If, with these thoughts in mind, one returns to Macías' sonnet, it becomes evident that more is being expressed here than self-deception. When Macías complains about the "ley cruel" he seems to be well aware of the nature of the problem, but cannot understand the need for a code of behavior which would keep him from exercising his chosen métier. He is a poet: he lives, in a sense, by transforming his feeling into verse; and since he intends no harm to either Clara or Tello he finds it difficult to be bound by a code which he sees as meaningless. In this sonnet, then, Macías expresses a conflict which occurs as the result of a confrontation between art and life. The victory of life over art at the end of the play is not presented by Lope as a confirmation of the validity of the honor code but rather as an unfortunate necessity dictated by that code.

Perhaps the ultimate ambiguity in character portrayal is achieved in El castigo sin venganza. Lope presents the Duke of Ferrara as a character whose concern for honor based on reputation is not quite as sincere as that of Tello in Porfiar hasta morir. As noted earlier, the Duke, having led a rather unsavory life and fathered an illegitimate son, is forced by public opinion--and against his own

inclinations--to marry, thus providing this subjects with a legitimate heir to his title. While the honor of Ferrara might rest on the honorable behavior of its ruler, the Duke accepts this new responsibility in appearance only, and continues to live as he did before his marriage.

The Duke is thus able to control public opinion, but his son, Federico, is not so fortunate. Known to be illegitimate, Federico is deprived by la opinión of any right to the title, even though his illegitimacy is the only stain on his reputation. Thus, from the very beginning, a situation is set up in which the audience would be inclined to sympathize more with Federico than with his father. The Duke is not presented as an evil character, but his hypocritical attitude toward his marriage is far from admirable. Federico, on the other hand, can only be seen as a victim. As T. E. May has noted:

Federico is his father's pawn, and is Casandra's pawn not only in the sense that he is an instrument of her lust (in this sense she is his pawn too) but in the sense that she is using him in her insane attack upon the Duke. He is from the beginning at least as much a victim of tyranny as Casandra is, and has also to bear the stigma of illegitimacy and the sudden denial of an inheritance he has been lead to count upon. He commits the same sin as Casandra does. But there is less enterprise of evil in him than there is in Casandra or the Duke, since he is not at all revengeful as they are; and while he does fall into deceit, he does not move among deceptions with the same ease and resolution as they.¹⁹

As the action progresses, the Duke continues to avoid his responsibilities toward his new wife. His intentions as a father do seem more honorable, as he tries to arrange a marriage with Aurora to insure Federico of a socially advantageous position in society. The problem here is that the Duke, who sees much of life in terms of the

satisfaction of public opinion, completely misinterprets Federico's obvious unhappiness and his attempts to avoid Casandra: he assumes that Federico still resents Casandra for the loss of his inheritance (i.e., a loss of honor) while Federico is actually involved in a desperate attempt to overcome his love for his step-mother. When the Duke denies Federico's request to accompany him into battle, Federico's last attempt to avoid disaster is thwarted, but the audience can see that he has, at least, tried to escape.

By the time the relationship between Federico and Casandra is consummated, therefore, the audience is disposed to sympathize with Federico and to see the Duke as a major cause of the offense to his own conjugal honor. When, in the third act, the Duke returns from war a reformed man and is informed of the affair between Casandra and Federico, the roles appear to be suddenly reversed,²⁰ and the audience is forced by its own approval of the honor code to see Federico as guilty and the Duke as the offended party. The offense to the Duke's honor has been real, but the nature of his vengeance is such that it would force the audience to shift its sympathy back to Federico and, once again, away from the Duke. As E. M. Wilson has commented, regarding the Duke's vengeance: "Resulta difícil reconciliar estos hechos con su supuesta santidad, por mucho disimulo supuesto para justificar cuando lo obligan razones de estado o las leyes del honor."²¹

One additional aspect of the Duke's character is worthy of comment. It has been noted that the Duke consistently seeks to maintain his reputation by means of deceit. One curious fact about the illusions he creates, however, is that none of them is really effective.

When, in the first act, the Duke arrives at Cintia's house, he realizes that his disguise will probably be an obstacle, since it is doubtful that she will admit him without knowing who he is. His servant, therefore, reveals to Cintia the Duke's true identity, although he does give a false reason for the disguise:

Por hacerte gran señora
viene disfrazado así. (ll. 91-92)

Cintia, however, prefers to maintain the original illusion created by the disguise, since this allows her to criticise the Duke's behavior as if he (the Duke) were not present. Thus the effect of the Duke's disguise is precisely the contrary of its objective, since it leads to Cintia's "publication" of his less-than-honorable opinión.

Cintia's penetration of the Duke's disguise establishes the pattern for the desenlace: the Duke's castigo sin venganza designed to cover up the affair between Federico and Casandra. As E. M. Wilson has noted, this illusion fools no one: "El duque representa un papel delante de una cantidad de gente que ya saben bastante de la verdad para entender exactamente lo que él está haciendo."²² The fact that such an appearance is outwardly maintained, nevertheless, does satisfy the principles of the honor code. Appearance is of such great importance in maintaining an honorable reputation that even this transparent appearance is better than an outright admission of the truth. While the other characters know the real nature of the Duke's venganza, all allow the appearance of the castigo to stand unquestioned.

It would seem, then, that if there is any triumph at the end of the play, it would be the dubious triumph of an honor code whose ends

are served by highly questionable means. Even the Duke has not gained by his castigo, since he has destroyed the son he loves for an offense for which he himself deserves much of the blame. Furthermore, as the work concludes, the Duke too falls victim to that obsession with honor which has determined his actions throughout the work. While he has ostensibly maintained his honorable reputation, the very means by which this has been accomplished has caused him to lose everything else.

By presenting two characters who cannot be easily classified according to the terms "good" or "evil," "honorable" or dishonorable," "sympathetic" or "unsympathetic," Lope has constructed a work in which character itself is subordinated to the pervasive force of honor. This is not to say that the characterization is somehow defective in El castigo sin venganza; on the contrary, the presentation of character here is far more complex than in most other honor plays. The audience follows the Duke and Federico through a series of personal conflicts throughout the work. By forcing the public to see the characters in this way, Lope underscores the questionable nature of the all-too-clever solution upholding the honor code at the end of the work. Without directly criticising a code of behavior which would inspire such a vengeance, Lope may leave his audience wondering about the ultimate validity of such a code.

A somewhat different kind of role reversal can be found in a number of Lope's comic honor plays. This involves situations in which a husband having an affair with another woman suddenly suspects that his own conjugal honor has been offended. In these works, the husband's

excessive concern with honor, in light of his own actions, is presented with a good deal of humor. In such plays as La bella malmaridada and El desposorio encubierto the double standard dictated by the honor code is given comic dimensions, as an obviously innocent wife is suspected by an obviously guilty husband. In keeping with this comic treatment of the honor preoccupation, the conflict in these works is resolved through the untangling of multiple equivocos, and the husband himself, seeing how close he has come to disaster, resolves to lead a better life.

One final instance of characterization which serves to undermine the honor code will be discussed in this chapter. In La locura por la honra Lope presents a character who is not directly involved in the honor conflict, but who is portrayed in such a way that her apparent role within the work is at variance with her real dramatic function: that of a skillful manipulator who actually sets up the caso de honra and profits from the vengeance with which it is resolved. Most of this play's action deals with the honor vengeance taken by Count Floraberto upon his wife Flordelís, and the Count's subsequent madness caused by the impossibility of taking revenge on Carlos, the prince and heir to the throne. A detailed examination of the play's structure, however, reveals that much of the significant action in the work is put into motion by Blanca, an apparently minor character, the sister of Carlos and former lover of Floraberto.

Blanca's personal concerns open the first act and bring the third act to its conclusion. Thus her desires--first thwarted and

finally fulfilled--form the frame for the entire action. At the beginning of the play, Blanca is furious because her father, the King of France, has arranged a marriage between Floraberto and Flordelís in order to end the relationships between Floraberto and Blanca, on the one hand, and Flordelís and Carlos, on the other. Not willing to accept this new situation, Blanca appeals to her brother to continue his relationship with Flordelís even after she is married. Blanca's motivation here is neither her love for Floraberto nor her desire to help her brother, but rather her need for revenge:

Que de que pierda su honor
el falso Conde me toca
más interés que su amor,
pues no es mi queja tan poca
que no te venza en rigor.²³

Later on, it is suggested that Blanca also fears for her own reputation:

Temo, y con mucha razón
que el Conde le habrá contado
lo que conmigo ha pasado,
en mengua de mi opinión. (297b)

These two motives lead Blanca to the decision that the one way she can solve her problem is to remove its cause:

A mí me importa matar
o al Conde o a su mujer.-- (297b)

Thus Blanca is portrayed as a character whose objective is to maintain her own honor at the cost of the honor and the lives of others. This is not particularly unusual in Lope's honor plays, but when it does occur it is usually presented in a way that clearly indicates Lope's disapproval of it.²⁴ This is the only work in which such a character is ultimately succesful in achieving her goals.

Blanca offers to serve as intermediary between Carlos and Flordelís, and she assures Flordelís that honor will not be lost through her affair with Carlos as long as the affair is kept secret.

que a la sombra del secreto
duerme segura la honra. (298a)

When the Count discovers the truth and kills Flordelís, Blanca now places all of the blame for what has happened on her brother. She tells her father that Floraberto should kill Carlos:

Ha sido justo furor;
nadie su venganza impida.
Carlos ha dado ocasión
a que muera Flordelís
y a que murmure París
de la vuestra y su opinión,
y que un pobre caballero,
inocente como el Conde,
que por no mancharle esconde
entre la infamia y el acero,
pierde el seso y el honor. (312b)

Thus Blanca uses honor as an excuse to manipulate others, appealing to her father's sense of honor in order to turn him against Carlos, who is really no more guilty than Blanca herself.

Later on, near the end of the play, the King honors Floraberto for his discretion by arranging a marriage between Carlos and Floraberto's sister. At this point, Blanca, who has deliberately caused all that has happened, expresses her dissatisfaction with the fact that she herself has received no reward:

¡A todos sucede bien,
sólo no hay bien para mí!
¿Qué puede haber en que acierte
a no ser la muerte el blanco,
que para dejarme el blanco
me llama Blanca mi suerte? (317b)

And Blanca's complaint is heeded, for as the play ends Floraberto, his sanity restored^d, is given Blanca's hand in marriage. While Blanca is not present in this scene and does not appear again before the play ends, it must be noted that the Count's reward is also Blanca's. The fact that she has taken an active part in the proceedings is never recognized by the other characters, who seem to accept everything she says at face value. At the end of the work she is given exactly what she has wanted from the beginning: marriage with Floraberto.

Thus in his portrayal of Blanca Lope creates a character whose participation in the play's actions seems completely dissociated from the way she is perceived by the other characters. Her actions, while they cannot be ignored by the audience, are never understood within the context of the play; and her devious behavior, which in other plays would be seen as deserving of punishment, is eventually rewarded. She successfully deceives the other characters by appealing to their sense of honor and, as a result, achieves her own ends. This type of character portrayal does not occur in any of the other honor plays, but the fact that it is used even once is highly suggestive. The cause of honor in La locura por la honra is transformed into a mechanism for the manipulation of others and Lope, by portraying Blanca as successful in her effort to secure the Count as her husband, seems to be taunting his audience for its willingness to accept any solution in which the honor code is upheld.

Thus Lope's characterization is consistent with other techniques used to challenge the Spanish system of honor. By portraying the King as a less-than-ideal character, he suggests that even the monarchy can

misuse honor or be deceived by it. By having some of his Kings use the bestowing of honor as a means to dishonor others, he further suggests that the obsessive pursuit of honor can easily lead to the loss of honor. Lope's own manipulation of audience sympathies, it has been shown, can also serve to question the validity of a code of behavior under which likable characters must be destroyed.

Finally, in La locura por la honra, Lope provides his audience with a most unusual character: one whose dramatic function as a selfish and destructive manipulator of the honor obsession in others is never recognized in the play. The overwhelming need for honor is thus presented as a kind of social blind spot which engulfs all of society, del rey abajo.

Notes to Chapter VI

¹"Algunas observaciones," p. 343.

²Ruiz Ramón, p. 152.

³Ruiz Ramón, p. 152.

⁴Los embustes de Fabia, La hermosa Alfreda, El príncipe despeñado, La resistencia honrada, La corona merecida, La batalla del honor, La firmeza en la desdicha, La locura por la honra.

⁵Ursón y Valentín, Los Comendadores de Córdoba (see Chapter II of this study), El testimonio vengado, Los pleitos de Ingalaterra, El valeroso catalán, La inocente Laura, Del mal lo menos, La discordia en los casados, El animal de Hungría, Don Lope de Cardona, La corona de Hungría.

⁶La desdichada Estefanía, Peribáñez, El más galán portugués, Porfiar hasta morir.

⁷Acad. VIII, p. 121a

⁸Henrik Ziomek, ed., Lope de Vega, La batalla del honor (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1972) p. 31.

⁹La batalla del honor, ed. Robert K. Spaulding (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), ll. 741-744.

¹⁰See Menéndez y Pelayo, Acad. VIII, cxxv-cxxvi (La corona merecida) and Diego Marín, La intriga secundaria, pp. 44-45 (El príncipe despeñado).

¹¹Ursón y Valentín, El testimonio vengado, Los pleitos de Ingalaterra, El valeroso catalán, La discordia en los casados, El animal de Hungría, La corona de Hungría.

¹²For a general survey of Lope's use of the false accusation of women in his comedias, see R. W. Tyler's introduction to his edition of La corona de Hungría, pp. 26-60.

¹³See pp. 150-153 of this study.

¹⁴This technique, as well as the unsympathetic portrayal of Kings, is also an aspect of some of Calderón's honor plays.

¹⁵See pp. 124-127 of this study.

¹⁶C. f., El halcón de Federico, El galán escarmentado.

¹⁷"Some uses of sonnets," p. 217.

¹⁸Dunn, "Some uses of sonnets," p. 218.

¹⁹"Lope de Vega's El castigo sin venganza: the Idolatry of the Duke of Ferrara," Bulletin of Hispanic Studies, XXXVII (1960), 159.

²⁰Whether this "conversion" is real or not has been disputed by the critics. E. M. Wilson suggests that Lope has deliberately left the matter open to question: " . . . hay por lo menos una insinuación que no debemos aceptar al duque como él considera a sí mismo. Los comentarios, mitad serios, del gracioso implican crítica del vengador y también de sus víctimas. ¿Puso Lope estas ideas en boca del gracioso para que pudieran ser, si fuera preciso, negadas?" "Cuando Lope quiere, quiere." p. 292.

²¹Wilson, "Cuando Lope quiere, quiere," p. 292.

²²Wilson, "Cuando Lope quiere, quiere," p. 296.

²³Ac. N. VII, p. 293a.

²⁴In El perseguido, for example, a wife rebuffed by a man she has tried to seduce decides to accuse him of trying to seduce her. By the end of the work, however, she is exposed for her deception and punished.

Chapter VII

Honor and limpieza de sangre

Perhaps one of the most intriguing aspects of the presentation of honor in the comedia is the fact that its universal acceptance is taken for granted. It has been noted in the foregoing chapters that Lope employed various techniques in order to challenge certain aspects of the honor code without seeming to do so. One question which is rarely, if ever, asked, however, is just why such caution on the part of Lope and other dramatists was necessary. The notion that honor had become what amounts to a dogma of Spanish existence is often used to explain why the creators of the comedia never criticized the Spanish preoccupation with honor; the audience, such reasoning goes, believed in honor as the basis for its own existence, and any undermining of the honor code would therefore be unacceptable.

Such an explanation, however, does not get to the roots of the problem. Why had honor become one of the pillars of Spanish existence? Surely the activities of an entire society did not revolve around a preoccupation with marital infidelity. But in that case, what was the real basis for the fascination with conjugal honor plays in Lope's day?

The possibility that the dramatic portrayal of honor was a literary transformation of the Golden Age preoccupation with limpieza de sangre has been suggested by a number of scholars. The Spanish obsession with blood purity has been well documented. As Albert A.

Sicroff has noted, " . . . nous avons toutes raisons de considérer la pureté de sang comme l'une des données les plus significatives de la conscience d'un espagnol du siglo de oro, et dont l'influence se faisait sentir, parfois d'une manière décisive, dans les démarches les plus importantes de son existence."¹ This preoccupation has also been noted by Julio Caro Baroja, who suggests, furthermore, its connection with honor: " . . . la sociedad española de los siglos XVI y XVII vivía dominada, casi amedrentada, por el concepto de la 'pureza de sangre,' que se consideraba en distintas proporciones según el honor que se quería alcanzar."²

The same author, in a later article, indicates even more emphatically the interrelationship between these two ideas: " . . . the whole of Spain was dominated by a preoccupation with the concepts of 'purity' and 'cleanliness of blood,' and of 'impurity,' 'stain' or 'blot;' this 'purity of blood' being equated with 'honor,' and impurity with 'dishonor,' and at the very least, ineligibility for the competition for honours,"³ Noël Salomon concurs in this view: "Nul doute: dans la lutte quotidienne et obscure du peuple la pureté de sang s'était transformée en critère de la dignité, de la 'honra.'"⁴

A number of critics have cited an interesting excerpt from a petition delivered to Philip III: "En España ay dos generos de Noblezas. Una mayor, que es la Hidalguía, y otra menor, que es la limpieza, que llamamos Christianos viejos. Y aunque la primera de la Hidalguía es mas honrado de tenerla; pero muy mas afrentoso es faltar la segunda: porque en España mas estimamos a un hombre pechero y limpio que a un hidalgo que no es limpio."⁵

In addition to the general idea that the preoccupation with honor reflects a preoccupation with limpieza de sangre, a number of specific connections between the two may be noted. Antony Van Beysterveldt points out that both honor and limpieza were ultimately dependent on public opinion.⁶ The preoccupation with the woman's "honorable" behavior has been noted by Larson,⁷ and possible reasons for this have been suggested by a number of other authors. Caro Baroja points out that while the general idea of "nobility" was judged from the paternal line only, purity of blood took all lines into equal account.⁸ Sicroff, furthermore, describes a number of cases in which attempts were made to conceal the true identity of a person's mother in order to satisfy an investigation into the person's family background.⁹ The importance of ascertaining the maternal line in these investigations meant that a great deal of attention was paid to the woman in matters "racial honor." As Sicroff has noted: "L'insecurité qui entoure la question de pureté de sang est si grande, que même lorsqu'un caballero entreprend un examen de la généalogie de sa fiancée et n'y découvre aucune tare depuis trois générations, l'intervention, après le mariage, d'un ennemi qui révèle l'origine impure d'un ancêtre de la femme à la neuvième génération, laisse le caballero et ses enfants déshonorés, comme si c'était eux-mêmes les nouveaux convertis."¹⁰

The preoccupation with the woman's honor is, of course, one of the bases for the honor code in the comedia. Just as any stain on the woman's ancestry would destroy the honor of her husband--whose own background might be unblemished--so too would the indiscreet behavior

of a wife in a conjugal honor play place her husband's honor in jeopardy. It should be recalled, moreover, that a number of the invectives cited earlier deal with precisely this problem.

The idea of the false accusation brought against an innocent person--an essential element in the action of many honor plays--might also be considered in its relation to the limpieza question. As Caro Baroja has noted, " . . . se halló . . . que entre los testigos había personas de muy vil condición que levantaron falsos testimonios a los conversos "11

In the matter of the peasant's claim to honor, indications that honor ultimately depends upon purity of blood exist within the comedia itself. As Alexey Almasov observes: " . . . en los dramas en que los exponentes del honor villano son indudablemente campesinos, no pierde Lope la ocasión de mencionar que ellos son cristianos viejos y llevan espadas."12

Américo Castro, in De la edad conflictiva, has given a good deal of consideration to this matter. Not only does the peasant acquire dramatic honor through his unblemished lineage, Castro maintains, but the nobleman suffers by comparison:

Los labriegos eran sedes de honra en las conversaciones de la gente a causa de su supuesto no judaísmo, pero en el teatro de Lope de Vega la conciencia honrosa del villano sale a luz al enfrentarse con el señor depravado. El labriego aparecía en escena sostenido por su ejecutoria de cristiano viejo, y sus choques con los poderosos se proyectaban sobre un fondo tradicional, sobre el recuerdo de la opuesta relación de los unos y los otros respecto de los judíos, amparados antaño por los grandes. La nobleza sale ahora a escena "contaminada" por sus remotos contactos con el judío.¹³

Salomon notes that the peasant's assertion of his pure blood was the only outlet through which he could attain some measure of human dignity:

. . .le préjugé populaire de la race n'était que la réaction de défense aveugle de ruraux incapables de connaître leur propre situation historique et de la comprendre théoriquement; ceux-ci transposaient en lutte de races ou de religions la lutte de classes qu'ils poursuivaient obscurément contre leurs divers oppresseurs, et c'est pourquoi face aux autres catégories sociales le sentiment de la "limpieza de sangre" vint nourrir la revendication d'honneur et de dignité des paysans.¹⁴

While the critics agree that the peasant based his claim to honor on his pure blood, there is some disagreement over Lope's use of this motif in his dramatic works and over his general attitude toward the Spanish preoccupation with limpieza de sangre. Caro Baroja sees Lope as simply antisemitic.¹⁵ Américo Castro, less concerned with Lope's personal views than with the function of the comedia as genre, sees in Golden Age drama (as opposed to earlier theater in Spain) the appropriate vehicle for the expression of the point of view of the cristiano viejo: "El teatro de fines del siglo XV fue obra de conversos, afanosos de situarse socialmente el de fines del siglo XVI se hizo portavoz de los problemas de la casta triunfante."¹⁶ Castro feels that the comedia, and Lope as its major proponent, gave Golden Age audiences, through the presentation of honor as el bien más alto, a resounding reaffirmation of the Spanish orthodoxy exemplified by the Old Christian caste.

Some critics, however, have begun to doubt this view of Lope as the ultimate conformist regarding the question of limpieza de sangre. Fernando Lázaro Carreter feels that while the comedia does uphold the

rules of honor, this had more to do with a desire to please the audiences than with Lope's personal views on the matter: "Y es que el público de los corrales tenía sobre esto ideas bien sólidas, no siempre coincidentes con las que Cervantes profesaba y Lope mantenía en el fondo de su conciencia."¹⁷ Salomon, moreover, is not even sure that Lope's presentation of peasant honor in his comedias is wholly in keeping with the strictly orthodox view. Pointing out the possibilities of parody as well as praise in the treatment of peasant life in Peribáñez, he refers to the "pluralité virtuelle des significations des motifs paysans"18

Salomon, furthermore, notes in some of Lope's peasants a pre-occupation with a kind of honor very different from the honor of reputation which motivates so many characters in the comedia:

. . . le héros paysan de El cuerdo en su casa propose comme modèle l'inverse même de ce que faisaient beaucoup de roturiers riches de la réalité au même moment. L'idée de la promotion sociale n'est acceptée par lui que dans les limites de la condition vilaine, et ceci au nom d'un sentiment d'humilité chrétienne derrière lequel nous devinons le lieu commun ascétique d'une mort égalitaire qui finalement nivellera toutes les classes."¹⁹

Aside from the question of peasant honor being related to limpieza de sangre, other references to the problems revolving around blood purity would have been extremely difficult to present within a literary format, particularly that of the comedia. As Caro Baroja has noted: "Nuestra literatura no hizo, claro es, ninguna sátira de la burocracia inquisitorial, aunque de vez en cuando aproveche algunos episodios novelescos a que pudo dar lugar."²⁰ As far as the comedia was concerned, states Castro, " . . . era impensable que apareciese en

escena un cristiano nuevo con cuidados de honra."²¹

At a distance of more than three centuries, however, one begins to wonder if there might, in fact, exist references to this problem in Golden Age literature, references which the contemporary reader might have difficulty discerning. As Sicroff has noted: "La préoccupation de la limpieza de sangre s'était si intimement mêlée à l'existence espagnole que nous ne pouvons pas savoir exactement les limites atteintes par cette obsession."²² Sicroff goes on to suggest that the use of the honor theme as one of the principal motivations of the comedia might, in fact, be an indirect means of reflecting the obsessive preoccupation of the Golden Age Spaniard with questions of blood purity:

Car cette susceptibilité envers le pundonor qu'on trouve comme thème principal de la comedia espagnole, n'aurait-elle rien à faire avec la susceptibilité envers la question de la limpieza de sangre? Ne serait-ce pas que le thème de la pureté de sang, dans la vie espagnole, mettait un accent encore plus vif sur la valeur de l'honneur?²³

The technique of using one type of honor preoccupation to reflect another is called "transposition" by Van Beysterveldt, who suggests that it is a technique used with a fair degree of frequency in the comedia. Van Beysterveldt presents the example of Alarcón's La verdad sospechosa, in which Jacinta refuses to marry don Juan until he has been awarded the hábito de Santiago for which he is being considered:

"En sollicitant donc un habit militaire, le noble s'exposait au risque de donner l'éveil aux soupçons sur le pureté de son sang, car si l'habit tardait à arriver ou était refusé, ces soupçons se confirmaient et le chevalier perdait de sa considération sociale."²⁴ Castro too suggests a similar technique, though in more general, existential terms: "Lope

redujo a 'casos'--limitó y temporalizó--situaciones humanas tensas al máximo, en las cuales se debatía conflictivamente la conciencia del existir de la persona, escendida en un sentirse siendo y a la vez en trance de no ser,"²⁵

A number of Golden Age authors do manage to suggest the great social pressures brought about by the extreme preoccupation with limpieza de sangre. Cervantes, in El retablo de las maravillas, presents the problem with a good deal of humor. Here the peasants are told by Chanfalla that the magical retablo will be visible to all, with two notable exceptions: " . . . que ninguno puede ver las cosas que en él se muestran que tenga alguna raza de confeso, o no sea habido o procreado de sus padres de legítimo matrimonio" ²⁶ As the "presentation" of the retablo progresses, the peasants must pretend that they can see the nonexistent performance for reasons of honor. As the Gobernador says, in an aparte, "Basta; que todos ven lo que yo no veo; pero al fin habré de decir que lo veo, por la negra honrilla."²⁷ Furthermore, Cervantes, from the very beginning of this work, pokes fun at the need to express things in terms of honor:

Gobernador	--Y bien: ¿qué es lo que queréis, hombre honrado?
Chirinos	--Honrados días viva vuesa merced, que así nos honra. En fin: la encina da bellotas; el pero, peras; la parra, uvas, y el honrado, honra sin poder hacer otra cosa. ²⁸

In this work, the humor is at the expense of the peasants, who place such great importance on their presumably Old Christian heritage. Other authors, however, have presented the problem from the broader point of view of society in general. Baltasar Gracián, in El Criticón,

describes a city ruled by the Queen Honoria, in which the preoccupation with limpieza de sangre is one aspect of the inhabitants' total preoccupation with honor. With devastating humor, Gracián describes the entrance into this city:

Célebre Puente, como tan temida, daba paso a la gran Ciudad, ilustre Corte de la heroica Honoria, aquella plausible Reina de la estimación, y por eso tan venerada de todos. Era un paso muy peligroso, por estar todo él sembrado de periquinos Peros, en que muchos tropezaban y los más caían en el río del reír, quedando muy mojados, y aun poniéndose del lodo, con mucha risa de la innumerable vulgaridad, que estaba a la mira de sus desaires. Era de ponderar la intrepidez con que algunos confiados y otros presumidos se arrojaban, y los más se despeñaban anhelando a pasar de un extremo de la bajeza a otro ensalzamiento, y tal vez de la mayor deshonor a la mayor grandeza; de lo negro a lo blanco, y aun de lo amarillo a lo rojo; pero todos ellos caían con harta nota suya y risa de los sabidores. Así le sucedió a uno, que pretendió pasar de villano a noble, otro de manchado a limpio, diciendo que tras el Sábado se sigue el Domingo 29

The immense pressure caused by this incessant preoccupation with honor is seen in the actions of various inhabitants of the city, who seem to divide their time equally between defending themselves and offending others. The city, described as "aquel célebre emporio de la honra,"³⁰ is a city of glass palaces, broken by one of the local citizens who spends his time throwing rocks at everything, " . . . así que no quedaba tejado sano ni honra segura, ni vida inculpable; todo era malas voces, hablillas, famas echadizas y los duendes de los chismes no paraban."³¹

Gracián's description of another inhabitant presents the pressure exerted by a concern over lineage:

Había tomado otro más perjudicial deporte, y era arrojar a los rostros, en vez de piedras, carbones que tiznaban feamente, y así andaban casi todos mascarados, haciendo ridículas visiones, uno con un tizne en la frente, otro en la mejilla,

y tal que le cruzaba la cara, riéndose unos de otros, sin mirarse a sí mismo ni advertir cada uno su fealdad, sino la ajena. Era de ver, y aun de reír, cómo todos andaban tiznados, haciendo burla unos de otros. ¿No veis, decía uno, qué mancha tan fea tiene Fulano en su linaje?, ¡y que ose hablar de los otros!--Pues él, decía otro, ¿que no vea su infamia tan notoria, y se mete a hablar de las ajenas, que no haya ninguno con honra en su lengua?32

While Gracián rarely makes specific reference to the problem of limpieza de sangre, he does create a grotesque world in which a preoccupation with lineage is one aspect of an honor obsession which controls the lives of all its inhabitants. It is a world in which each individual is isolated from all others and is, at any moment, open to attack from those around him. The only solution to this vulnerability seems to be to offend others in return. Each person, then, finds himself in the precarious position of maintaining an ongoing offensive against others in order to keep his own honor intact. The consequences of such a situation can be seen in the steady stream of false accusations, gossip and rumors which constitute the only activities of the members of this society.

The problem is treated in a far more serious fashion in a sonnet by Quevedo, in which he advises a friend not to go through the process of having his origins investigated:

Solar y ejecutoria de tu abuelo
es la ignorada antigüedad sin dolo;
no escudriñes al Tiempo el protocolo,
ni corras al silencio antiguo el velo.

Estudia en el osar deste mozuelo,
descaminado escándalo del polo:
para probar que descendió de Apolo,
probó, cayendo, descender del cielo.

No revuelvas los huesos sepultados;
que hallarás más gusanos que blasones,
en testigos de nuevo exminados.

Que de multiplicar informaciones,
puedes temer multiplicar quemados,
y con las mismas pruebas, Faetones.³³

No direct reference is made here to limpieza de sangre, but there is certainly the suggestion that one should be extremely cautious in examining one's ancestry. This is the same idea presented, though in very different ways, by Cervantes and Gracián; and, in fact, the need for caution is one of the basic principles of the honor code in the comedia, although there the question of limpieza is largely ignored.

In La desdicha por la honra, one of the Novelas a Marcia Leonarda, Lope himself shows the destructive pressure exerted upon an individual by a preoccupation with blood purity. The honor referred to in the title is directly related to the question of lineage, as the protagonist feels dishonored when he learns that his parents are moriscos, descended from the Bencerrajes. Feeling the need to prove himself an honorable upholder of the Christian faith, Felisardo leaves Sicily, explaining to the Viceroy, in a letter, the reason for his departure: "Parecióme dejar su casa de Vuestra Excelencia, por harto dolor mío . . ., que no es justo que un hombre a quien pueden decir esta nota de infamia siempre que se ofrezca ocasión, viva en ella, ni mi tristeza y vergüenza me dieran lugar, aunque yo me esforzara, por no estar con este recelo cada día, y más adonde he tenido buena opinión."³⁴

Lope, however, is not content to merely present the consequences of the Spanish preoccupation with racial honor, and expresses opposition to the concern with lineage in the Viceroy's answer to Felisardo: "En el nacer no merecen ni desmerecen los hombres, que no está en su mano; en las costumbres sí, que ser buenas o malas corre

por su cuenta Porque la diferencia de las leyes no ofende la nobleza de sangre, y más en los que ya tienen la verdadera, que es la nuestra, como vos la tenéis, y confirmada por tantos años."³⁵

Here Lope is stating, with surprising directness, that the preoccupation with pure blood must give way to a more ethical, or Christian, view of honor.³⁶ As the action of the novela progresses, Felisardo is ultimately destroyed in his attempt to prove himself a true Christian, and Lope marks his death with the following epitaph:

Aquí yace un desdichado,
que, de sí mismo nacido,
vivió por desconocido,
murió por desconfiado;
del propio honor engañado,
aunque no sin culpa alguna,
dejó el sol, buscó la luna:
donde se ve que el valor
quiere a fuerza del honor
resistir a la fortuna.³⁷

If Lope was capable of such a negative presentation---in a nove-la--of the effects of a preoccupation with honor based on limpieza de sangre, was he also capable of expressing these ideas in his comedias? According to Bataillon, neither Lope nor any other dramatist went to this extreme:

La desdicha por la honra nos presenta la fatalidad externa del honor encarnada en el prejuicio de la limpieza de sangre. ¿Cómo lo juzga Lope? En este caso también valdría la pena comparar el pensamiento de Lope novelista con el que se expresa en el teatro. Pero, aunque hablan poco de ella los que tratan del honor español, esta manifestación de la honra es mucho más típicamente española que las venganzas de los maridos calderonianos: y por eso tal vez no se atreve ningún dramaturgo a tratar el tema en serio, a escribir tragedias de la limpieza de sangre como hay tragedias del honor conyugal.³⁸

Bataillon goes on to note, however, that the theme is treated in some comic works. While there are no tragedies built around the

question of limpieza de sangre the present study has revealed that there are, among Lope's conjugal honor plays, a number of works which do present the problem from a serious point of view. This material will be included in the present study for a number of reasons. In the first place, although it is not related to conjugal honor it does form part of the context of several of Lope's conjugal honor plays. Secondly, Lope's handling of this theme may provide some insight into his own attitude regarding the question of blood purity. Finally, since there is a possibility that the whole matter of conjugal honor may be a transposition of the Golden Age concern with limpieza de sangre, it should be of great interest to see how such material is used in a conjugal honor play.

Two plays in which the problem of blood purity is referred to directly are El galán escarmentado and La pobreza estimada. While El galán escarmentado is essentially comic in tone, the humor is derived from the antics of Celio, the protagonist, rather than from the caso de honra itself, in which Julio, aside from suspecting his wife's infidelity, is also accused of being a cristiano nuevo. It is this accusation, made by his father-in-law, and not his preoccupation with conjugal honor, which is the direct cause of Julio's death.

While the suspicion of conjugal dishonor does provoke the desire for vengeance on Julio's part, a far more violent reaction is provoked by Tácito's assault upon Julio's lineage:

Tácito	Yo he tenido la culpa en dar mi sangre a quien la tiene, por ventura, en mezclas.
Julio	Yo soy hidalgo, y conocido hidalgo, de hecho notorio y de solar antiguo.

Tácito Solar. ¿De qué solar? ¿De los que agora
 se labran en Madrid en muladares?
 ¡Qué gallardo que hablas, por ser rico!
 Tendrás quizá las armas en la iglesia. (138a)

The frenzy into which Julio is thrown by this accusation is relieved only through Tácito's devious manipulation of his son-in-law: he apologizes, insists upon a reconciliation, invites Julio to embrace him, and finally stabs Julio to death. Tácito's treacherous murder of Julio would most likely have been more acceptable to the public precisely because of the suggestion that Julio is of converso origin. This holds true also for the aftermath of Tácito's actions: the use of trickery to bring about his exoneration from any charge of murder by proving to the authorities that Julio had killed his wife and therefore deserved such punishment. Thus, even after his death, Julio is the victim of a false accusation which brings even further stain to his opinión.

If Julio's honor problems and the question of his limpieza de sangre were presented only through the views of those around him, Lope's attitude toward the converso's claim to honor would be clearly a negative one. Nevertheless, while much of the audience would no doubt share such a negative view, Lope does present the problem of the converso from a second, and opposing, perspective. There is a moment in the play, just after Julio finds the love letters written to his wife (and before the accusation of impure blood is made), in which Julio recites a sonnet about papeles and the dangers they may cause:

¡Oh, malditos papeles, cuántos daños
 habéis hecho en el mundo, que no hay suma
 que los pueda contar; fuego os consuma,
 que así dais ocasión de hacer engaños!
 ¡Cuántos en reinos propios y en extraños
 levantasteis del suelo como espuma;

pero a veces volar con una pluma,
 suele venir a malograr los años!
 Cuántos, sin culpa alguna, habréis culpado
 por no poder saberse la disculpa!
 ¡Grande poder es un papel escrito!
 Que sois testigos mudos del pecado;
 y, siendo los terceros de la culpa,
 venís a ser la prueba del delito. (133b-134a)

In this sonnet Julio expresses a fear which could be shared by any comedia protagonist: that an honorable reputation can be destroyed by a mere piece of paper. In El galán escarmentado, however, this view of honor can be understood on two distinct levels. In a general sense, Julio is commenting upon the dangers inherent in an honor code which is based on the whims of public opinion. In a more specific sense, however, Julio's sonnet inveighing against papeles is reminiscent of a problem which grew out of the preoccupation with limpieza de sangre: the malditos papeles that threatened one's honor had their counterpart in the anonymous letters of accusation which could, at any time, endanger a man's claim to pure blood.³⁹ Although at this point the blood purity problem has not yet appeared within the context of the play, it becomes evident in retrospect that Julio is a character acutely concerned with lineage and racial honor. It is possible that Lope introduced Julio's sonnet in such a way that the audience, still unaware of the accusations Tácito will make, will understand the sonnet only with regard to the conjugal honor conflict. In this way, Lope would allow his character to receive a good measure of audience sympathy before his lineage is called into question.

Moreover, when one considers the sonnet in retrospect, the excessive preoccupation with honor which leads Julio to erroneously

suspect his wife becomes more understandable. It can now be seen as a serious concern with which any member of Lope's audience could empathise--particularly when one recalls that Julio's problem will center around an accusation which is never substantiated during the course of the play. The sonnet, then, contributes a note of ambiguity to the portrayal of Julio, who, for this brief dramatic moment, becomes a very sympathetic character.

Julio's sonnet is, using van Beysterveldt's term, an excellent example of transposition. While referring to conjugal honor, it also calls attention to another anguishing problem: that of Julio's preoccupation with his limpieza de sangre.

The play which deals most directly with the question of limpieza de sangre is La pobreza estimada. In this work one character, Ricardo, is identified throughout the work as being of converso origin. Here, instead of transposing the problem of the converso into a conjugal honor conflict, Lope deals directly with the question of blood purity and its relation to honor.

To begin with, Ricardo is evidently not a sympathetic character. As one of two suitors of Dorotea, he is clearly the second choice, a "rico mal nacido" in contrast to Leonido, who is described as "hidalgo y pobre."⁴⁰

Once Dorotea decides to marry Leonido, Ricardo becomes the villain of the work, the potential offender of Leonido's conjugal honor. When Leonido, still plagued by poverty, leaves home to seek his fortune as a soldier, Ricardo bribes a servant in order to gain access to Dorotea. The caso de honra in this work arises when Leonido returns

home only to find Ricardo emerging from his house. Though Leonido is inclined to suspect the worst, the caso is ultimately resolved without violence when Leonido hears Ricardo praise Dorotea for her loyalty to her husband and for her refusal to accept a gift of money he has offered to help her survive.

With regard to most of the play's action, Ricardo appears as a character who will use devious means to achieve his objectives. Before Dorotea makes her final choice, Ricardo either stabs or has one of his servants stab Leonido in the back. Later on, he resorts to bribery and attempts to take advantage of Dorotea's unprotected position. Once in a while, however, Lope does suggest that Ricardo should not be viewed as wholly unsympathetic. At the end of the work, it is actually Ricardo who prevents Leonido from committing an unjust honor vengeance by praising Dorotea's fidelity. Furthermore, Ricardo's last action in the play could be described as an act of Christian charity, as he gives the money refused by Dorotea to two cautivos he sees in the street, cautivos who turn out to be Leonido and Aurelio, Dorotea's father.

Thus Ricardo, who up until this point has been portrayed as a treacherous converso, gains in stature when faced with a virtuous Dorotea:

Tú, que el alma me robaste,
 fiera esquiva, Dorotea,
 darás causa á mi remedio;
 que yo pondré tierra en medio,
 y aun cielo, que cielo sea. (308a)

Ricardo's determination to abandon his pursuit of Dorotea is accompanied by an even greater transformation, as the wealthy converso takes a vow of poverty and decides to enter a monastery:

Mas, ¿qué me quejo de ti,
santa, honrada, casta, hermosa,
pues has sido poderosa
que hoy vuelva á vivir en mí?
Echéte aqueste dinero
sólo para que comieses
y ique tan honrada fueses,
que le has dado al pregonero!
Pues no ha de volver conmigo.
Cautivos, tomá este lienzo;
que desde agora comienzo
a ser de pobres amigo.
Goce mi renta mi hermana,
y á un monasterio me voy. (308a)

While there is no allusion here to the question of limpieza de sangre, Lope does portray his converso character as having learned the truly Christian virtues of poverty and charity which lead him to the monastery where he will devote the rest of his life to the practice of Christianity.

The character who was originally presented as lacking honor for racial reasons, then, is transformed into a most honorable character in the matter of religion. Thus the suggestion is made that blood purity is a poor indicator of a person's inclination to live as a Christian.

There is, furthermore, a sub-plot in this work which reinforces the notion that Lope may be questioning the validity of limpieza de sangre as a measure of the worth of a character. Dorotea's servant, Isabel, is a Moorish slave (who later turns out to be the daughter of the King of Algiers, who had been holding Aurelio for ransom). Early in the play, Isabel is courted by Tancredo, Leonido's servant. Tancredo's

feelings for Isabel are restrained by the fact that she is of Moorish birth, and he refuses to believe her claim to noble origins:

Algunas veces te oí
hablar en esa quimera;
 pero entiendo que son leyes
de esclavos hacerse altivos,
porque siempre los cautivos
os fingís hijos de reyes. (207b)

When the marriage between Leonido and Dorotea is planned, Leonido (whose prejudice against impure blood seems restricted to those of Jewish origins) suggests that Tancredo marry Isabel:

Que aunque ésta es mora los moros
son nobles, son bien nacidos,
mayormente los de Argel,
más sabios que los antiguos. (291b)

Tancredo, however, has no intention of dishonoring his own heritage:

¿Qué pleito me han sentenciado, [sic]
que siendo yo un hombre limpio
me queres mexclar con ellos? [sic] (291b)

In his portrayal of these servants, Lope makes clear who is the more honorable of the two. While Isabel remains loyal to Dorotea, Tancredo, during his master's absence, allows himself to be bribed by Ricardo after Dorotea tells him that she no longer has the money to pay his wages. Tancredo becomes, in effect, Ricardo's Celestina, while Isabel goes out to work to bring money home for Dorotea. At the end of the play, a distinction is again made between racial and religious questions as Isabel, reunited with her brother, declares that she is a Christian and influences her brother to accept the Christian faith as she has done.

While Lope ends the play's action with these suggestions diminishing the significance of limpieza de sangre, he does find it

necessary to leave the vulgo with the idea that he has done nothing to contradict the usual attitude toward the question of blood purity. The play, therefore, is brought to a conclusion with Leonido telling Isabel's brother:

Acabe con tu venida
la riqueza mal nacida
y la pobreza estimada. (310b)

This final reminder of Ricardo's converso origins would satisfy the public's negative attitude toward the converso, but it completely ignores the fact that not only has Ricardo ultimately displayed the attributes of an honorable Christian, but also that it has been Ricardo's own "ill-born" wealth which has meant financial salvation for Leonido and Aurelio. Thus Lope manages to dramatize the possibility of a converso becoming a true convert without offending his public.

Underlying the play's principal action, moreover, is a less evident line of development presenting limpieza de sangre in a rather unorthodox way. Here Lope sets up a dialectical structure that serves to present the problem from two distinct perspectives. The audience first learns of Ricardo's lineage through a minor character, Felisardo, who, echoing public opinion, informs Leonido about his competitor:

Leonido	¿Es Ricardo espadachín?
Felisardo	Que ya el tiempo se pasó de los bravos macabeos
Leonido	¿Cómo es eso?
Felisardo	Y los trofeos que al templo con armas dió.
Leonido	¿Es mal nacido Ricardo?
Felisardo	Por cierto que te mintieron. ⁴¹ Su abuelo y padre lo fueron, que él es un mozo gallardo. Es confeso y confesado por boca de San Benito,

un santo en la iglesia escrito,
donde también es guardado. (278b)

When Felisardo expresses the view that Leonido's situation is far preferable to that of Ricardo, Leonido disagrees to a certain extent (although Lope is extremely careful here, as may be noted in the last two lines):

Felisardo	¡Oh santa y noble pobreza!
Leonido	¡Oh poderosa riqueza, que me ganas por la mano! Y aunque al dolor se atribuya, digo que, por tanta gloria, trocara mi ejecutoria por la rica infamia suya; no por lo que toca á Dios, sino por lo temporal . . . (278b)

At the beginning of the second act, the matter is discussed even more fully, and from other perspectives. Aurelio, a captive of Audalla, the Moorish King, has just received a letter from Dorotea in which she asks her father to choose between Ricardo and Leonido. While birth and wealth are still the two major considerations, Dorotea's description of Ricardo is not wholly unsympathetic:

Es el uno hidalgo y pobre,
de sus cuatro abuelos limpio,
y tanto, que lo es también
de entendimiento y vestido.
. . .
El otro es rico y mancebo,
heredado y mal nacido,
cofrade de San Andrés,
devoto de San Benito.
Es gallardo, humilde, alegre,
galán vistoso, pulido. (284b)

Furthermore, Dorotea also expresses the view that the concern over lineage is related more to reputation than it is to any profound consideration of human worth:

Este mozo es hombre cuerdo,
y aunque en la sangre ofendido,
de Adán descendemos todos;
mírale con los oídos. (284b)

Aurelio later explains this last line:

Como ese es rico y mal nacido, dice
que escuche su dinero, y que á su sangre
cierre los ojos. (285a)

Following the reading of Dorotea's letter, Aurelio and Audalla discuss the merits and disadvantages of each of the suitors. Aurelio, oddly enough, takes the side of Ricardo, while Audalla, the Moor, claims that Leonido is the better choice. While Lope could not allow the ultimate decision to be in favor of the converso, he does manage to introduce a number of arguments which reflect a charitable view of Ricardo's origins:

Audalla	Quien no tiene nobleza vive esclavo, y cuando alcanza estima es á su costa, y no le honran á él, sino al dinero.
Aurelio	El virtuoso es noble entre cristianos.
Audalla	Y entre moros también es santo y noble.
Aurelio	Mil reyes comenzaron por esclavos y esclavos han venido á ser mil reyes. De un hombre hemos nacido.
Audalla	Ya lo entiendo; pero de tres que el mundo dividieron, Dios bendijo los dos, maldijo el uno.
Aurelio	¿Con la Escritura acotas?
Audalla	Luego ¿dudas que no la lee el moro?
Aurelio	Si la sabes, mira el valor de los hebreos, mira el libro de los Reyes y Jüeces. (285b)

By means of Aurelio's arguments, Lope has conveyed a number of ideas in direct contradiction of the traditional view that a defect of ancestry constitutes an indelible stain of dishonor. Virtue and noble birth is no guarantee of a noble existence. All men, says Aurelio,

share a common origin, thus repeating Dorotea's assertion that all men are descended from Adam. Moreover, Aurelio points out that there are virtuous Hebrew figures described in Kings and Judges. While none of these arguments will convince Audalla, Lope has at least managed to expose his audience to the idea that there are a number of valid arguments on the side of acceptance of the converso.

The last such dialogue in the play involves an open dispute between Leonido and Ricardo. This begins when Leonido insults Ricardo, who has tried to buy from Dorotea a scarf Leonido gave her. Leonido attacks Ricardo's lineage, in which he sees the source of the dishonorable actions committed by Ricardo:

Como el vender y comprar
fué en vuestra casa primero
que el blasón de caballero,
no lo podéis olvidar.
Esa banda en mi poder
poco valor atesora;
pero el pecho en que está ahora
no es tienda para vender;
y si yo tuviera espada,
allá fuera ser pudiera
que las espaldas os viera,
como vos mi cara honrada;
que entonces, con más recelo
que dueña de toca y faldas,
me sajaste las espaldas,
oficio de vuestro abuelo.
Aquella herida, aunque brava,
no fué herir ni fué blasón,
sino hurtar sangre á traición,
para honrar la que os faltaba. (289a)

Using the stereotyped image of the Jew, Leonido attributes Ricardo's actions to his origins. The arguments used here would no doubt have been quite familiar to Lope's audience, and wholly in keeping with its own views. Ricardo's reply, on the other hand, is a serious

attempt to present the feelings of one who has been persecuted with arguments of this sort. Ricardo expresses both resentment of such persecution and the idea, previously expressed by Aurelio, that true nobility should be based on actions rather than lineage:

Que hidalgo seáis no sé;
 pero cuando lo seáis,
 ni con hablar lo mostráis,
 ni en vuestro talle se ve.
 ¿Son las castas de nobleza
 de solar y hechos notorios
 libelos infamatorios
 contra la naturaleza?
 Al que es vil, ¿recibe el cielo
 descargo de que es hidalgo?
 ¿Estima la muerte en algo
 al más hidalgo del suelo?
 Son las hojas de que fundo
 la más noble ejecutoria
 cédulas de vanagloria
 que da firmadas el mundo.
 Yo soy de mis obras hijo;
 mis padres fueron honrados,
 tengo amigos y criados,
 de quien me acompaño y riño.
 Si la noche que os hirieron
 las espaldas les mostráis,
 en la cara que les daís,
 en esa la herida os dieron.
 . . .
 Pero tan hinchado os sienta
 de hidalgo hasta en el decir,
 que no os debió de salir
 sangre entonces, sino viento. (289b)

Ricardo does not deny his origins, but he does assert his right to the honor he has earned. He challenges Leonido's nobility which, he says, is borne out by neither noble acts nor a noble demeanor. He even questions Leonido's right as an hidalgo to defame others.

While Ricardo is not a sympathetic character, his arguments are undeniably valid. Thus Lope has dared to put before his audience views contradicting their concern with limpieza de sange. Without

directly criticising the traditional view, he introduces into both the action and the dialogue of this play the suggestion that the converso may not deserve the stigma of dishonor which society places upon him. While the other characters in the play continue to uphold the view that racial honor must be maintained, Lope also suggests that from the point of view of the Christian faith itself, honor cannot be denied an individual merely on the basis of his origins. That Lope himself believes this to be true is evident in his intentional dissociation of the racial from the religious situation of the cristiano nuevo (whether of Jewish or Moorish origin) as well as in his characterization of Ricardo. While the play starts out with Ricardo as a treacherous converso, Ricardo's last act on stage is one of self-sacrifice, and he is thus transformed into a figure of considerable dignity and honor.

A number of plays which do not deal directly with the question of limpieza de sangre contain passages and motifs which could be seen as dramatic transpositions of this problem. In one work, En los indicios, la culpa, while the theme of lineage does not appear at all within the framework of the action, there are a number of curious allusions to this question. In one of these, similarities with the papeles sonnet of El galán escarmentado may be noted, as the protagonist complains about anonymous letters after having received such a letter accusing his wife of infidelity:

Papel infame, ¿a qué aspira
tu acusación criminal,
si el proceso original
que te engendró fué mentira?
Lámina de bronce duro
para la imaginación;

voz sin alma, que a traición
 tiras a un pecho seguro;
 mudo con lengua entendida
 para pronunciar agravios;
 boca arrojada sin labios
 falsamente introducida;
 alevosía cubierta,
 aventurado rigor,
 sin disfraz para el honor
 y para el crédito incierta, (278b)

. . .

Here the character is expressing the helplessness of an individual in the face of an anonymous accusation against his honor. In this passage the invective is directed against the fact that this type of accusation leaves the offended party unable to face--or even to know--his accuser. Lope piles up metaphors for the anonymous accuser: he is as impenetrable as bronze, a voice without soul, mouth without lips which, hidden behind the paper, can damage reputations without any danger to himself. As has been noted with regard to El galán escarmentado, the anonymous letter was frequently used to accuse a person of having converso origins.

Later on in the work, there is an anecdote which describes the intense fear brought about by the slightest contact with an officer of the Inquisition. The occasion for telling it arises when the husband in the play is prevented from avenging his honor by the entrance of other characters. He explains his presence in his wife's room by saying that he only wanted to get one of her jewels to give to a friend. The wife, though wholly innocent of any wrongdoing, overreacts, and tells the husband:

Daldas todas, y también
 el escritorio en que están. (287b)

Gonzalo, the gracioso of the work, compares the wife's reaction to that of another innocent person, who received an unexpected visit from the servant of an Inquisitor:

Lo de aquel inquisidor
de toledo encaja aquí.
Tenía un hidalgo allí,
con fragantísimo olor,
un naranjo, y a él un día
antojósele enviar
por un poco de azahar,
y el que el recado traía,
en su casa no le halló,
y por no se detener,
que era hora de comer,
dicho a su mujer dejó,
cansado ya de esperar,
que de parte del señor,
don Fulano, inquisidor,
le buscaba un familiar.
Pero apenas del recado
el hidalgo se informó,
cuando en pie se corrompió,
sin poder comer bocado.
Cuanto hizo y cuanto dijo
en su vida y nacimiento,
revolvió en su pensamiento
con un discurso prolijo,
y llegando averiguar [sic]
después a lo que venía,
y que por más volvería
volviéndose antojar,
el hidalgo respondió:
"¡Juro a Dios, que no he de tener [sic]
otra vez a qué volver!"
Y el naranjo le envió. (288a)

With this black-humored anecdote Lope draws the parallel of the intense fear suffered by those subjected to constant scrutiny--in matters pertaining to honor as well as in those concerned with religion--and this, despite innocence of any wrongdoing. This is also one of the few passages in which Lope specifically points to a connection between conjugal honor and limpieza de sangre.

Even the title of this play can be seen as a possible transposition of the limpieza de sangre theme. The notion that guilt rests on indicios applied to blood purity as it did to honor. The way in which Lope reiterates the title at the end of the play is of particular interest. Gonzalo is offered the hand of the wife's servant in marriage, but he refuses the offer because he has no intention of ever marrying. At the beginning of the play he had already explained to his master his reluctance to marry, noting that when the married couple undresses at night, many realities normally covered up by dress may be revealed:

¡Qué de dientes escupidos
debajo de las almohadas;
qué de cabezas peladas
que se quitan sus vestidos
para volarse mejor;
qué de maridos viciosos,
con los cuerpos deseosos
y las almas sin amor! (262a)

There is only one solution, says Gonzalo, to this problem:

Reñir al desnudarse
y sólo desenojarse
después de haberse vestido. (262a)

While all of this appears to be said in jest, one wonders if Gonzalo might not be using a bit of low humor to express a very specific fear on the part of a man required to undress: the fear that his wife will see that he has been circumcised. This possibility is brought to mind with greater force at the end of the play, when Gonzalo refuses to marry Teodora:

A Turquía
a ser soltero me voy:
y cuando fáciles modos
de ser soltero no hubiera,

no me casara, siquiera
 porque lo han pensado todos,
 Y así, daré por disculpa,
 si con mujer he dormido,
 que solamente he tenido
en los indicios la culpa. (295b)

The idea that Gonzalo intends to go to Turkey in order not to reveal himself is highly suggestive. Turkey may not have been a haven for bachelors, but it was a place of refuge for another group who wanted to live undisturbed according to their own inclinations: those Jews who wanted to practice their religion without fear of the Inquisition.⁴² It would be impossible, of course, to prove definitively that this is the object of Gonzalo's allusions, but the suggestion is an intriguing one. Gonzalo is a thoroughly comic figure, and it is possible that the use of a comic character to allude to the problems of Spaniards living under constant surveillance by the Inquisition is Lope's way of introducing in an acceptable form matters which could not be dealt with seriously in the comedia.

That humor may be used toward this end is further suggested by a scene in El cuerdo en su casa. At the end of the second act three peasants--all minor characters--are entertaining Mendo, Leonardo and Elvira with a contest over which of the peasants can tell the best lie. The first two tell lies which are simply amusing. One, for example, says:

Digo que vi dos tinajas
 volar encima del sol,
 y que vi dos calabazas,
 todas llenas de poetas
 y músicos, que cantaban,
 con dinero y sin envidia,
 (573a)

. . .

Everyone enjoys the game until Gilote, the third contestant, tells his lie:

Gilote	Yo sé que Mendo es judío, y está en la iglesia su estampa, y que Leonardo es ladrón y que doña Elvira es mala.
Mendo	¡Calla, bestia!; que es mentira.
Leonardo	Tan grande, que a todos gana.
. . .	
Mendo	Esto basta. (573b)

The humor of this scene is derived from Mendo's outburst of anger at the very thought of such an accusation. Even though it is a competition for the best lie, Mendo cannot allow the matter to go further without vehemently denying the charge, thus showing Gilote to be the undisputed winner of the contest. Mendo is normally a character who is able to deal with questions of honor (*i.e.*, his social status as a peasant and the attentions paid to his wife by a young nobleman) quite calmly and rationally. This scene is the only instance in the play in which Mendo loses his temper, demonstrating that there is one type of honor preoccupation which can produce near hysteria even in the most rational of men.

La cortesía de España is another play in which Lope uses the gracioso to make fun of the Spanish obsession with honor based on lineage. Zorrilla, a lacayo, is upbraided by his father, an escudero, for wanting to marry Julia, a servant in the same household. While the father insists that his son is too good for Julia, Zorrilla ridicules his father's preoccupation with all of the apellidos of his family tree:

Escudero ¿Sabes quién eres?
 Zorrilla Señor,
 yo sirvo, ¿quién puedo ser?
 Escudero Quiérote dar a entender
 tu nacimiento y valor.
 Tú eres hidalgo, y sabrás
 que lo menos es Zorrilla.
 Zorrilla Sí, porque zorra en Castilla
 debe de ser mucho más.
 Escudero Tú eres Malo de Molina
 Zorrilla Pensé que de enfermedad;
 que si no es sarna, en verdad
 que no hay otra, aunque ésta es fina,
 Escudero Tú eres Lumbrera de Atienza.
 Zorrilla Con eso en mi aposentillo
 hay tantas, que el airecillo
 entra y sale sin vergüenza.
 Escudero Tú eres Quirós.
 ¡Qué locura!
 Pensé que kyrieleisón.
 Escudero También te llamas Montón.
 Zorrilla Debe de ser de basura.
 Escudero Tú eres Cabrera.
 Zorrilla Adivino
 las cabreras de Buñol.
 Escudero Cueto, limpio como el sol.
 Zorrilla No, sino cuero de vino.
 Escudero Tú eres Carrillo y Quijada.
 Zorrilla Y aun mandíbula seré.
 Escudero Y Salado, a buena fe.
 Zorrilla Mas tocino o ensalada.
 Escudero Tú eres Mozo.
 Zorrilla ¿Qué fin tomo
 para hacer cortes en mí?
 Escudero Solís también.
 Zorrilla Más Sofí
 Escudero Y aun Zurita.
 Zorrilla ¡Soy Palomo?
 Escudero Si vieses tu ejecutoria
 llena de tantos cuarteles,
 leones, tigres, lebreles. . .⁴³

At this point Zorrilla stops his father with a question which reflects his more practical view of life, a view in which his father's concept of honor has little value:

Zorrilla ¡Qué espantosa pepitoria!
 Padre, ¿vos tenéis dinero?
 Escudero No, hijo; pasó solía. /sic/

Zorrilla Pues poned esa hidalguía
 si es pergamino, a un harnero,
 que ya no hay más de tener.
 La hidalguía os sé decir
 que es cédula de pedir,
 y aun a veces de alquilar.
 Tened vos estos cuarteles
 llenos de muchos doblones,
 haced puercos los leones
 y carneros los lebreles,
 y verés que soís hidalgo,
 franco de necesidad,
 que es la mayor libertad
 de aquel que se estima en algo. (369a)

At the end of the play Zorrilla does marry Julia, much to the disgust of his father:

Zorrilla Bendecidnos, padre mío,
 escudero del rey Wamba,
 . . .
 Escudero Ello es fuerza, y sólo digo
 que mi linaje se acaba
 en ti.
 Zorrilla Como esos linajes
 han venido a ser tinajas. (373b)

While there is no direct reference to the question of blood purity here, the humorous rejection of lineage as the basis for honor or social success does serve to make light of the Spaniard's obsessive preoccupation with his ancestry. Zorrilla, a character who has chosen to be a servant rather than pursue the more honorable career of let-ras recommended by his father, prefers freedom from the need to maintain reputation to the situation of his father, whose only enjoyment of life is the pride he takes in his noble origins.

In a more serious vein, the very title of El testimonio vengado seems to invite scrutiny, as the idea of a falso testimonio can be understood in terms other than those of conjugal honor alone. In the third act of this play the Queen, who is about to be burned at the

stake after having been falsely accused of adultery by her envious sons, recites the following sonnet:

Leña del sacrificio riguroso
 desta culpada víctima inocente,
 que de mi llanto apagas la gran fuente
 y no del rigor de mi engañado esposo.
 Padre, sacrificaba, aunque piadoso,
 al santo Isaac: aquí es tan diferente,
 que el hijo sacrifica, ó lo consiente,
 la madre, á quien negó el amor forzoso.
 Pero la fe, que siempre firme estuvo
 en ese gran poder, dice que espere,
 sin temer que mi sangre se derrame;
 que Dios, que el brazo de Abraham detuvo,
 si es que probar en esto mi fe quiere,
 mejor tendrá la espada á un hijo infame. (627b)

Seen from one perspective, the sonnet is perfectly applicable to the situation in which it is used. If, however, the sonnet is considered on its own merits, a number of curious points emerge. The idea of an innocent victim being burned at the stake, the son who dissociates himself from his mother's name for his own personal gain, the Old Testament references to Abraham and el santo Isaac, the notion of a faith which must be maintained firm through patient waiting⁴⁴ and even, perhaps, the appeal to divine intervention, suggest that this sonnet might be equally appropriate coming from a converso being persecuted by the Inquisition.

In addition to this sonnet, the action of El testimonio vengado contains a number of other points suggestive of transposition and of a sympathetic attitude on the part of Lope toward the innocent victims of persecution based on lineage. The Queen is accused of adultery with the King's groom, whose name is Mosén Pedro de Sesé, and who is described to the King by García as "el más vil de tus vasallos (607b)."

Even more interesting is the way in which Ramiro's lineage is dealt with. Ramiro is deprived of his right to the crown because of his illegitimacy. At the end of the play, however, the stain on Ramiro's maternal ancestry is removed by means of a ceremony in which he emerges from under the Queen's skirts and is "reborn" as her legitimate son. Thus Lope may be suggesting that a man need not be permanently dishonored by an unfortunate family background.

In El santo negro Rosambuco the protagonist is a black captive who undergoes a miraculous conversion to Christianity and is freed by his master to enter the Franciscan order. In the monastery Rosambuco is continually persecuted by Pedrisco, another monk who is envious of Rosambuco's prestige and his ability to work miracles. Even the name Pedrisco may be viewed as ironic: if Pedro signifies rock of the Church foundation, a Pedrisco would be a scornful name for an upholder of the Christian Church. Pedrisco taunts Rosambuco with racial slurs:

Señor perro penitente,
soy, aunque donado, hidalgo,
y no se usa en mi linaje
la almohaza;⁴⁵

Rosambuco, always humble, is obviously the superior of the two, and Pedrisco's preoccupation with his own racial "superiority" is shown to be in direct violation of the will of God, since Rosambuco, with the help of Divine intervention, is able to undo all of Pedrisco's mischief. Also implicit in the presentation of Rosambuco as a saint is the belief that the conversion of a character of non-Christian origins can be a genuine one, and that such an individual is capable of living an exemplary Christian life worthy of a saint. It should be noted that

Lope avoids the real problem of the converso by using a character of gentile origin. Still, the point is made that true conversion is possible.

In any discussion of limpieza de sangre in the comedia, a word must be said about those plays involving the honor of villanos. It has already been noted that the peasant is considered to possess racial superiority on the basis of the apparent purity of his origins, and Américo Castro assumes that the theme of peasant honor in Lope's comedia is presented in accord with an unbendingly orthodox (i.e., cristiano viejo) orientation of the comedia as a genre. What Castro did not notice was that Lope might not have been in agreement with the "majority opinion" (el vulgo) to which his comedia appeared to cater. The present study has indicated a number of instances, particularly in plays not dealing with peasant honor, in which Lope's orthodoxy in dealing with limpieza de sangre as a primary source of honor is, at the very least, questionable. In each case cited Lope notes the overwhelming importance of blood purity in Spanish life, but he also reserves a place to insinuate his own dissatisfaction with it. Never, even in those works in which a cristiano nuevo is a major character, is the Spanish preoccupation with blood purity unequivocally upheld, although it might have seemed so to many of the members of Lope's audience, nor is the cristiano nuevo unequivocally presented as a character with no redeeming qualities.

In plays dealing with peasant honor, the superiority of a peasant as a cristiano viejo is always mentioned. Peribáñez, for

example, begins his confession to the King with an affirmation of the purity of his ancestry:

Yo soy un hombre,
aunque de villana casta,
limpia de sangre, y jamás
de hebrea o mora manchada. (ll. 3032-3035)

In these works, then, Lope does permit the villano to express the generally accepted view that the Old Christian peasant was superior to the nobleman--whose ancestry might be called into question. Lope never presents a villainous peasant on stage, nor, curiously, is there ever the suggestion of an honor conflict involving two peasants.

This, however, is not sufficient evidence to indicate that Lope's intention is to have the self-proclaimed Old Christian peasant triumph over the noble disdained as a "caballero cansado" merely on the basis of his lineage. It is, in fact, very possible that the references to a peasant's limpieza de sangre were used by Lope as a dramatic commonplace reflecting the preoccupations of his day while masking a different, less orthodox view of honor denying the idea that honor is necessarily a function of lineage. Both the peasant's affirmation of pure blood and his virtuous actions would give him the right to honor in the eyes of much of the audience, but Lope plays with his public by basing the peasant's ultimate triumph on very different grounds. The dying Comendador in Peribáñez recognizes the peasant's moral right to vengeance:

No busques, ni hagas extremos
pues me han muerto con razón.
Llévame a dar confesión
y las venganzas dejemos.
A Peribáñez perdono. (ll. 2872-2876)⁴⁶

But when Leonardo argues that a peasant is not entitled to take such vengeance, the Comendador makes reference to Peribáñez' social status: it is Peribáñez' knighthood, he says, which has given him the right to take his revenge:

No es villano, es caballero;
que pues le ceñí la espada
con la guarnición dorada,
no ha empleado mal su acero. (ll. 2880-2883)

Thus retribution is not legitimized on "judicial grounds" (i.e., the Comendador could not be killed just because he had evil designs on the peasant's wife) but on social grounds: Peribáñez could legitimately take revenge because he was a caballero who had been wronged by another caballero. It might also be noted here that in Fuenteovejuna the peasants were to be punished even though justice was on their side; there Lope finds another way, at least as equivocal, of legitimizing their revenge: the King, faced with the solidarity of the peasants, cannot find the culprit and therefore condones their murder of the Comendador.

In El cuerdo en su casa, the success of Mendo and the failure of Leonardo in handling conjugal honor conflicts does leave the audience with the impression that Mendo is more secure in his honor than Leonardo. It must be recalled, however, that while the hidalgo Leonardo may end up the victim of Mendo's manipulations, the real offender of conjugal honor--a nobleman of far higher rank than Leonardo--is actually saved from an honor vengeance by Mendo's actions. Similarly, his brother's attempts to pay court to Mendo's wife receive no more punishment than a timely warning from the shrewd peasant protagonist.

Lope's dramatic presentation of limpieza de sangre has been shown in this chapter to be quite different from the conformism and orthodoxy which most critics attribute to his dramatic production. It would be of interest, therefore, to attempt to ascertain whether Lope ever expressed clearly unconventional ideas regarding either honor or blood purity outside his dramatic works. What is known of Lope's life and the testimony of his own letters to the Duke of Sessa provide some valuable information in this regard.'

There is no need to go into a lengthy description of Lope's personal relationships. His love affairs with married women were certainly in contradiction with any notion that he accepted the rules of the honor code as a regulator of his own behavior. In one of his letters, Lope expresses his feelings about a more general aspect of honor: the fact that it depends upon reputation or public opinion. Explaining to the Duke his reasons for taking refuge with a friend in Valencia, Lope expresses the view (noted in a number of the plays studied) that this aspect of honor is an encumbrance placed on man by society:

que todo esto habemos menester los que estamos a los ojos del pueblo, aunque con humilde nacimiento, o soltar esto que llaman onrra de los ombres; que le prometo a Vex.^a que es carga insufrible al gusto, que querria aprovecharse del albedrio que Dios le dió; pero son tales las leyes del mundo, que atreuiendose a las suyas la libertad, no la tome para la murmuracion.⁴⁷

While the matter being referred to here does not appear to reflect any serious questioning of the honor code by Lope, he does express the feeling that it is a burden for one who would exercise his freedom for the sake of pleasure.

As far as limpieza de sangre is concerned, the problem becomes somewhat more complex. It is generally thought that Lope, as a familiar de la Inquisición, was particularly orthodox in his views about this aspect of honor. It is known that he took an active part in at least one auto de fe, in 1624.⁴⁸ There is no description of this event in Lope's own words, but he does refer to a number of earlier autos in his letters to Sessa. In 1611, Lope described one of these with a good deal of humorous cynicism. While the victims of this particular auto appear to have been condemned for homosexuality, it is of interest to note that Lope seemed to find the spectacle of the auto personally distasteful. It is also of interest to note how the auto described here became the occasion for an assault on the nobility by the vulgo:

Oy ha sido el mayor espectaculo de gente que Madrid ha tenido, porque sacaron a tostar al Hermano mulato que se hazia el santo. Llebaron delante dél asta el brasero tres mozos, açotandolos, y un niño que perdigaron en la llama; mas de esto no más; que aun es feo para escrito.

Los coches, mulas, caballos y roçines que acompañaron este auto putesco no se he visto en entrada ni en salida de príncipe pero a la que hizieron en la puerta de alcala dio el vulgo en tirarles lodo, sin respetar damas ni señoras, y ha sido el más festejado puto que ha tenido la corte.⁴⁹

In a more reflective vein, Lope wrote, in 1615: "Aqui se esta es- perando el Auto, fiesta de quien dize el Cardenal que es como la mar, que, passada la primera admiracion, entristeza."⁵⁰

Lope's attitude toward the activities of the Inquisition, then, does not seem entirely in keeping with his function as a familiar; but just how important was Lope's role as an officer of the Inquisition?

Antonio Domínguez Ortiz describes the awarding of such posts and the reasons for seeking them:

No todos tenían la influencia y calidades necesarias para obtener una beca o un hábito. Afortunadamente, la Inquisición podía nombrar un numero indefinido de familiares (ministros inferiores de carácter honorífico). Para muchos hidalgos ésta fué una solución providencial; las familiaturas se distribuían con largueza, su obtención no exigía grandes dispendios y aseguraban a sus titulares el fuero privilegiado y la poderosa protección del Santo Oficio, pero más que por nada fueron apreciadas porque sus informaciones llegaron a adquirir con el tiempo tal reputación de rigor y seriedad que el que atravesaba incólume esta prueba del fuego nada tenía que temer por esta parte. Seguramente, éste era el objetivo primordial de los 20.000 familiares que llegaron a contarse en España, pues si entre ellos predominaba el tipo de hidalgo modesto, como Lope de Vega, tampoco faltaban miembros de la alta nobleza y de la jerarquía eclesiástica que no necesitaban la inmunidad y otros privilegios de que gozaba el personal del Santo Oficio.⁵¹

The assurance of blood purity brought by this office, then, could be considered of far greater importance than any functions which went along with it. It was, however, a lesser honor than acceptance into one of the military orders. Furthermore, although Lope was eventually awarded an hábito de San Juan, Bataillon feels that he must have been trying to attain such honors for a good many years, and that his lack of success must be attributed to his own difficulty in proving the purity of his ancestry.⁵²

Lope himself, therefore, may very well have experienced personally the problems of those whose racial reputation was questioned; This is certainly suggested by Juan Pérez de Montalbán, who in his "Fama póstuma" writes of Lope's life-long persecution by all kinds of testimonios:

. . . pues mientras vivió, a vueltas de los honores que por otras partes granjeaba, siempre estuvo padeciendo sátiras de los maldicientes, detracciones de los ignorantes, libelos de los enemigos, notas de los malintencionados, correcciones de los melindrosos e invectivas de los bachilleres, con tanto extremo, que solo su muerte pudo ser asilo de su seguridad, haciendo la lástima lo que no pudo recabar el mérito, pues muchos de los que le lloraban muerto fueron los mismos que le murmuraron vivo; bien así como a Moisés los israelitas, que, según Oleastro, nunca le alabaron en vida. . . .⁵³

Lope's reaction to one such accusation has been well-documented by Joaquín de Entrambasaguas. In addition to the literary satire against Lope presented in Pedro de Torres Rámila's Spongia, there was also the suggestion that Lope was of converso origin.⁵⁴ Lope, in the two satires contained in the Expostulatio Spongiae,⁵⁵ responded in kind, with numerous damaging allusions to the origins of his antagonist.

In 1622, Torres Rámila's candidacy for a post requiring limpieza de sangre was thoroughly investigated by the Inquisition, and, "a causa de las murmuraciones suscitadas por los escritos de Lope de Vega y de sus amigos en torno a la limpieza de sangre del opositor y a su conducta sospechosa en la corte, se emprendió, además de las investigaciones genealógicas acostumbradas en tales casos, una serie de pesquisas en Madrid, Toledo y Alcalá de Henares, interrogando a los escritores más notables que fué posible."⁵⁶

Two significant points are revealed by this investigation. In the first place, the mere fact that a bout of name-calling between literary rivals could produce such serious consequences to the reputations of those involved gives some indication of the tremendous insecurity with regard to blood purity which must have been experienced by any

individual in Lope's time with even the slightest involvement in public life.

No less significant is Lope's own role in these investigations. Not only did Lope deny his own authorship of the satires, which would be understandable, but he also denied the veracity and even the value of his own accusations:

Y preguntado qué concepto tiene de todas essas sátiras de la calidad del oppositor, dixo que a sátyras no tiene crédito alguno, ni le da, ni sabe que fundamento tuuieron los componedores destas satyras, ni de quien llegasen a saber cosa contra su calidad. . . .⁵⁷

.
Y preguntado si a perdido el dicho oppositor du su opinión y honrra con essas satyras, dixo que eso dexa al colegio y a su juycio y que no sabe si esso importa o no, por tener todas las satyras por cosas inciertas. Y repreguntado si ese dicho oppositor viniese a ser Collegial Mayor de Alcalá, qué concepto tendría del dicho colegio, y si vernía a perder de su calidad y estimacion, dixo que no, por la dicha razón, y concluyó que por las dichas sátiras no tiene mal concepto del, y que por otros principios no sabe nada.⁵⁸

Entrambasaguas' comment that with such answers "quería Lope de Vega, sin duda, curar en lo posible el daño que había causado anteriormente con su ira. . . ."⁵⁹ is very much to the point. Lope was apparently unwilling to allow his attack of Torres Rámila to go beyond the arena of a guerra literaria, no matter how angry he was as a result of the original accusations made in the Spongia. The picture of Lope which emerges from this episode in his life is that of a man both concerned with his own reputation and not unwilling to offend, up to a point, the reputation of his enemy; but it is also the picture of a man well aware of the dangers of even the most frivolous kind of accusations, a man who, apparently, refused to allow himself to be the instrument of another's permanent dishonor.

Lope's unorthodox dramatic treatment of the question of limpieza de sangre thus seems to be entirely in keeping with his personal feelings about the matter. Whether or not Lope had any real reason to fear an accusation regarding his own origins is of little consequence. In Golden Age Spain, the fact that such an accusation was even made would be enough to provoke fear, for it was more a question of opinión than of proven fact. In both his life and his art, Lope, like many of his contemporaries, had to tread cautiously. While direct condemnation of the social pressures produced by the preoccupation with limpieza de sangre was rarely attempted,⁶⁰ indirect criticism, often by "refracting" the problem through a lens of irony and ambiguity, was possible, and it is precisely this procedure that Lope used in his conjugal honor plays.

Notes

- ¹Sicroff, Les controverses, p. 263.
- ²Los judíos en la España moderna y contemporánea, vol. 2 (Madrid: Arion, 1961), p. 378.
- ³"Honour and Shame," in Honour and Shame. The Values of Mediterranean Society (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), p. 101.
- ⁴Recherches sur le thème paysan dans la "comedia" au temps de Lope de Vega (Bordeaux: Féret et Fils, 1965), p. 821.
- ⁵Larson, Honor Plays, p. 79, n. 23. Taken from Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, La Clase social de los conversos en Castilla en la Edad Moderna (Madrid: CSIC, 1955), p. 229. Variants of this passage are also found in Sicroff, Les controverses, p. 210, n. 108, and Salomon, Recherches, p. 821.
- ⁶Van Beysterveldt, p. 182.
- ⁷Larson, Honor Plays, pp. 10-12.
- ⁸Caro Baroja, "Honour and Shame," p. 102.
- ⁹Sicroff, Les controverses, pp. 265-266, 269, 295-296.
- ¹⁰Sicroff, Les controverses, p. 296.
- ¹¹Caro Baroja, Los judíos, vol. 1, p. 279.
- ¹²"Fuenteovejuna y el honor villanesco en el teatro de Lope de Vega," Caudernos Hispanoamericanos, 161-162 (May-June, 1963), p. 74C.
- ¹³Castro, De la edad conflictiva, p. 213.
- ¹⁴Salomon, Recherches, p. 819.
- ¹⁵Caro Baroja, Los judíos, vol. 1, p. 275.
- ¹⁶De la edad conflictiva, p. 30.
- ¹⁷Lázaro Carreter, p. 202.
- ¹⁸Salomon, Recherches, p. 913.
- ¹⁹Salomon, Recherches, p. 803.
- ²⁰Caro Baroja, Los judíos, vol. 1, p. 358.

²¹Castro, De la edad conflictiva, p. 29.

²²Sicroff, Les controverses, p. 297.

²³Sicroff, Les controverses, p. 299.

²⁴Van Beysterveldt, p. 67. Sicroff uses the same example to express a similar view in Les controverses, p. 298.

²⁵Castro, De la edad conflictiva, p. 49.

²⁶Obras completas, p. 709a.

²⁷Obras completas, p. 711b.

²⁸Obras completas, p. 708b.

²⁹El Crítico, 6th ed. (Madrid: Colección Austral, 1964), pp. 232-233.

³⁰Crítico, p. 234.

³¹Crítico, p. 235.

³²Crítico, p. 235.

³³"Aconseja a un amigo, que estaba en buena posesión de nobleza, no trate de calificarse, porque no le descubran lo que no sabe," in Obra poética, ed. José Manuel Blecua, vol. 1 (Madrid: Castalia, 1969), p. 213. According to Salomon ("Toujours la date," p. 625) this sonnet was part of the satirical literature criticising the social pretensions of Rodrigo Calderón. Even assuming that this was the case, the sonnet may be making the more general suggestion that the position of even the most noble member of Spanish society was, at best, precarious, and could be easily toppled if his origins were called into question.

³⁴Novelas a Marcia Leonarda, pp. 85-86.

³⁵Novelas a Marcia Leonarda, p. 87.

³⁶As Bataillon has noted, there are actually two views being expressed here, as the Viceroy "se adhiere . . . a la doctrina eterna de los filósofos negadores de los privilegios de la sangre, y parece negar, de camino, toda la validez al prejuicio de limpieza. Pero, a renglón seguido, parece decir el virrey que el ser caballero pone a Felisardo por encima de las exigencias de este prejuicio . . . lo cual equivale a reconocer que hay una nobleza musulmana como hay una nobleza cristiana. . . ." "La desdicha por la honra," in Varia Lección de clásicos españoles, trans. José Pérez Riesco (Madrid: Gredos, 1964), p. 311.

³⁷Novelas a Marcia Leonarda, p. 105. Francisco Yndurain, in Lope de Vega como novelador, sees as a defect of this novela the extensive descriptions of Constantinople. He notes the fact that Lope feels the need to explain these descriptions, and tells his reader: "Pues sepa vuestra merced que las descripciones son muy importantes a la inteligencia de las historias." Yndurain takes this comment at face value (pp. 57-58). One wonders, however, if these descriptions might not represent further irony in the structure of the work: the inclusion of material describing one haven of refuge for those who could no longer practice their religion in Spain.

³⁸Bataillon, "La desdicha," p. 397.

³⁹Joseph H. Silverman expressed a similar view in "Lope de Vega's Other National Theater: A Different View of the Honor Problem," Spanish Section III, MLA Convention, New York, 27 Dec. 1974.

⁴⁰Acad. XIV, p. 279b.

⁴¹This line, attributed in the Academia edition to Felisardo, would seem more appropriately spoken by Leonido.

⁴²Caro Baroja describes Salonika as follows: "Salónica fue considerada . . . como la 'madre de Israel,' y su fama como Meca de los judíos llegó a Occidente." Los judíos, vol. 1, p. 224. Moreover, the author of the Viaje de Turquía talks about a certain don Juan Micas, described as "gentil hombre y diestro en armas y bien leído y amigo de amigos; y hai pocos hombres de quenta en España, Italia y Flandes que no le conociesen, al qual el Emperador habia hecho caballero. . . ." Don Juan left Spain for Turkey in order to practice the Jewish faith: "Preguntado que por qué habia hecho aquello, respondió que no por más de no estar sujeto a las Inquisiçiones d'España. . . ." Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, vol. II, p. 131.

⁴³Ac.N. IV, pp. 368b-369a.

⁴⁴Caro Baroja, noting that the Jews refused to accept Christ as the Messiah, states: "Así, en España, al judío o judaizante siempre se le embromaba haciendo alusión a aquella paciencia suya para esperar." Los judíos, p. 95.

⁴⁵Acad. IV, p. 378a.

⁴⁶Charles Aubrun and José Montesinos consider the Comendador a tragic character precisely because, unlike the Comendador of Fuenteovejuna, he is capable of respecting his subjects. See "Peribáñez," in El teatro de Lope de Vega, ed. cit., p. 30.

⁴⁷Epistolario de Lope de Vega Carpio, ed. Agustín G. de Amezúa, vol III (Madrid: Real Académica Española, 1941), p. 255 (August, 1616).

⁴⁸See Rennert and Castro, Vida de Lope de Vega, p. 272.

⁴⁹Epistolario, vol. III, p. 84 (December 1, 1611).

⁵⁰Epistolario, p. 185 (May, 1615).

⁵¹Domínguez Ortiz, p. 196.

⁵²"Sólo en 1627 pudo Lope anteponerse el decorativo Frey al recibir del Papa la cruz de San Juan. Es verosímil que en épocas anteriores, y tal vez aún después de ordenarse, haya sentido el prurito de conseguir un 'hábito' español de Santiago o Calatrava. Si no lo consiguió, fue sin duda porque las pruebas de limpieza tropezaron con algún testimonio adverso a la hidalguía del linaje paterno." "La desdicha. . .," p. 392.

⁵³Fama postuma a la vida y muerte del doctor Frey Lope Félix de Vega Carpio. In Lope de Vega, Obras escogidas, ed. Federico Carlos Sainz de Robles, vol. II, 4th ed. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1964), pp. 1524b-1525a. Diane J. Pamp, in Lope de Vega ante el problema de la limpieza de sangre (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1968), claims that Lope was plagued by accusations against his blood purity: ". . . Lope de Vega sufría por la infamación de la limpieza de su sangre, situación angustiosa que se refleja en su obra y hasta cierto punto la configura (p. 1)." She cites his friendships with a number of conversos (p. 23) and suggests that "Hay quien defiende a Lope y su fama, acaso demasiado (p. 25)."

⁵⁴Joaquín de Entrambasaguas, "Una guerra literaria del siglo de oro," in Estudios sobre Lope de Vega, 2ª ed. corregida y aumentada, vol. II (Madrid: CSIC, 1967). During a subsequent investigation into the lineage of Torres Rámila, Lope and a number of his friends were questioned. One of these, Tamayo de Vargas, affirmed that the Spongia falsely accused Lope and others, "llamándolos a todos confesos, cornudos, hijos de puta y otras palabras que por no ofender la grauedad no es razón decirles. . . (p. 66)" and, more specifically, ". . . auer dicho que era judío Lope de Vega. . . (p. 67)."

⁵⁵According to Entrambasaguas (vol. I, p. 351), there should be no doubt as to the authorship of these satires: "Que Lope de Vega es el autor de las citadas sátiras, es indudable de todo punto, aunque él, más tarde, hiciera correr la voz de que las había hecho el desdichado Baltazar Elisio de Medinilla, ya muerto entonces, y por tanto, irresponsable ante la ley. . . ."

⁵⁶Entrambasaguas, vol. II, p. 54.

⁵⁷Entrambasaguas, vol. II, p. 58.

⁵⁸Entrambasaguas, vol. II, pp. 59-60.

⁵⁹Entrambasaguas, vol. II, p. 60.

⁶⁰The problem is dealt with, however, in La villana de Getafe, a comedia in which two characters accused of morisco origins are named don Félix del Carpio and Lope (Don Félix' servant). Lope's treatment of the limpieza theme here is essentially comic, largely because the accusation against these characters is taken seriously for only a brief period of time. No lives are destroyed by this falso testimonio, and Lope pokes fun at a society which willingly accepts any anonymous accusation of this sort as true.

Chapter VIII

Conclusions

The conclusions which may be drawn from this examination of Lope de Vega's conjugal honor plays may be summarized briefly, but their implications are of considerable significance to both the study of Lope as a dramatist and the overall view of the comedia as a genre.

It has been demonstrated that Lope uses a number of specific techniques that would indicate his own dissatisfaction with the popular view of honor in Spain. These techniques are applied to questions of conjugal, family, social and racial honor. The first of these to be examined was Lope's re-elaboration of source material. In his adaptation of an already existing story Lope often makes changes which serve to place additional emphasis on the nature of Spanish honor and a number of problems derived from it. Occasionally, by adding new honor-related action to the source story he suggests the absurdity of a society in which all attention must be turned to honor. Moreover, Lope sometimes makes changes which drastically alter the original focus of his source, as in those works in which the offender of a man's honor turns out to be a woman in disguise.

Lope also challenges the Spanish notion of honor by his manner of resolving a number of the conjugal honor conflicts. Several works, it has been seen, have desenlaces which, without directly contradicting

the honor code, do use some of its principles to arrive at an unexpected, and even unconventional, solution to an honor conflict. The satisfaction of the demands of honor by means of the death or ultimate deception of the offended husband occurs in a number of these plays.

Many of Lope's honor plays contain a good deal of irony and equivocation related to the honor theme itself. This functions in several different ways. Some truisms related to the honor code are presented as recurring motifs and are proven to be in error by the action of the plays themselves; honor as a peculiarly Spanish obsession is used to portray the Spaniard in an unfavorable light; different types of honor preoccupations are played against each other with disastrous results; discussions of the nature of honor in Spain show that there is an alternative way of thinking about honor and point out that problems do exist in the conventional notion that honor must be served at all costs. Even the origins of honor are called into question, and the suggestion is made more than once that honor was created out of envy in order to make the more fortunate suffer. The use of his literary persona in a number of comedias provides Lope with an opportunity to make an appearance in his own plays, usually, it has been demonstrated, to comment cynically on honor and other aspects of the play's action. Finally, Lope gives some of his plays ironic titles, so that works which would seem to promise an affirmation of Spanish honor end up negating it instead.

Through his characterization in the honor play Lope often creates characters whose function within the context of an honor play is problematic. This is particularly evident in his portrayal of evil and foolish kings and of unsympathetic husbands faced with a threat to their honor.

The possibility that Lope perceived a connection between the question of blood purity and the honor preoccupation in Spain has also been examined. In several plays such a connection is established and any notion of Lope as an orthodox proponent of Old Christian superiority must be tempered by the realization that he was capable of portraying the converso and his problems with some measure of sympathy.

Through the use of these techniques, Lope takes a theme which had become a dramatic dogma for Golden Age audiences and presents it in such a way that it at once satisfies popular demand and raises serious questions about the values held by those to whom it appears to cater. Responding to his public's desire for honor plays, Lope avoids turning out play after play conforming to a set pattern and instead creates a body of work remarkable for both its variety and its vitality.

Thus what was once thought to be at best a traditional presentation of honor as the ultimate goal of Spanish life may now be seen as a skillful and complex query on the nature of honor and its function as one of the values on which life in Golden Age Spain was based. By defining and redefining honor from a number of perspectives, by questioning the origins of honor and challenging its efficacy as a social force, by showing the dangers inherent in the excessive preoccupation with honor, Lope transforms works intended for popular entertainment into multi-levelled works of literature which go beyond dramatic convention and reflect the problems of the society which inspired their creation.

The fact that such complexity can be found in Lope's honor plays suggests that further investigation may reveal similar techniques in other works with regard to the honor theme in general, the problem of blood purity and a broad range of other themes treated in the comedia: love and marriage, religion and morality, Spanish history, social status and ambition, and others. Such an investigation of Lope's dramatic work would be likely to produce a new awareness of Lope as a dramatist who, while writing for the vulgo, produced a highly sophisticated body of work in which specific literary techniques were used which would serve to challenge the traditional views of the spectator. While it would seem unlikely that the majority in Lope's audiences would be capable of perceiving such a challenge, it may be demonstrated that these plays do contain a good deal of serious reflection on the themes which they treat.

Finally, it is doubtful that Lope was the only Golden Age dramatist whose abilities and personal inclinations led him to the creation of works which went far beyond the limited capacities of the Golden Age theatergoing public. It is to be hoped that the current re-evaluation of the works of Calderón and others will lead to a general re-evaluation of the comedia as a genre which combined theatrical spectacle with serious literature and reflected an effort on the part of many dramatists to create a genre which could endure on its own merits.

Appendix

Lope de Vega's conjugal honor plays

(Listed in the chronological order suggested
by Morley and Bruerton)

- El caballero del milagro. 1593
- Las ferias de Madrid. Before 1596 (probably 1585-1589).
- Los embustes de Fabia. Before 1596
- El nacimiento de Ursón y Valentín. 1588-1595.
- Carlos el perseguido. 1590-1595.
- La bella malmaridada. 1595-1598.
- El galán escarmentado. 1595-1598
- Los comendadores de Córdoba. 1596-1598.
- La hermosa Alfrede. 1596-1601
- Los embustes de Celauro. 1600
- La contienda de Diego García de Paredes y el Capitán Juan de Urbina.
1600.
- El castigo del discreto. 1598-1601
- El príncipe despeñado. 1602.
- La resistencia honrada y condesa Matilde. 1596-1603 (probably
1599-1603).
- En los indicios, la culpa. 1596-1603.
- El testimonio vengado. 1596-1603.
- La pobreza estimada. 1597-1603.

- Los pleitos de Ingalaterra. 1598-1603.
- El gallardo catalán (El valeroso catalán). 1599-1603.
- La corona merecida. 1603.
- La desdichada Estefanía. 1604.
- El halcón de Federico. 1599-1605.
- El rústico del cielo. 1605.
- El santo negro Rosambuco. Before 1607.
- El piadoso veneciano. 1599-1608.
- La inocente Laura. 1604-1608.
- La batalla del honor. 1608.
- Del mal lo menos. 1604-1609 (probably 1608).
- La discordia en los casados. 1611.
- El cuerdo en su casa. 1606-1612.
- El animal de Hungría. 1608-1612 (probably 1611-1612).
- La cortesía de España. 1608-1612 (probably 1608-1610).
- Don Lope de Cardona. 1608-1612 (probably 1611)
- Peribáñez y el Comendador de Ocaña. 1609-1612 (probably 1610).
- La firmeza en la desdicha. 1610-1612.
- La locura por la honra. 1610-1612.
- El más galán portugués. (1608-1613).
- La vitoria de la honra. 1609-1615 (probably 1609-1612).
- Los peligros de la ausencia. 1613-1620 (probably 1615-1618).
- La corona de Hungría. 1623.
- Porfiar hasta morir. 1624-1628.
- El castigo sin venganza. 1631.

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