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“EL MONSTRO CON SU FIGURA”:

RUIZ DE ALARCÓN’S TRANSATLANTIC SELF-FASHIONING

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Abstract

Among the many authors active during the Spanish Golden Age, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón stands out for his appearance and American background. When Juan Ruiz de Alarcón arrived in Spain for a second time in 1614 he soon became aware of the uses of theater and developed his future as a playwright. Critics have long studied how Alarcón portrays himself in the various characters in his theater. This study builds on these interpretations and claims that some of these characters are best understood as part of a strategy of self-fashioning on behalf of Alarcón: the playwright engages in self-representation in his theater as a strategy to move upward in society and make himself known in Madrid. This study uses monster studies to address the monstrosity behind Alarcón, not so much for his appearance but for the monstrosities that surround him. Furthermore, it uses the approaches suggested by scholars of the Hispanic Baroque as well as transatlantic studies to address the implications of his American background. Bringing together these different approaches, this study will show that Alarcón used his ascribed monstrosity and his networking in Mexico as strategies to compete with his contemporaries and fashion a persona that would allow his success in Madrid.

Alarcón's response to his monstrosity is observed in the paratexts of his two volumes of theater where he exposes the monstrous in his readership. He also evokes his nautical experiences when he compares his *comedias* to ships that navigate the theaters of Madrid. In two plays, *El desdichado en fingir* and *Todo es ventura*, the monstrosities found in Madrid are related to views of poetry and the political environment Alarcón encountered in Madrid. As an emerging playwright, Alarcón exposes deficiencies in the metropolitan center and in doing so in a subtle and comic manner, he brings attention to himself. His birth and upbringing are particularly relevant in *El*

semejante a sí mismo and *La industria y la suerte*, where Alarcón characterizes the Indies not as a source of wealth, as it was constantly portrayed in literature at the time, but as a place of unattainable wealth. This contrast makes Alarcón stand out when compared to his contemporaries, but also allows him to emulate Lope de Vega in his description of the Mexican drainage system as a Wonder of the World. America becomes one of Alarcón's tools for upward mobility. His affinity for enclosed spaces and magic is addressed in two plays, *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas* where both *comedias* also evince a preoccupation with the rivalry between art and nature. In both instances, Alarcón favors art over nature or the ability of outward appearances to influence reality. Lastly, I address Alarcón's affinity for games in his two most famous plays, *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*. Both *comedias* have a character that is new to court and seeks advice. The situation of the characters allows the plays to be interpreted as court manuals. In these guides of courtly behavior, the use of a ludic language instructs the spectator, or the reader, that approaching life as a game leads to success. The use of ludic lexicon also fashions Alarcón as an emerging playwright when compared to Lope de Vega because he self-fashions as a poet that values innovation and originality more than his contemporary.

Introduction: Alarcón's Monstrosity and Transatlantic Self-Fashioning

. . . pues como el temperamento desta Nueva España sea más caliente que frío, síguese ser acomodado para producir buenos ingenios, y esto es en cuanto al temperamento de la región . . .
Henrico Martínez, *Repertorio de los tiempos, y historia natural desta Nueva España* (181).

In the second half of 1613, less than a century after the Conquest of Mexico, the *criollo* lawyer Juan Ruiz de Alarcón left his native New Spain for the second time, this time to settle in Madrid. He arrived at the metropolitan center around the same years that Miguel de Cervantes published his *Viaje del Parnaso*, Lope de Vega entered priesthood, and Tirso de Molina travelled to the West Indies. Pedro Calderón de la Barca, still a teenager, had not yet become the revered playwright that replaced Lope de Vega as the finest of his time. Interestingly, shortly after his arrival Alarcón turned to writing for the theater. This writing of theater is odd because Alarcón did not arrive in Madrid to become a famous playwright but rather to seek an administrative position as a lawyer. So how and why did Alarcón compose theater? How did he successfully ascend to the high literary circles of Madrid in only a few years after his arrival? Especially after being constantly marked as an outcast not only because of his place of origin but also because of his physical deformity, hunches on his back and chest that often were the cause of monstrous diatribes from contemporaries. I argue that Juan Ruiz de Alarcón self-fashioned through his theater, and this practical use of theater allowed him to invert his monstrosities in Madrid. That is, he took advantage of an artistic medium that reached the masses to publicize to his name and fashion a persona through his characters and their situations. Theater was his catalyst to fame, which in turn enabled him to have a stable career in the Council of the Indies that would provide him with a decent life in Madrid.

Alarcón was born to Pedro Ruiz de Alarcón, from Spain, and Leonor de Mendoza, from New Spain. His mother came from a mining family that owned estates in Zumpango and Taxco, Mexico. Documents suggest that Alarcón was born in Taxco, Mexico in 1572, but Alarcón himself says he was born between 1580 and 1581 in Mexico City.¹ No one knows why Alarcón would give a different city and year of birth; perhaps this is one of many examples where Alarcón starts to mold aspects of his identity. It is known that his family moved to Mexico City from Taxco in the early 1580's after their mines were exhausted. In June of 1596 he begins his studies in Canon Law at the Royal Pontifical University of Mexico, and after four years he embarks on his first journey to Spain, specifically to the University of Salamanca where he matriculates in Civil Law. He remains in Spain until 1608, the year he returns to Mexico. By 1609 he is “granted the degree of *licenciado* in both Civil and Canon Law by the Royal and Pontifical University of Mexico” and although he sought the degree of doctor he “asks to be excused from the expensive attending ceremonies in view of his poverty” (Poesse 14). During his return and after his studies he sought multiple positions, such as adviser to Don Garci López del Espinar on matters related to *pulque* and the investigating judge for the murder of Isabel Zubiri in Veracruz. In 1613 he decided to give Spain a second chance, and this time he would settle in Madrid in early 1614. Two years later, Poesse informs that Juan de Grajales, an *impresario*, agreed to pay Alarcón 500 *reales*, which the critic

¹ Margarita Peña, on multiple occasions has given credibility to the *fe de bautismo* discovered by Leopoldo Carranco Cardoso in 1974 that states that Alarcón was baptized in December of 1572, which implied his birth was earlier that year. This would go against Alarcón's own words about his age and place of birth: “El lugar y la fecha de nacimiento del dramaturgo mexicano han planteado dudas. Los datos aceptados tradicionalmente, que se deducen de declaraciones notariales del propio Alarcón, son 1580 o 1582, en la ciudad de México. Por otro lado, según una fe de bautismo dada a conocer en 1974 por Carranco Cardoso, un hijo del matrimonio de Pedro Ruiz de Alarcón y Leonor de Mendoza fue sacramentado con el nombre de Juan, en 1572” (“Juan Ruiz de Alarcón” 62-63).

believes to be for a play (14).² It took him a few years to find a love companion, as we know that in 1617 Alarcón's daughter, Lorenza Ruiz de Alarcón, is born to Ángela de Cervantes, his partner. *Las paredes oyen* was represented that same year and *Los favores del mundo* the year after, showing a quick and successful ascension in the literary scene not long after his arrival to Madrid. He continues to write theater, but slowly veers away from the *corral de comedias* once he is appointed as interim Court Reporter to the Council of the Indies in 1626, which would turn into a permanent position in 1633. During his administrative position, he published his first volume of theater in 1628, though it was submitted for publication in 1622, with a total of eight plays (*Los favores del mundo*, *La industria y la suerte*, *Las paredes oyen*, *El semejante a sí mismo*, *La cueva de Salamanca*, *Mudarse por mejorarse*, *Todo es ventura*, and *El desdichado en fingir*) and his second volume in 1634 with a total of twelve plays (*Los empeños de un engaño*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, *La amistad castigada*, *La manganilla de Melilla*, *Ganar amigos*, *La verdad sospechosa*, *El anticristo*, *El tejedor de Segovia*, *Los pechos privilegiados*, *La prueba de las promesas*, *La crueldad por el honor*, and *Examen de maridos*). In August of 1639 Alarcón died leaving behind a will that evidenced his economically stable life. He lists multiple items to be passed on to some family members, though he does not mention any of his siblings, and leaves his daughter as universal heir of his belongings.³

Among the interesting facts of Alarcón's biography, two have attracted attention since the rediscovery of his theater in the nineteenth century until now: his physical appearance and his place of origin. This dissertation considers both as integral to his theater. The first is notorious if

² Poesse's suggestion seems very likely considering that, according to José María Díez Borque, it was ordinary for the *poeta* to earn 500 *reales* for each new play (*Sociedad y teatro* 55).

³ In his will, Alarcón declares: "dexo y nombro por mi heredera universal a doña Lorença de Alarcón, mi hija y de doña Angela Cerbantes, . . . para que haya y herede los dichos mis bienes con la bendición de Dios y la mía" (Reyes 260).

we look at the way contemporaries described Alarcón. Luis de Góngora, for example, called him “Galápago;” don Antonio de Mendoza termed him “corneja” and named his poetry “monstruos de octavas confusas;” don Alonso de Pérez Marino called him “semienano o semidiablo;” and an anonymous poet goes as far as to name him “profecía de Jerónimo Bosque,” referring of course to the wildly imaginative paintings of Hieronymus Bosch. His hunches and short stature were targets of this mockery. I would like to pause over this monstrous reception of Alarcón in Spain. Some may argue that such name-calling does not go beyond the typical banter between literary figures, where everyone publicly derided the other based on appearances or personal scandals in an effort to compete and succeed. While I concede that more than a handful of authors were ridiculed one way or another, I set the boundary with Alarcón because the negative consequences of his appearance extend beyond his literary public career and sometimes hindered his possibilities to succeed. For example, in 1625 he was denied a position in the Council of the Indies, even though he had the qualifications required for such position, because of “el defecto corporal que tiene, el cual es grande para la autoridad que ha menester representar en cosa semejante” (King 200). This shows that Alarcón’s appearance hindered his possibilities outside of the literary field. A letter from Lope de Vega to an anonymous friend displays how even in private life Alarcón was being ridiculed for his appearance: “y como no descubría más de la cabeza parecía a don Juan de Alarcón cuando va al estribo de algún coche” (“A un poeta” 312). These examples show that the diatribes went beyond the typical disparagement of authors and exhibit the true consequences of his appearance. However, he may have upturned his “monstrosity” through his theater. His look did not favor him in the social or private life, but in the world of spectacle it could have been an advantage. Theater would be his tool to fashion a persona that would build his public image,

allowing him to represent different aspects of his persona to self-benefit. I understand Alarcón's as a "monster" not because of his appearance, but because he is a case out of the ordinary when compared to his contemporaries. The diatribes show that his contemporaries were repulsed by his image and made Alarcón a receptacle of their dislikes and jealousies. But as studies on the notion of the monster have shown, what a society considers a monster shows much about the society itself. For example, Kristen Wright notes that

rather than just warning us about the forbidden things that we desire by making them objects of disgust, the monster can fulfill a reverse role as well. The fact that we still love to talk about and look at monsters shows that the attempt to make forbidden behaviour disgusting does not always work. When things are depicted as monstrous, we not only secretly desire them, but our ability to look at that thing gives us more chance to assess why we view it as monstrous in the first place; . . . (x)

Alarcón, while depicted as a monster because of his appearance, can also be interpreted as an attraction. This may show in his popularity among his contemporaries. Despite having produced a small number of plays (between twenty and twenty-five *comedias*) Alarcón was the target of derision from almost every major literary figure in Spain. The constant concern with his successes and his figure show that contemporaries were not only repulsed by Alarcón, but at the same attracted by his persona. The monster sometimes combines the sentiment of fear with wonder and admiration, as when Miguel de Cervantes famously nicknamed Lope de Vega "Monstruo de la Naturaleza" for his ability to produce theater. This study takes Alarcón's reception by his contemporaries as an opportunity to analyze how he inverts his monstrosity and sometimes uses it to his advantage. It is as if Beltrán from *Las paredes oyen* summarized Alarcón's experience in Madrid when he lists the

numerous ways that people make money in the city: “con la cruz el sacristán, / con los responsos el cura, / el monstro con su figura, / con su cuerpo el ganapán; / el alguacil con la vara, / con la pluma el escribano, / el oficial con la mano, / y la mujer con la cara” (760-767). Just like the “monstro,” Alarcón’s “figura” becomes his way of earning a living, for who knows if Alarcón would have been as successful in theater as he was if his look had not been suitable for theatricality and spectacle. Socially, Alarcón’s physical deformity hindered him, but in the world of spectacle and theater Alarcón knew how to use his appearance to his advantage.

Another source of scholarly discussion related to Alarcón’s biography has to do with his birth in Mexico. Much has been debated on whether Alarcón should be understood as a Spanish playwright given that he was born in Mexico at a time when it belonged to the Spanish empire, and his theater is undistinguishable from what his Iberian contemporaries wrote. Furthermore, Alarcón makes very few references to his place of origin, and the notion of “Mexico” as a nation did not yet exist. Others disagree and view Alarcón as one of the first “Mexican” literary figures highlighting that his upbringing in a foreign land, New Spain, with its indigenous past, had an impact on his upbringing and outward views. The debate is much more complex than his nationality, hence I approach Alarcón in a transatlantic manner. Thus I join scholars who have a flexible method of studying the Baroque and the many complex identities it encompassed. Particularly, I am referring to scholars of the “Hispanic Baroque,” which is defined by Juan Luis Suárez as

the cultural system that arises and develops between the middle of the XVI-Century and the end of the XVII-Century as a result of the relations established in the Hispanic world by means of the Atlantic, and whose historical points of reference are, on one extreme, the

synthesis of American information culturally managed and made into knowledge by the technologies of humanism, the appearance of *Lazarillo*, the imperial project of Charles V, the step toward a colonization stage in America, and the triggering of the Counter-Reformation. At the other chronological end, we see the disappearance of Calderón and Sor Juana, the change of dynasty in Spain, the era of the *novatores*, the new literary sensitivity in Spain towards neoclassicism, the deepening of baroque expressions in the different arts in many parts of America, the beginning of a Creole culture, and the collapse of the political system with the national independence. (38-39)

The Spanish Empire was the first transatlantic cultural system, and therefore a figure like Alarcón must be approached with both worlds in mind within the Baroque. Put in another way, the Baroque is “a formation that features breaks, interstices, and cracks through which—alongside hegemonic politics, ideologies, and aesthetics—other alternatives constantly emerge, develop, and reach a highly prominent position within the overall formation” (Braun and Pérez-Magallón 12). From the first encounter between Europe and Americas, the Atlantic Ocean served as mediator for an exchange of ideas and cultures, and it is within this framework that we must understand Juan Ruiz de Alarcón’s voyages and background. We cannot comprehend Alarcón’s self-fashioning without understanding his upbringing, transatlantic travels, and references to the Indies in his theater. Hence this study sometimes analyzes Alarcón’s self-fashioning based on his experiences in New Spain before his arrival to Madrid.

In Alarcón we have a transatlantic lawyer that was described in monstrous terms and somehow turned into a playwright to make ends meet. The exact date when he started to write theater is not known, though we have records that indicate that by 1618 his theater started to be

performed. This means that Alarcón must have started writing theater within four years after his arrival in Madrid. Once he attained a position as Reporter of the Council of the Indies in 1626, he seems to have retired from the theatrical scene. That gives us roughly a period of at least ten years when he was active in theater production. It ended once he gained a stable administrative position. I argue that he appropriates the practice of writing theater not only for monetary income, but also as a way of representing himself as a poet. In the prologue of his first volume he writes that he composed theater for two reasons: “si no lícitos divertimientos del ocio, virtuosos efectos de la necesidad” (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Obras* 60). These reasons show an anxiety between his need to earn money and his aspirations to be a good poet. He considers himself as a good poet in the prologues to his second volume, while downplaying his talents through false modesty. It seems that Alarcón was preoccupied with his reputation and fame as a poet. Thus, he may be comparable to don García from his *La verdad sospechosa*, seeking fame at all costs in the mouths of others. His theater, then, may show an attempt to fashion a persona through the characters. While I am not the first to assert that Alarcón painted himself in some of the characters of his theater, in this dissertation I interpret this self-representation as a form of self-fashioning.

The term “self-fashioning” is borrowed from the new-historicist literary critic Stephen Greenblatt. I use it because it encapsulates the drive for upward mobility that characterized Alarcón’s self-representation in his theater. It also places him in context with his contemporaries via competition. I am not the first to use self-fashioning to describe the self-representation of a literary figure in early modern Spain. For example, Antonio Sánchez Jiménez, in his book *Lope pintado por sí mismo*, translates self-fashioning as “autofiguración,” and uses it in reference to Lope de Vega’s poetry. Other studies include Anne Cruz’s “Self-Fashioning in Spain: Garcilaso de la

Vega,” Meryem İçin’s “*Self-Fashioning en la epopeya de Ercilla: el discurso sobre las armas y las letras*,” Laura Delbrugge’s compiled and edited studies in *Self-Fashioning and Assumptions of Identity in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, Christopher B. Weimer’s “Tirso’s Counter-Ovidian Self-Fashioning: *Deleitar aprovechando* and the Daughters of Minyas,” and Javier García-Irigoyen’s recent chapter “Lope’s Moors: Self-Fashioning and Resentment,” among others. While most of the existent work focuses on men from Spain, there has been an attempt to describe the self-fashioning of transatlantic subjects. Such studies include Robert A. Folger’s book *Writing as Poaching: Interpellations and Self-fashioning in Colonial Relaciones de méritos y servicios* and Frederick Luciani’s *Literary Self-Fashioning in Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. My dissertation joins the latter in describing how the interconnectedness of Alarcón’s background manifests in his theater, and how he uses that to his advantage when comparing himself to other playwrights. I believe that Alarcón was particularly good at fashioning a persona through his theater, and that in this process his monstrosity is upturned. Furthermore, his American background played a role, for we cannot approach the Spanish Empire without its transatlantic territories, nor Alarcón’s experience in Madrid without his background.

After discussing what this dissertation is about, it is timely to express what it is not. This thesis is not a biographical study of Alarcón. Rather it explores the figure of Alarcón based on some biographical evidence with a focus on the strategies he employs to succeed in Madrid, the way he forges a persona through his characters, and what various situations that his characters are imbued in can tell us about his environment. That is, the focus of analysis is his theater as a medium for his self-fashioning. I also do not intend to give one cohesive account of Alarcón’s identity that remained constant throughout his life. Likely Alarcón, like any person, was not the

same from the moment he set foot for the first time in Madrid in 1613 or 1614, to the time he published his second volume of theater in 1634. Instead, I analyze the different instances he fashioned through a character or situation in a play and interpret the text as a moment in a specific time of Alarcón's literary career.

The selection of *comedias* is based on those that he himself published. I am interested in the manifestation of Alarcón's self-fashioning particularly during his first years as a playwright because this would show his early attempts to succeed in the theatrical scene. Hence the majority of my primary texts, with the exception of two plays, comes from his first volume of theater. I selected *La verdad sospechosa* and *La prueba de las promesas* from his second volume because of their early composition date, corroborated by experts, and because of their shared topics with *comedias* from his first volume.

We do not have any correspondence or document that gives any information about Alarcón's own opinion of his theater. Therefore, in Chapter 1 I analyze the only text available to us where Alarcón speaks of his own theater: the paratexts of both volumes. It is in the prologues of his two published volumes where we can see that Alarcón presents his work as a strategy to gain authorship and authority. He addresses his readership as "bestia fiera" which is another way to refer to the "vulgo." But in calling them "bestia," he is also using monstrous terms to describe his readership, thereby projecting his monstrosity on them. As the spectators once judged his work in the *corral de comedias*, his plays are now judging the readers. This inversion is evident in the study of space present in the prologues of both of his volumes. Not only does he self-fashion as a great poet-playwright, but he also frames his work as a voyage across a dangerous body of water. This way of switching roles with the reader and spectator, and exposing the reader as "bestia" serves to frame

and introduce the monstrosities in two plays: *El desdichado en fingir* and *Todo es ventura*. The former is the only Alarconian *comedia* that features a character, Persio, who is openly described as a poet. A second character, Arseno, who is forced into an insane asylum by the Prince, serves as complement and contrast. The portrayal of the poet as a liar and the exercise of cruel power by the Prince show a dark mirror image to the age of high arts and political strength in Madrid at the time. Alarcón is exposing some monstrosities found in Madrid in these two plays, and this in turn may be comparable to the way the protagonist Tello from *Todo es ventura* confronts a bull in the last scene of the *comedia*. His victory signals his ascension in the social ladder, despite his unfortunate circumstances. After analyzing the character Tello, one sees a close resemblance to Alarcón in his transatlantic experience as they both have contact with a place full of riches (the Indies), yet are disfavored and decide to be in Madrid in search of a better opportunity. Tello exchanges his experience with the sea for the ideals of the Spanish court such as horse-riding and bullfighting. In the exposition of monstrosities in Madrid, Alarcón self-fashions as Tello, the unfortunate transatlantic character who relies on chance for success.

While the uses of the sea and navigation as found in the prologues is continued in *Todo es ventura*, in Chapter 2 I turn to the land in order to explore how such topic presents itself in Alarconian theater in terms of his place of origin: Mexico. Hence *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte* are two plays where their respective protagonists, don Juan de Castro and don Juan de Luna, lose an inheritance coming from the Indies. While the Atlantic Ocean is the passage that united both Worlds, here we see that Alarcón reminds his spectators and readers about the dangers and distance caused by this Ocean in the protagonists' loss of inheritance. As such, this chapter not only explores the representation of the Indies in these two plays, but also how Alarcón

uses his place of origin to his advantage. This is particularly evident in *El semejante a sí mismo*, where the newly constructed drainage system in Mexico City is described as an eighth wonder of the world. Not only is Alarcón appealing to his acquaintance Luis de Velasco for his interest in attaining a position in the Council of the Indies (Velasco was the president of the Council of the Indies when Alarcón was in Madrid), but he does so—I argue—by appropriating the style he observed from his contemporary Lope de Vega. Alarcón considers the drainage system as a World Wonder and includes diverse aspects of the construction in the same way that Lope de Vega describes the Temple of Solomon and the Escorial as World Wonders and with the same attributes in his *La octava maravilla*. We see an example of a literary self-fashioning, in the sense that Alarcón appropriates theatrical practices he observed in Spain, but it is also here where Alarcón's background plays a role. Without his prior knowledge and experience in Mexico and the drainage system, Alarcón would not had been able to describe the drainage system in such a way. The manner he describes the drainage system in Mexico City, then, serves as Alarcón's method of self-fashioning.

In Chapter 3 I analyze Alarcón's intervention in the debate between art and nature considering his background with mines and enclosed spaces. For Greenblatt, the term self-fashion not only implies the manipulation of an identity using art but also a way of using art against nature: "This forming may be understood quite literally as the imposition upon a person of physical form—'Did not one fashion us in the womb?' Job asks in the King James Bible, while, following the frequent injunctions to 'fashion' children, midwives in the period attempted to mold the skulls of the newborn into the proper shape" (2). Considering the enclosed spaces and the use of magic present in *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas*, I explore how these plays

show that art can imitate and sometimes supersede nature. I offer an alchemical reading of *La cueva de Salamanca*, where the character don Juan de Mendoza, while absent for most of the play, is fashioned as a key component of an alchemical transmutation. This reading serves to show how art can be used to manipulate an identity, and therefore show how art may supersede nature. The relationship between art and nature is also analyzed in the debate on the legality of magic between the theologian and Enrico at the end of the play. Together, Alarcón shows in his theater the fashioning of a persona. In *La prueba de las promesas*, Alarcón employs meta-theater to contrast art and nature. The occurrences in don Illán's study under his magical spell are interpreted as art and they influence in the incidences outside of his study. Hence, art is used to influence nature in this play. While in *La cueva de Salamanca* Alarcón fashioned as mercury in the alchemical conjunction of the play, in *La prueba de las promesas* he fashions as a playwright. In both he shows how art can be used to manipulate nature.

In Chapter 4 I analyze Alarcón's two most famous and studied plays, *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*, to argue that their protagonists self-fashion as players in order to succeed in Madrid. This interest in games corresponds with anecdotes about Alarcón himself. At the same time, the situations in these plays may be comparable to those found in court manuals because both have a character that is new to the Court and seeks or is assigned another experienced character to guide them through Madrid. I combine the genre of court manuals and the ludic language in these plays to argue that Alarcón is showing his spectators and readers a manual of how to succeed in Madrid using the benefits of games. Hence I analyze how the use of games such as chess, *naipes*, and ballplaying are used in the play to fashion the protagonists and contrast games with real life. In *Las paredes oyen*, don Juan de Mendoza, modelled after the playwright himself, self-

fashions as a chance player to compensate for his unattractive appearance. Medieval games are contrasted with newer ones practiced in Madrid, and simultaneously, Alarcón is fashioning as a new playwright. In *La verdad sospechosa* Don García is described as “arrojado” which shows his predisposition for games. His interactions in court fashion him as a player and the fact that he feigns being an *indiano* shows to what extent he approaches life as a game. One of his biggest failures is precisely not being able to distinguish from game and real life, so he rather finds ways of gaining “provecho” in real life through his tricks.

Based on the analysis, Alarcón’s self-representation in his theater can be understood as a strategy that would aid his social ascension in Madrid, or a form of self-fashioning. The *criollo* lawyer represents a figure by which to analyze the early modern period in a transatlantic manner, keen to the strategies he employed in order to succeed in Madrid. With upward mobility we can also analyze the relationships with his contemporaries and how he forges a persona through his theater. This not only diversifies the field of self-fashioning in the early modern period but also gives an account of a particular case in Spanish Golden Age theater.

Chapter 1: "Contigo hablo bestia fiera": Monstrosities in Alarcón's Theater

A don Juan de Alarcón, Corcovado
De Jerónimo Bosque / soy profecía, / porque soy disparates, / si bien se mira. / ¡Jesús? ¡Qué
tengo? / Que es mi cara de buho, / de rana el cuerpo.
-Anónimo

Juan Ruiz de Alarcón's physical appearance stirred his contemporaries with such contempt that he was compared to a creation of Hieronymus Bosch. This monstrous comparison carries specific connotations within the Spanish Baroque. Some have understood the Baroque and the 17th century as an era of monsters (Río Parra 230). New definitions of the monstrous emerged as literature, and the arts began to experiment with the grotesque. Although the word monster is derived from the Latin *monstrum*, meaning a warning or a bad omen from God to signal a disaster, the monstrous was also associated with variety and hybridity during the early modern period.¹ Either as a premonition or a curious hybrid creature, it had to be seen in order to be decoded. In theater, for example, the *comedia nueva* was viewed as a hybrid between tragedy and comedy. Lope de Vega comments that the best plays that please the *vulgo* are those that combine both, comparing theater to the Minotaur: "Lo trágico y lo cómico mezclado, / y Terencio con Séneca, aunque sea / como otro Minotauro de Pasife, / harán grave una parte, otra ridícula, / que aquesta variedad deleita mucho;" (*Arte nuevo* 174-178). In light of the multiple meanings assigned to the monstrous in his time period, in this chapter I analyze how Ruiz de Alarcón dealt with his "monstrous" self through his theater. As I stated in the Introduction, Alarcón was always associated with the

¹ About the etymology of "monster" Kristen Wright writes: "The word *monster* is derived from the Latin *monstrum* meaning 'portent, prodigy, monstrous creature, wicked person, monstrous act, [or] atrocity.' Furthermore, it has its base in the verb *monere*, 'to warn,' but it also bears a striking resemblance to the Latin verb *monstrare* meaning 'to show.' This etymological background reflects what the monster's role has always been in society: the monster shows us that which we must not do or that which we must not become" (vii).

abnormal due to his physical deformity. Though the monstrous has long been associated with his look, his theater may provide a venue for the “monster” to self-fashion and speak back. Alarcón self-fashions as a poet that holds a mirror in front of Spanish society, exhibiting some monstrosities he observes in Madrid. The protagonists’ situations may portray the monstrosities he confronts in Madrid as a newcomer.

I will analyze the Prologues of Alarcón’s two volumes, as well as two plays published in his first volume, *El desdichado en fingir* and *Todo es ventura*, to investigate some examples of the monstrous in his theater. Alarcón’s depicts the space in his prologues with the monstrous reader in mind, which he calls “bestia fiera,” and presents his work with a sense of obscurity and mobility. Part of this monstrosity is continued in the second volume with reference to navigation and the difficulty of staging theater in Madrid. The obscure and mobile aspects of the paratexts lead to the analysis of two plays where the protagonists confront different monstrosities. In *El desdichado en fingir*, the monstrosity of the deceit of poets is confronted with madness, and both are mirrored with the behavior of a misbehaving prince. As a poet, Alarcón introduces the negative connotations that came with such occupation while simultaneously exposing a deficiency of political virtue in Madrid. In *Todo es ventura*, the protagonist, an unfortunate character who has crossed the Atlantic a few times in the search of riches, attempts to change his luck in Madrid. It is revealing that the only mechanism that allows his success in Madrid is Chance. In this play, Alarcón starts to expose that coming from a place notorious for its riches does not secure such fortune. The protagonist is forced to confront his misfortune, symbolized in a bull, towards the end of the play. His victory over this monstrous being confirms his social ascension.

Criticism on Alarcón and the Monstrous

Many literary critics have commented on the autobiographical aspects of Alarcón's theater, although the vast majority associates them with his deformity. One of the first critics to suggest that Alarcón represents himself through his characters is Harzenbusch, who in the second half of the nineteenth century associated Alarcón with the character don Juan de Mendoza from *Las paredes oyen*: ". . . y benévolo don Juan de Mendoza, en quien tal vez se retrató Alarcón a sí propio, con su nombre, apellido y fealdad" (xvii). Luis Fernández-Guerra y Orbe will repeat this interpretation in the same century, even commenting on Alarcón's relationship with his contemporaries: "en quien se quiso retratar el poeta, y a quien, para vivo resalte de su intención, dio el nombre de D. Juan de Mendoza; esto es, el propio suyo de pila y el tercer apellido, con que Figueroa tan acertadamente le punzaba" (255). Harzenbusch and Fernández-Guerra y Orbe initiated the topic of Alarcón's self-representation due to his deformity in his theater, and the topic flourished in the coming centuries.

With the turn of century, new findings of Alarcón's life would increase the number of plays associated with Alarcón's self-representation. In 1928, Carlos Vázquez-Arjona studied references to Alarcón's life in his theater, opening his study with the following words: "Ninguno de los dramaturgos del siglo diecisiete se describe a sí mismo tan minuciosa y elocuentemente como lo hace Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza en su propio teatro . . . La constitución raquítica del vate mejicano y sus malditas jorobas fueron la causa, indudablemente, de que tuviera que apurar hasta las heces la copa de la amargura" (557). Vázquez-Arjona points to a total of thirteen plays where Alarcón alludes to himself: "Hay —como ya pudimos ver— en trece de sus composiciones dramáticas alusiones a su figura escuálida y contrahecha, atormentándole más que nada su fealdad

y sus jorobas" (614). *El desdichado en fingir* is included among those thirteen plays (569).

Noteworthy is that all references in Vázquez-Arjona's study allude to Alarcón's physical deformity as the source of this self-representation. In the same century, Alba Ebersole would also study the topic of the self-representation of Alarcón in her thesis "La autobiografía de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón en su obra" in 1951. Continuing with this strand, in the second half of the century the topic will become a common trope almost always tied to Alarcón's physical deformity. Ruth L. Kennedy veers away from Alarcón's figure and ties *Las paredes oyen* to his possible amorous life:

That Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza had himself in mind when he sketched its protagonist, Don Juan de Mendoza, is to me inescapable. Equally inescapable for the present critic is the conviction that *Las paredes oyen*, in which the poor but noble hero wins the virtuous and charming widow, is at once an answer to his detractors and a reflection too of the love he felt for some woman at this time. (148)

Here, Kennedy takes the characterization of don Juan de Mendoza in *Las paredes oyen* not only as a sketch of Alarcón himself, but also as a way of interacting with his enemies in court and represent his love life.² Alarcón's self-representation as a response to his hostile environment seems to be a common trend in criticism. As Jaime Concha summarizes:

La crítica se ha referido a menudo a Alarcón desde un punto de vista biográfico. Siempre se alude a su deformidad física, . . . También se suele señalar su afán por ostentar títulos y blasones nobiliarios. En realidad, ambas cosas son lo mismo. O mejor: la deformidad corporal se transforma, mediante la alquimia dolorosa de su obra, en esa monstruosidad cultural y social que supone haber nacido en Ultramar. (35 Introducción)

² I analyze *Las paredes oyen* in light of Alarcón's ludic interests in Chapter 4.

Concha associates Alarcón's self-representation with his deformity and his place of origin, bringing about a "monstrosity" to his theater. Much of criticism has followed this pattern, privileging Alarcón's *Las paredes oyen*. This tradition would continue through the twentieth and into the twenty-first century, though new plays were also be integrated.

Margarita Peña would set out multiple possibilities of how aspects of Alarcón's biography could be read in his theater, sometimes deviating from the topic of the monstrous:

La imbricación de los mil y un elementos procedentes de experiencias de infancia, del núcleo familiar, del medio social, presentes en todo escritor, se manifiestan pertinazmente en la obra de Ruiz de Alarcón. Citemos tan sólo, a guisa de ilustración: los antecedentes judaicos que inclinan, virtualmente, al gusto por la magia (*La cueva de Salamanca*, *La prueba de las promesas*); posibles traumas de infancia (*La cueva...*, *El Anticristo*); presencias "moriscas" en los antecedentes familiares (*La manganilla de Melilla*: recuerdo de la abuela esclava mora); experiencia del medio social (*Los favores del mundo*: nada se consigue por méritos propios, posiblemente escrita hacia 1616 o antes, casi al momento del regreso a España, inmediatamente después de los fracasos mexicanos; también *La industria y la suerte*); conocimientos de tipos que encarnan debilidades humanas, algunos de ellos condiscípulos probables en la Universidad de Salamanca (*Don Domingo de don Blas*: imagen del hidalgo poltrón; *Las paredes oyen*: crítica del maldiciente, ¿acaso el Conde de Villamediana?; *La verdad sospechosa*: exaltación y condenación del genial mentiroso don García); atracción por el tema de la mentira y la simulación (*La verdad sospechosa*, *Siempre ayuda la verdad*; *El desdichado en fingir*); el problema de la identidad (*El semejante a sí mismo*); el tema de la

lealtad, "sostén principal del marco ideológico de sus obras teatrales" (*Don Domingo de don Blas, La amistad castigada, El tejedor de Segovia*). (271 Juan Ruiz de Alarcón ante la crítica)

The same critic later mentions: "Puestos a especular sobre aspectos diversos del tema 'Alarcón', llama la atención la proyección del escritor en sus personajes" (278). Two years later, Lola Josa would echo a similar statement, adding that some characters are often masks of the playwright himself: "A este último grupo pertenecen, especialmente, los galanes principales -a menudo, máscaras del propio Alarcón- por la conducta que adoptan ante las adversidades que siempre les obliga a sufrir nuestro dramaturgo. Pensemos en el Garci Ruiz de Alarcón de *Los favores del mundo*, en el Juan de Luna de *La industria y la suerte*, o en el Don Juan de *Las paredes oyen*" (15-6). We see that when Alarcón models characters after himself, they are the characters who face adverse events in the plays. Even more recent is Ysla Campbell's edition of *Los favores del mundo* where the critic claims in the introduction: "Es evidente, pues, que en los versos hay una referencia autobiográfica en la que el dramaturgo novohispano pretende ennoblecer sus orígenes y mostrar las cualidades de los miembros de su estirpe con el fin de autoafirmarse socialmente" (21). Just like Harztenbush and Fernández-Guerra y Orbe before her, she focuses her interpretation on the fact that the character shares the same name as the playwright, albeit in a different play. More important, however, is that Campbell highlights the social benefits that Alarcón gains once he expresses his lineage in his theater.

Without doubt, the attractive biography of Alarcón has left an imprint in the trends around Alarconian criticism. What started as Alarcón's possible response to his deformity in *Las paredes oyen* developed into a concern to improve his image and gain recognition via his characters. However, if we follow the critics mentioned it seems that Alarcón's self-representation is either tied

to his physical deformity, or so general that it may include any coincidence between his biography and the plot of his plays, as Peña seems to suggest. Though it may be possible that Alarcón is representing aspects of his biography in all those instances mentioned, it may also seem arbitrary to consider every coincidence with his biography as a form of self-representation. As a person that went against the norm, due to his deformity but also because of his place of origin, the monstrous has remained a topic in Alarconian studies. Describing Alarcón in monstrous ways is informative of how contemporaries and literary critics have viewed the figure of Alarcón in Spanish Golden Age Theater, and may nurture studies on Alarcón's self-fashioning because it helps to visualize his social environment. While this may speak more about Alarcón's contemporaries than Alarcón himself, we know that repulsion for the monster is often accompanied with a fascination with the monster that reflects fears and anxieties of the society that creates these monsters in the first place. Although criticism has focused for years on Alarcón's appearance, the monstrosities in his theater evince critiques related to Spain and his condition as *indiano* in Madrid.

“Contigo hablo, bestia fiera”: The Reader's Corner and Other Dangers in the Paratexts

One way to make that transition between biography and work is by looking at the paratexts to Alarcón's two volumes. Although they did not form part in the stagings of Alarcón's theater, they are still the only textual space that we have today where Alarcón can speak and reflect back on his theater. As a space of transaction between the author and the reader, the prologues or paratexts

could represent a space of communication between the author and the interpretation of the texts.³

I adopt the term "paratext" from Gerard Genette, who defines the term as:

. . . what enables a text to become a book . . . More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext, is rather a *threshold*, or . . . a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, . . . Indeed, this fringe, always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of *transaction*: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that - whether well or poorly understood and achieved - is at the service of a better reception for a text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies). (1-2)

In other words, the paratext is a space of privilege and strategy where the author influences the reception of the text. The notion of "paratext" as it pertains to the prologues is not new in Spanish Early Modern studies. Alberto Porqueras-Mayo has devoted a number of his studies to prologues within the Spanish Golden Age. He views the prologue as a "vehículo manejado libremente por el autor para interponerlo entre el lector y su propia obra creada" in which "se produce un diálogo entre autor y lector ante un espectáculo (el libro) que empezará puntualmente a la caída del telón

³ Ruiz de Alarcón was preoccupied with the "discreto lector" when he revised and published his theater. For example, he refers directly to the "discreto lector" in *La industria y la suerte* (line 1688) and *El semejante a sí mismo* (line 524). Both plays are analyzed in Chapter 2.

(el prólogo). El prólogo será el telón que nos recuerde que asistimos a un espectáculo intelectual" (*El prólogo en el manierismo* 8). The prologue in this sense is an indicator of a spectacle that the literary text represents. Both scholars refer to the paratext as a transitional space: for Genette it is a zone of transition and transaction while for Porqueras-Mayo it is the curtain to a spectacle. The paratext, in this sense, may show how Alarcón framed his published plays. Alarcón will transform the metaphorical space of the paratext into a physical one. This relationship with space is not only an authorial strategy but also a way to motivate the reader, who is considered to be a monster or "bestia fiera" in his first volume.

At a first glance, the Prologue to the *Primera parte* appears to stand out for its brevity. We are not confronted by a pedantic list of philosophers and thinkers as we are in the prologue to Lope de Vega's *Peregrino en su patria* (1604), nor are we among imaginary friends as in Miguel de Cervantes' *Quixote* (1605). Rather, Alarcón is succinct and elegant in the way he frames his theater. Alarcón addresses his work to two recipients: on the one hand he addresses don Ramiro Felipe de Guzmán, his sponsor, and on the other, the "vulgo." In the first, he signs as "El licenciado don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza" highlighting his education and background. The use of "licenciado," "don," and "Mendoza" add to his self-fashioning of an educated authoritative figure, but also reflects the practice of adorning his name for self-interest. Furthermore, when he addresses don Ramiro Felipe de Guzmán, the Count-Duke Olivares's son-in-law and President of the Council of the Indies, he highlights his administrative position in the Council of the Indies. It is in this moment when Alarcón states possible reasons as to why he composed theater: "Estas, pues, ocho Comedias, si no lícitos divertimientos del ocio, virtuosos efectos de la necesidad en que la dilación de mis pretensiones me puso, reciba vuestra Excelencia en su protección, que si bien

parecerá que por haber pasado la censura del teatro no necesitan de tan gran defensa, tal es la envidia, que la han menester" (Ruiz de Alarcón *Obras completas*, 60). This highlights a transaction already: Alarcón offers his theater to Guzmán in exchange for his protection. Alarcón is carefully ambiguous about the purpose behind his theater. On the one hand, he refers to his eight *comedias* as "lícitos divertimientos del ocio" perhaps to show high quality of poetry and reputation. Immediately after, however, he refers to his theater as "virtuosos efectos de la necesidad" alluding to the monetary purpose behind their composition and publication. There seems to be an anxiety between writing theater as a form of art, and writing theater as a form of income. In addition, Alarcón juxtaposes "divertimientos" and "virtuosos," thus foregrounding Horace's view of poetry as having a double purpose, to entertain and to teach.

The anxiety between writing licitly as entertainment and writing as a source of income seems be reflective of an anxiety also present in a game setting, especially because Alarcón mentions his plays are "lícitos divertimientos del ocio." Games should be played leisurely in order to be distinguished from work. In opposition to the materiality that gets produced through labor, leisure time was meant as a pause from such effort. However, games often involved gambling and betting, a way of earning money. As gambling and betting began to be a source of income, the relationship between leisure and work became an area of dispute. As Michael Scham informs:

While cards and games that incorporate dice appear to contain the ideal blend of chance and human agency promoted by Alfonso X and later by Vives, the *agon* combined with prospects for material gain distort the ingenuity and inventiveness celebrated in other contexts. Economic interest comprises the game's autonomy, blurring the distinction between play and work. Luque Faxardo laments various consequences: the poor see in

gambling a means of social mobility (bk. I, Ch. 8), and the nobility, whose role is to administer justice, becomes tyrannical (bk. III, ch. 5). (79)

We see that gambling and playing could also be an action of upward mobility, associated with the poor, and by extension, to the *pícaros*. Furthermore, because gambling blended work and leisure, or *negocio* and *ocio*, it could be compared to theater because it was the most commercialized form of literary entertainment. Alarcón plays with this anxiety, leaving open the interpretation of his work either as licit products of leisure or strategic means of making money.⁴

Alarcón will continue with this anxiety when he addresses the reader, or "vulgo". Here, his title will no longer be that of a "licenciado" but rather as "autor" considering the section is entitled "El autor al vulgo". Alarcón directs his words to the reader in a cruel and succinct way. The paragraph reads:

Contigo hablo, bestia fiera, que con la nobleza no es menester, que ella se dicta más que yo sabría. Allá van esas Comedias; trátalas como sueles, no como es justo, si no como es gusto, que ellas te miran con desprecio y sin temor, como las que pasaron ya el peligro de tus silbos, y ahora pueden sólo pasar el de tus rincones. Si te desagradaren, me holgaré de saber que son buenas, y si no, me vengará de saber que no lo son el dinero que te han de costar. (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Obras* 60)

He goes from addressing his Maecenas, to addressing his readers. He does not seem to think highly of part of his readership, referring to them as "bestia fiera" and even suggesting how they should receive his work. The paragraph, though concise, is a way for Alarcón to contextualize his work to

⁴ The topic of games is continued in Chapter 4 where I analyze *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa* in light of Alarcón's experience in games.

the reader and therefore represents a space of privilege and transaction. It is here where Alarcón is self-fashioning as a poet, not as an administrator as when he referred to don Felipe de Guzmán. Though it seems that Alarcón is following typical conventions of the paratexts of his time, the references to the economic market also show Alarcón's intervention in such paratextual conventions.

Criticism has explained this paragraph in multiple ways. Porqueras-Mayo interprets the reference to the "vulgo" as a rhetorical device. He comments: "En el ejemplo transcrito de Ruiz de Alarcón, famoso por su crueldad, acaso no se ha percibido todavía claramente el valor, por contraste, de la palabra 'nobleza' que permite una 'captatio benevolentiae' incrustada en un mundo de fiereza, 'captatio' que se concentra en el aislado 'discreto lector'" (*El prólogo como género* 157). In another study, the same scholar says that the use of "vulgo" was commonplace in the prologues of the time, and part of a *manierista* formula. He writes: "no hay que otorgar mucho valor a la aparente violencia de algunos famosos desplantes como el de Ruiz de Alarcón" ("El concepto 'vulgo'" 118). The approach to the "vulgo" that Porqueras-Mayo follows, originates from Horace, a poet we have already mentioned as the *locus classicus* of *podesse et delectare*, to instruct and to delight. Now, Alarcón turns to the *Odes*. Specifically, it is derived from the *odi profanum vulgus* where the classic poet desires to be away from the ignorant *vulgo*.⁵ If this is the case, Alarcón's use

⁵ Javier García Gibert's explains the hate towards the "vulgo" in classical times. He writes: "El desprecio de la tradición humanista por el vulgo no es un vano signo de elitismo estamental, sino, más bien al contrario, una apuesta radical contra el clasismo social y económico Lo que se propugna precisamente es establecer las diferencias ente [sic] la aristocracia hereditaria y la aristocracia del espíritu . . ." (77). He elaborates later, "A estos hombres venales e irreflexivos que integran el vulgo, que no controlan sus instintos y que no se esfuerzan por su dignidad humana, podía achacárseles, en efecto, una tendencia a la animalidad y esa condición de 'bestia fiera' con la que el dramaturgo Juan Ruiz de Alarcón tildaba al "vulgo" en el Prólogo de 1628 que antepuso a sus *Comedias*" (78).

of "vulgo" would be as a rhetorical device that was commonly used in multiple prologues of his time in order to distinguish between the learned reader and the ignorant *vulgo*. Under this interpretation, the learned reader would identify with the "nobleza" and Alarcón would be critiquing the ignorant reader who cannot distinguish extraordinary theater.

Such interventions have also been used in other literary texts, among them the *Guzmán de Alfarache* and Quevedo's *Los sueños*. Mateo Alemán insults the "vulgo" in his picaresque novel stating: "oh enemigo vulgo, los muchos malos amigos que tienes, lo poco que vales y sabes" alluding to their low level of comprehension (3). Immediately after, he will refer to the "discreto lector" or the learned reader in a humbler tone: "No me será necesario con el discreto largos exordios ni prolijas arengas: pues ni le desvanece la elocuencia de palabras ni lo tuerce la fuerza de la oración a más de lo justo ni estriba su felicidad en que le capte la benevolencia" (4). The specific mention of a *captatio benevolentiae* remits to the common formula of the prologues. Similarly, Quevedo expresses the same mistrust towards the "vulgo" when he writes: "Si dices mal de mi sueño, / vulgo, como tal harás, / mas di, que con decir más / dices bien dél y del dueño" (31). As with Alemán, Quevedo agrees that the *vulgo* is ignorant. Also, it is evident that the *vulgo* is not related to social class but rather to a level of interpretation.

However, more than the apparent *captatio benevolentiae* that distinguishes learned readers, Alarcón may be echoing the anxiety between writing theater leisurely or as a source of income, a topic his contemporary Lope de Vega knew well. I propose this reading because there is reference to a monetary transaction when he speaks to the reader. This transaction places Alarcón in dialogue with Lope de Vega and the means to earn money as a poet. When Alarcón directs his words to the "vulgo," he suggests they treat his plays "no como es justo, sino como es gusto." In the

first sentence of the paragraph Alarcón distinguished between *vulgo* and "nobleza" to clarify who he is referring to. It must be mentioned that the terms *vulgo*, *nobleza*, *justo*, *gusto*, and the act of selling plays take on a new meaning after 1609 with the publication of Lope's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*. In 1978, Emilio Orozco Díaz focused on the rhyme between *justo/gusto* in the *Arte nuevo*, arguing that: "esas dos palabras en rima . . . constituyen con su mero enunciado la afirmación rotunda de la esencial ley o regla dramática; lo *justo*, esto es lo que constituye ley, es lo que responde al *gusto*" (23). José María Díez Borque and Antonio Sánchez Jiménez link the relationship between *justo* and *gusto* with the market, justifying their claim with the fact that Lope defends that it is *justo* to write the plays in *recio* in order to please the *vulgo*, since it is them who pay for the works (Díez Borque 18; Sánchez Jiménez 728). Lope will repeat the use of this transaction when he publishes his *Cuarta parte de comedias* in 1614, where he writes: "no hay en España más preceptos ni leyes para las comedias que satisfacer al vulgo, máxima que no desagradó a Aristóteles cuando dijo que el poeta de la fábula había conseguido el fin con ella si conseguía el gusto de los oyentes" (34). It seems that Lope, in the *Arte nuevo* as well as in the prologue to his fourth volume, had already used the referents *vulgo*, *nobleza*, *justo*, *gusto*, in order to describe the production of theater as a transaction with the public. Alarcón seems to share such vision when he makes references to the cost of his volume, and when he instructs the "vulgo" to read his works "como es gusto y no como es justo." Furthermore, Alarcón mentions that his vengeance against a misinterpretation is to know that his plays are good: "me holgaré de saber que son buenas". But he goes further, for in case the "vulgo" has an affinity for his plays, then his vengeance will be "el dinero que te han de costar." That is, Alarcón refers back to theater as a means to make money. He continues emphasizing the anxiety between interpreting his work as "lícitos divertimientos"

similar to a game, or “virtuosos efectos de la necesidad” related to work. The way he refers to his theater may lead to the interpretation of his plays as a way to control his identity as playwright. Notice that in either case, Alarcón self-fashions as a winner in this game.

Another key element to this paragraph is the representation of space as it relates to the practice of reading. I mentioned above that Genette and Porqueras-Mayo both refer to the paratext as a metaphorical space of transition and transaction, or as a curtain to a spectacle. Alarcón will transform this metaphorical space into a physical one when he writes to the “vulgo”. The transition of his theater as a represented work, to a work that is being read leisurely already implies a change of space and practice. This change is suggested when Alarcón tells the reader that his plays “te miran con desprecio y sin temor”. His plays, once the object of attention of his spectators, now become the subject that “see” the reader. The roles are inverted, and the spectator now becomes the object of attention of the plays. If we understand theater as a representation of life, a common topic in the work of Calderón de la Barca and other contemporaries, then these representations are looking back at the spectator. The reader would find himself judged by Alarcón’s theater just as he once judged Alarcón’s theater in the *corrales* as a spectator.

The exchange between subject and object will foreshadow a change of space. Alarcón comments that his plays already passed through the danger of the “silbos” once they were performed in theaters, and now run the dangers of the readers’ “rincones”. He is referring to the transfer of seeing the play in a *corral* or theater, and reading it in a room where one can do so at leisure. The transposition between the dangers of the theatrical production and those that happen in the readers’ “rincones” proves hard to define for the diverse connotations that the term “rincón” had at the time. Covarrubias defines “rincón” as: “aquel estrecho que causan dos paredes juntando

una con otra, adonde de ordinario no llegan derechamente las luces, y así se toma por lugar escondido y oscuro. Dezimos estarse al rincón y arrinconado y arrinconarse, por retirarse y esconderse" (*Tesoro* 911). As such, "rincón" implies a periphery, a place distant from light. Not quite at the center of the spotlight, "rincón" is hidden, dark, and hard to reach. The term's open meanings invite a series of interpretations.

As "lugar escondido y oscuro," the association between the danger and the reader's "rincones" may be referring to a mental shortcoming of his readers. This would be in accord to the rhetorical device used in prologues to express hate towards the ignorant readers. This definition of "rincón" implies that the act of reading will be marked with a certain "obscuridad" in the interpretation due to the ignorance of the *vulgo*. The danger here is that the ignorant reader will not interpret the text in its entirety, not taking "provecho" out of the plays. The "rincón," then, represents the obscurity in the *vulgo's* mind.

Yet, Alarcón may also be using "rincón" to refer to a physical place. Another definition of "rincón" was that of an "estrecho que causan dos paredes" alluding to a room in a building. The "rincón", in this way, refers to the place used to read. This can be associated with an intimate practice, as it is used in the *Quixote* when Sancho says: "mucho mejor me sabe lo que como en mi rincón sin melindres ni respetos, aunque sea pan y cebolla, que los gallipavos de otras mesas donde me sea forzoso mascar despacio, beber poco, limpiarme a menudo, no estornudar ni toser si me viene en gana, ni hacer otras que la soledad y libertad traen consigo" (Cervantes 87; I. 11, emphasis mine). This definition of "rincón" helps to distinguish between going to see a play among a crowd, and reading the play either intimately or to a small group of people. A "rincón" is a smaller place compared to a "corral de comedias" where people of all backgrounds would go to

see a play. This change of space also refers back to the advantage of reading a work at one's own pace which, in turn, had implications in the interpretation of the work. Juan Pérez de Montalbán refers to this in his *Tomo primero de Comedias* (1635) as a way of justifying the publication of his theater:

Por esta, y otras causas, para desengañar a los curiosos y desmentir a los que profanan nuestros estudios, me reduje a imprimir las mías, empezando por estas doce, que es el tomo, lectores míos, que os consagro para que las censuréis en vuestro aposento, que aunque parecieron razonablemente en el tablado, no es crédito seguro, porque tal vez el ademán de la dama, la representación del héroe, la cadencia de las voces, el ruido de los consonantes, y la suspensión de los afectos, suelen engañar las orejas más atentas, y hacer que pasen por rayos los relámpagos porque como se dicen aprisa las coplas y no tiene lugar la censura para el examen, quedan contentos los sentidos pero no satisfecho el entendimiento. (20)

The change of space allows for a closer reading that could have been misguided due to circumstances in the theatrical representation. The “rincón” would allow a space for the reader to interpret the work at his/her own pace.

Yet another interpretation of the word “rincón” is as the verb “arrinconar,” and the danger is that the reader may corner Alarcón's theater or vice versa. This can be read in two ways. The book or play may “threaten” the readers for some of its content may challenge their ideas. In this sense, the rincón becomes a place where the book and reader battle each other. In a second sense, “arrinconar” means that his plays run the risk of occupying the corners of the readers' bookshelves, being forgotten and not read with “deleite y provecho.” This also shows preoccupation with the

practice of reading, for his theater loses all worth if it is not read. The concern here is more with the book as an object that is forgotten among the other books that constitute the readers' library. If forgotten and not read, Alarcón's theater suffers from not being known and appreciated.

Lastly, I would like to comment on another interpretation not mentioned by Covarrubias that is immersed in the literary practice and associated with the picaresque. In literature, "rincón" may also refer to the famous Rinconete in Cervantes's *novela ejemplar* "Rinconete y Cortadillo," where his name implies deception. Once Monipodio baptizes Rincón with the name Rinconete, he mentions that the name reflects the fraternity's "ordenanzas" (241). The change of name goes in accordance with Rincón's picaresque behavior, implying a change of social status. He becomes part of the underworld. I am not arguing here that Alarcón is alluding to Cervantes in his prologue, but rather that the distinct use of "rincón" had different connotations during his time. All connote a sense of obscurity, or doing things in an alternative manner, such as the *pícaros*. And such an alternative manner may threaten the readers, as they feel *arrinconados*. Alarcón's choice of words brings about all these interpretations in his concern with the reception of his theater. Whatever the danger may be, Alarcón mentions that his vengeance will be the cost of the book, referring to a transaction.

Although Alarcón presents his theater in a playful way, either as "lícitos divertimientos del ocio" or "efectos de la necesidad," he also expresses concern over the reception of his plays. This concern is not only visible in his words to the "vulgo" but also in the use of the word "rincón." While his way of writing may be immersed in a tradition of paratexts dating back to classical authors, he also debates with newer concepts brought about by his contemporary Lope de Vega. The concern with the readership also points to his self-fashioning as an author because it is the

readers who will judge his worth as a poet. Alarcón's justification for writing theater and his playful uses of space can both be viewed as strategies in his self-representation while in court.

Whereas the prologue to Alarcón's first volume is concerned with the interpretation of his work, in his second volume, published in 1634, there is a shift where he will be preoccupied with gaining agency over his work. This may stem from biographical events that need to be stated. Shortly after his arrival to Madrid in 1614, Alarcón was beginning to gain recognition for his poetry. An example is the duty the Duque of Cea asked of Alarcón for the festivity of 1623 that was organized in honor of the Monarchs. Willard F. King notes: "Entre los participantes estaban algunos de los grandes nobles de España, como el Duque de Pastrana (director de la fiesta), el Almirante de Castilla, el Duque de Maqueda y el Duque de Cea. Al lado de ellos *sólo* dos figuras literarias: Alarcón y Luis Vélez de Guevara" (179). The author later concludes that Alarcón formed part of the "círculo más íntimo de la corte" (179). This would be the pinnacle of Alarcón's career as a playwright, but it would also be shadowed with jealousies. In August of the same year, a celebration was planned for the wedding between Charles I of England and María Anna of Spain. The Duque de Cea, son of the Duque de Uceda and grandson of Duque de Lerma, asked of Alarcón to write "una descripción poética de las fiestas en el estilo más elevado posible" (King 182). Alarcón sought help from fellow poets, some of whom he had already collaborated with in the play *Algunas hazañas del Marqués de Cañete*. They include Mira de Amescua, Luis de Belmonte Bermúdez, and Luis Vélez de Guevara. New collaborators included Anastasio Pantaleón de Ribera, Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo, and Diego Vélez de Guevara. The result, as King informs, was "73 octavas reales compuestas en el más pomposo e hinchado lenguaje gongorino, ninguna de las cuales salió enteramente de la pluma de Alarcón" (182). Each collaborator provided highly extravagant verses

that did not emulate the poetry of Góngora, but rather served to ridicule Alarcón. The scandalous occurrence resulted in diatribes against Alarcón from famous contemporaries such as Quevedo, Góngora, Lope de Vega, and Tirso de Molina, among others. Some incriminate him for not sharing the money granted to him by the Duque de Cea, others for not giving credit to his collaborators, and yet others continue to poke fun at his appearance. Although Alarcón continued to publish theater after this incident, it is clear that the relationship with his contemporaries had been shaded and this is reflected in the publication of his second volume. By the time he published his last volume in 1634, he had already retired from the theatrical scene and devoted his life to the permanent administrative position he had acquired in the Council of the Indies.

Although there is considerable time between the publication of these two volumes, I include the prologue of his second volume in my analysis for two reasons. First, because Alarcón considers that his second volume is a continuation of the first. In his dedication to Don Felipe de Guzmán, he states “que esta de la segunda *Parte* de mis Comedias no es segunda dirección, sino continuación de la primera”. Also, some of the plays included in the *Parte segunda* were written before 1622, the year that the first volume was submitted for publication.⁶ There is no apparent reason why or how he chose the plays to be published in his *Parte primera* and others in his *Parte segunda*. It must be mentioned that although his *Parte primera* was published in Madrid, his *Parte Segunda* was published in Barcelona. This is explained by Jaime Moll, who clarifies that Alarcón’s first volume was among the few published in Madrid despite the suspension of licenses that lasted from 1625 to 1634, only because it was submitted for publication in 1622. He also mentions that

⁶ As a matter of fact, some scholars have dated all his published work as between 1599 and 1625 (Josa 300-301). This would mean that some plays contained in Alarcón’s second volume could have been published in his first volume, he chose not to publish them for unknown reasons.

this suspension may have been the reason Alarcón published his second volume in Barcelona: “Juan Ruiz de Alarcón publica en Madrid, en 1628, la primera parte de sus comedias, pero la licencia y privilegio fueron otorgados el 16 de marzo de 1622, antes de la suspensión de concesión de licencias. En cambio, su segunda parte de comedias, de 1634, es impresa en Barcelona, por Sebastián de Cormellas” (101). More importantly, Alarcón will continue to play with rhetorical devices in his second volume and will continue metaphors of dangerous spaces for his theater.

Alarcón will add some concepts related to navigation in his *Parte segunda*. He also augments a *Proemio* in which he explains the reason for his publication. Here, he mentions that no one asked for his works to be published, nor has he been badgered to publish them by any of his friends; rather the reason that he published his work is in gratitude of his Maecenas, the Duke of Medina de las Torres: “proemio sea, no el vulgar de que importunado de amigos hago esta impression; nadie lo ha solicitado, sino el deseo de publicar siempre lo que debo al Duque de Medina de las Torres” (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Obras* 61). Thus, he may be commenting on contemporaries who justify their publications as petitions from their friends. However, he renews the topic of danger and the change of space as he did in the first *Parte*. He continues the paragraph with: “lo sea la que les negocia tan gran Mecenas, que no sólo en el puerto de la emprenta, pero en el golfo del teatro les asegurara, si acaso no alabanzas, a lo menos lisonjas, que si ocultan diferentes corazones, descubren todas una misma cara” (61). The analysis of Anne Cayuela about paratexts in theater nuances what Alarcón refers to as “puerto” and “golfo”. According to Cayuela: “La metáfora empleada por Ruiz de Alarcón del 'puerto de la imprenta' frente al 'golfo del teatro' traduce muy bien esta oposición tan frecuentemente evocada entre la imprenta (el libro) como lugar seguro (puerto), mientras que el corral de comedias (el teatro) es golfo, esto es, lugar de todos los peligros” (12). Whereas in the

first volume he used “rincón” to highlight the different dangers between reading a play and seeing it at a *corral*, here he will use the metaphors of “golfo” to connote danger and “puerto” to connote safety. These metaphors are interesting for their relation with navigation and the sea. In this transposition of places, Alarcón is referring to theater (*emprenta* and *teatro*) in naval terms.

As a transatlantic subject, Alarcón was familiar with navigation and the sea. He does not hold back from using nautical references when he directs his words to the reader and claims authority over his theater. As opposed to the *Parte primera*, Alarcón will not refer cruelly to his readership, and instead be more encompassing. The text reads as follows:

Cualquiera que tú seas, o mal contento o bien intencionado, sabe que las ocho comedias de mi primera parte y las doce desta segunda son todas mías, aunque algunas han sido plumas de otras cornejas, como son *El tejedor de Segovia*, *La verdad sospechosa*, *Examen de maridos*, y otras que andan impresas por de otros dueños: culpa de los impresores, que les dan las que les parece, no de los Autores a quien las han atribuido, cuyo mayor descuido luce más que mi mayor cuidado; y así he querido declarar esto, más por su honra que por la mía, que no es justo que padezca su fama notas de mi ignorancia; mas, con todo, no te arrojes fácil a condenar las que te lo parecieren; advierte que han pasado por los bancos de Flandes, que para las comedias lo son los del teatro de Madrid; y mira que en este consejo hago más tu negocio que el mío, que siendo mordaz, ganarás opinión de tal, y a mí ni me quitarás la que con ellas adquirí entonces (si no miente la fama) de buen poeta, ni la que hoy pretendo de buen ministro. Vale. (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Obras* 61-62)

Alarcón starts by establishing authorship over his plays in both his *Parte primera* and *Parte segunda*. This authorship is ingrained in a competition among playwrights, since his humble demeanor

connotes false humility. This false humility serves as a way to self-fashion as a good poet, as he reminds the reader at the end of the paragraph. As an excuse, he criticizes the practice of the "impresores" who do not try to print the actual author of the work, but rather give the name they see fit.

Attributing plays to the wrong playwright was a common practice among the "impresores" and an irritating one for playwrights. Christophe Couderc elaborates on the subject and ties it to a concern about intellectual property:

La voluntad de reivindicar la autenticidad de los textos publicados, es decir la afirmación de la propiedad intelectual, junto con los escrúpulos filológicos, aparecen a las claras en el prólogo a la *Cuarta parte* de Lope y se volverán todo un tópico de esta modalidad prologal nueva que corresponde al fenómeno también nuevo de la publicación para la lectura de textos hasta entonces solamente destinados a la representación. (123)

Examples of the same complaint are found also in Lope's *Parte novena* of 1617, in the *Primera parte de don Pedro Calderón de la Barca* of 1636, and in Montalbán's *Primero tomo* of 1635, among others. Alarcón, again utilizes a common tradition among his contemporaries. Although his modesty can be interpreted as a *captatio benevolentiae*, the way he ends the paragraph clarifies that it is a false modesty. Alarcón highlights the quality of his works and his fame of good poet and administrator. He specifically lists the works that have been attributed to other playwrights, two of which we know were printed as works of his enemy Lope de Vega (*La verdad sospechosa* and *Examen de maridos*). Although he humbly says he claims authorship more for the reputation of his contemporaries than his own, it is hard to believe him when he ends his paragraph in a self-appraisal of his theater and his administrative work.

Just as he is establishing agency over his theater, Alarcón decides to counsel the reader. In the same manner as his *Parte primera*, Alarcón shows a concern about the readership of his works. Alarcón will literally take the position of the reader and not the author, since he admits doing "más el negocio de lector" than his own. In this advice, Alarcón transforms the spatial metaphor in the paratext into a physical space that will affect the reception of his work. He comments that his works have passed through "los bancos de Flandes, que son los teatros de Madrid". The reference to the "bancos de Flandes" is strategic since it helps to fashion Alarcón as a poet of high style.

"Bancos de Flandes" at the time had different meanings. It was commonly used as a metaphor for a dangerous place, since the banks of that territory were known to be difficult to navigate. As Agustín Millares Carlo mentions, this is how the banks were referred to in the *Quixote's Second part* Chapter XXI, and in Lope's *El Arenal de Sevilla* (Ruiz de Alarcón *Obras* 62). Francisco Rico's edition of the *Quixote* however, expands on the connotations of the "bancos de Flandes." He states: "Se juega, como otras veces y en otros autores, con tres significados posibles que se entrecruzan: 'las mayores dificultades', por alusión a los bajíos o *bancos* de arena que se encontraban en Flandes, peligrosos para la navegación; 'casas de crédito de Flandes', prestamistas frecuentes de los reyes de España, . . . ; 'cama construida con el pino de Flandes', el más común en las sierras de la España central" (Cervantes, *El ingenioso hidalgo* 802). The first definition of "bancos de Flandes" suggests that Alarcón frames his second volume in terms of navigation. In other words, theater can be dangerous due to its environment and the competition it attracts. While in the *Parte primera* the danger was the "rincón", here it is a "banco" that is hard to navigate. His theater made a journey through the banks of Flanders, and this navigational reference complements his earlier metaphors of "puerto" and "golfo." Since the banks of Flanders is a

metaphor for the theaters of Madrid, it is referring back to his experience in the metropolitan center.

In the Prologues of both *Partes*, Alarcón shows rhetorical devices and strategies to establish authorship over his work and insert himself in the debates and practices of his time, but there is also a special relationship with the space described in these paratexts. If Genette and Porqueras Mayo both refer to the paratexts as symbolic spaces, Alarcón will convert them into physical spaces. Being "rincones" in the *Parte primera* or "bancos" in the *Parte segunda*, Alarcón self-fashions as the author who addresses the "bestia fiera", in other words, the reader. In the first volume, it seems Alarcón presents his work as a game or competition. The references to navigation in his second volume may reflect his familiarity with crossing the Atlantic, an aspect that will be observed in his plays. It is no surprise that countless of his protagonists will refer to themselves as sailors who must guide a ship when confronted with bad fortune. Two important conclusions can be drawn from his paratexts: the first is the way Alarcón refers to the reader as "bestia fiera" and denotes the dangers of the "rincón" or the "bancos" which associate his work with the monstrous by adding a sense of obscurity and bestiality to the readers and his theater. Secondly, his works not only connote danger with the "rincón" or "banco" but also provide a means of income. The context offered in both paratexts will be showcased in at least two plays, where the protagonists are represented as battling fortune in the Spanish Court. In *El desdichado en fingir*, the representation of poetry and the Prince, the antagonist, will be key in interpreting the role and ascension of the protagonist Arseno at the end of the play. In *Todo es ventura*, Tello will confront a monster represented by a bull that will confirm his rise in social status and his constant good fortune under the unfortunate circumstances that drives the plot. Both examples show how the protagonists face

monsters that will influence their successful resolution at the end of the play, and the monsters at the same time reveal aspects of Spanish society in court.

Monstrosities in *El desdichado en fingir*

El desdichado en fingir, a play full of deception, takes place in the seventeenth-century Bohemian court. Three men pursue their love for Ardenia: Arseno, the Prince, and Persio. Arseno and Persio are both tricksters and swindlers, comparable to Tirso's don Juan Tenorio, though they do not know each other in the play. Ardenia loves Arseno, so she suggests that he disguise himself as her brother Arnesto, who has been away in Rome since he was a young boy. Persio, a foreign poet who is new to Court, and his servant were listening to their conversation. As a result, Persio and Arseno both arrive to Ardenia's house disguised as Arnesto, but Persio succeeds because he arrived earlier. Hearing the commotion, the Prince arrives at the house and recognizes Arseno. The Prince unjustly orders him to be locked in an insane asylum. While Arseno is in the asylum, Persio is living with Ardenia and Justino, as brother and son respectively, and receiving favors from the Prince as a future brother-in-law. He finds it hard to hide his lust for Ardenia and desperately admits not being Ardenia's brother as he seeks to seduce his "sister." The Prince hires murderers to kill Persio as he sees him as a potential obstacle to Ardenia. Shortly after, it is revealed that Persio is not Ardenia's brother Arnesto, but rather an impostor that had a love affair with Celia. Once the Prince knows about the schemes of Persio, he releases Arseno and tries to detain Persio as he is about to flee the Bohemian court. At the end, the real Arnesto arrives to the house as a pilgrim, and his arrival resolves the plot. The play ends with three marriages: Persio with Celia, Arseno with Ardenia, and Arnesto with a niece of a Cardinal in Rome.

There is little criticism dedicated to *El desdichado en fingir*. Eduardo Castro Leal dates it as between 1601 and 1603, implying that Alarcón started it while he was in Mexico but provides no evidence to support his opinion. He also mentions that “[e]n la Bohemia imaginaria donde tiene lugar la acción hay que ver más bien un vago trasunto de México que a Salamanca o Sevilla” and comments that the play lacks “modulación psicológica” (84-85). In contrast to Castro, Walter Poesse sees Madrid in the Bohemian setting and mentions “with certain minor reservations, it is a good comedy, in the real sense of the word, unprofound, involved as to plot, entertaining, with rapid action and sparkling dialogue” (58). We may never know why Alarcón decided to situate this play in the Bohemian court, although it appears that the Bohemian court in the play has traits that equate it to seventeenth century Madrid.

Jules Whicker brings out an important aspect about the characterization of the play, which is that Persio is “[t]he only one of Alarcón’s characters to be identified explicitly as a poet” and is characterized as “not only a poet, but he is also a rake, an adventurer, and one of the most audacious frauds to appear anywhere in Alarcón’s works” (*The Plays* 23). He elaborates about Persio that “as a poet, he is the embodiment of the shameless mendacity, lasciviousness and slander about which contemporary moralists were so concerned” (23). In retrospect, Persio is not much different from Arseno. Both are, in the words of Lillian von der Walde Moheno, “un par de tramposos” (“El influjo” 483).⁷ Elsewhere, Walde Moheno has insisted on how the plot depends on the parallel between both Persio and Arseno (“La estructura” 252). Lola Josa has also mentioned some parallels between both characters such as their arrival to Court around the same

⁷ It must be stated that Lola Josa sees honesty in Arseno when compared to Persio: “La diferencia es que Arseno no pensó burlarse nunca de Celia porque la quería de verdad, mientras que Persio no” (*El arte dramático* 146). I differ from this interpretation as I present in my analysis.

time and their affair with Celia (*El arte dramático* 146). The deceiving characteristics of the protagonists of the play have been noted as problematic earlier by Alberto Lista. Lista mentions that “la parte de costumbres es reprehensible, porque hay personajes viciosos en que el vicio no aparece de modo que repugne” (Harzenbusch 519). In this sense, criticism has presented an unresolved problem. While the characters are presented with negative traits, the reader cannot come to terms with their happy ending because they are not reprehended. Since both characters seem to complement each other, my analysis of the play will be based on Persio’s exchange of his poem for Ardenia’s letter that will allow him to enter Ardenia’s house before Arseno. As a consequence, the Prince locked Arseno in an insane asylum. Due to the unjust actions of the Prince towards Arseno, I will also emphasize how his actions and poetry are examples of monstrosities in this play that also comment on the views of moralists at the time and the state of political matters in the metropolitan center.

Persio’s servant, Tristán, is the first to inquire about the paper Persio exchanged for Ardenia’s letter. Persio responds saying he wrote a poem in vernacular-octosyllabic ballad (*romance*) to one of his friends about his affair with Celia: “Un romance / en que a Montano escribía / la historia de Celia y mía” (Alarcón, *El desdichado* 333-335). To which Tristán answers: “Suma el recibo y alcance. / El poeta eres primero / que por coplas enriquece. / Mas, ¿sabes qué me parece? / . . . / Que llevas mal agüero / en que principio haya dado / a este caso la poesía” (340-342).

While Tristán’s words start in a humorous way, referring to the economic status of authors at the time, he quickly changes his tone to describe the exchange as a “mal agüero” or a “bad omen”. This reference already associates the exchange as monstrous. “Monster”, as a portent, is believed to come from the Latin *monere* meaning to warn. The bad omen could then be interpreted as a

prodigy, an extraordinary event, meant to warn about a negative consequence.⁸ Tristán is specific in naming poetry as the source of the bad omen. In this way, he is distressed to know that the poem Persio exchanged for Ardenia's letter is the sign of the demise of Persio.

However, there may be more at stake in Tristán's warning. For the learned spectator, the warning would also be related to contemporary debates about the role of poetry, prose, and theater. Some Spanish moralist argued against theater and certain works of literature because of the influence they exerted on their readers or spectators, and for the imprecisions presented in such works. This is apparent through Tristán's own words later when he elaborates on the loose foundation of Persio's lies: "Bien me atrevo; mas recelo / cuando alzas torres al viento, / como no es firme el cimiento, / verlas todas en el suelo; / que de tu parte en engaño / se fundan, pues descubierta / quién eres, mira si es cierto / que fabricas por tu daño;" (1353-1360). Tristán's words resemble closely the dangers associated with poets and authors. As Jules Whicker has observed, Tristán repeats Miguel Sánchez de Lima's negative characterization of poets in his *El arte poética en romance castellano* published in 1580 (*The Plays* 23). In his book, Sánchez de Lima writes: "Ay otra suerte de hombres tan locos, que no parece, sino que siempre andan metidos en vnas vanas imaginaciones, fabricando en sus memorias vnos castillos de viento, cuyo fundamento esta edificado sobre la region del ayre" (15-16). His way of referring to "castillos de viento" compares to Tristán's "alzar torres al viento." Furthermore, they both emphasize the weak foundation of the lies distributed by poets and their respective dangers.

⁸ Examples of monsters as bad omens abound in Early Modern literature. An example is Covarrubias's *Emblema* 64 "Neutrumque et utrumque" depicting Hermaphrodite. The text under this emblem reads: "Soy terrero de los que como a monstro horrendo y raro me tienen por siniestro y mal agüero" (429).

Of equal interest is how Sánchez de Lima refers to the poets' ability to invent and use their imagination. He calls them "locos":

Es cierto verdad, que os tengo lastima a todos los Poetas: porque todo el dia os andays co[n]mas sobra de locura que de dineros. Dezidme pobre de vos, no veys q[ue] tras cada concepto se os va la mitad del juyzio, y que tiene necesidad vn buen Poeta de otros tantos juyzios, como quantos conceptos se le representan ala memoria? Y cierto que acerto el que dixo, Que Musicos, y Poetas carecen de seso. (17)

In this way, Tristán, like Sánchez de Lima, expresses the dangers of building upon false premises. He also associates Persio with the element of air, revealing a sanguine behavior tied to his will to action and social life. As such, Tristán's warning is also immersed in the debates about the role of literature in Spain at the time. Different from Tristán, Sánchez de Lima ties the behavior of poets to some delirium or lack of reason. These dangers would impact the readers or spectators directly, and would speak against poets.

While Persio fits the stereotype of the fanciful poets at the time it is strange that he is not characterized as mad or crazy in the play. While the excess of imagination is displayed in Persio with his inventiveness to compose poetry, for Arseno the excess of imagination will be imposed by the Prince when he accuses him of being mad. Here, it is important to recognize the difference in power and social status between Arseno and the Prince, as Arseno himself acknowledges when he says: "Con un príncipe, ¿quién puede, bella Ardenia, competir?" (3-4). Sancho echoes the stark difference when he says in reference to Arseno: "Él es caso temerario, / que un pobre soldado intente / a un gran príncipe oponerse" (191-193). The prince who is pursuing the love of Ardenia has political power and influence which Arseno does not possess as a poor soldier. As such, the

scene in which the Prince locks Arseno in an insane asylum requires close attention for its political implications.

Walde Moheno has interpreted the Prince's action of locking Arseno as a metaphor of Arseno's "fingimiento": "en virtud de los celos del Príncipe, se le condena por 'loco' y va a dar a una jaula de manicomio —hecho que interpreto como la metafórica concreción, por parte del dramaturgo, de lo realizado por su personaje, esto es, la 'locura' del fingimiento" (252). However, I find a closer tie with the monstrous derived from the way the Prince orders Arseno to be locked. The Prince gives clear instructions that Arseno and his servant shall remain locked but in public display and dressed a certain way: "Estos dos has de llevar / y entregallos en la casa / de los locos. El cuidado encarga de su salud. / . . . / Un saco muy roto y malo / haz que a éste se le dé, / y que lo pongan en parte / que todo el mundo lo vea, / porque esto en Ardenia sea / a que lo aborrezca parte" (890). The Prince places emphasis on two aspects: the clothing they should wear and that they be displayed to the public. Both visual aspects may add a sense of theatricality and performance to the scene. At a time when beings who did not fit the norm or went against nature due to deformities were being called monsters and put on display for commercial means, it is not surprising that the Prince here wishes to display Arseno as a mad man, perhaps as a warning to the public (Río Parra 118-119). With ripped clothes he will serve to display the dangers of those that have an excess of imagination. Indeed, the characters in the play quickly react to Arseno's situation. For example, Perea, one of Ardenia's servants, comments about Arseno: "Tan cerca está de la calle, / que nadie sin que lo vea / por ella podrá pasar; / que yo por eso lo vi, / que pasando por allí, / acaso volví a mirar" (1000-1005). The visual importance resorts back to the monstrous characterization of Arseno. Closely related to the verb *monstrare*, or to show, the monster

necessarily needs to be portrayed and seen in order to exist. In this case, Arseno is being watched not only by the characters in the play but also by the spectators of the play. This interaction between the mad and the public may have been a common practice in Early Modern Spain. As Dale Shuger informs about hospitals and asylums: “The public entered and the residents went out from the asylums under a variety of auspices” (22). Commonly on display and easily approachable, the mad in madhouses stood as a warning of potential suffering of the mind or had an excess of imagination.

The madness imposed on Arseno may associate him with a monster, but the truth is that monsters also exhibit internal crises and fears. In this case, the Prince’s action may reveal more about him than about Arseno. We have an example of a political figure, who is supposed to represent righteousness and reasoned decisions, instead displaying irrational behavior and being guided easily by worldly pleasures. This leads to the misuse of his political power. He blames love for his wretched actions: “¡Oh, loco amor! ¡Oh, deseos! / ¿Dónde me habéis de llevar? / ¡Que yo, que ejemplo he de dar, cometa casos tan feos!” (2325-2327). But we should not forget that his compulsions also led him to order the killing of Persio. Contextualized in a time when Spain was undergoing an economic crisis and was struggling with its monarch Phillip the III who relied heavily on his *valido* the Duke of Lerma, the characterization of a misbehaving Prince would clearly serve as a warning of what has happened and may continue to happen in a declining empire.

We have in *El desdichado en fingir* two examples of monstrosities that comment on the cultural and political reality of Spain at the time. The first comes through Tristán and exposes fanciful poetry as a bad omen in the play. As such it is a prodigy, or a monstrous occurrence that also comments on the role of literature in everyday life and engages with the debates with moralists

at the time. The second, is about the excess of imagination in poets represented in Persio but imposed on Arseno. Due to the public display, the excess of imagination can be seen as monstrous and serves to reflect the political decline of 17th-century Spain in Alarconian theater, the situation that Alarcón was facing as he arrived Madrid. Rogelio Miñana has written that fiction and an excess of imagination are both examples of monsters:

En suma, el monstruo comparte al menos cinco rasgos fundamentales con la ficción de los siglos XVI y XVII. Primero, ambos suponen una amenaza a los órdenes establecidos, a la normalidad, a la legalidad biológica, religiosa y cultural. Fuera de los límites de lo ordinario, tanto el monstruo como la ficción excitan la imaginación de los seres humanos y les provocan reacciones extremas que les pueden llevar, como en el caso del hidalgo Quijano transformado en caballero don Quijote, a saltarse las leyes existentes. El poder está amenazado por lo extraordinario; la desestabilización del *status quo* es potencialmente un peligro para el Estado y su aparato jerárquico. (57)

As a threat to the norms, fiction and the excess of imagination can lead to instability in public matters. The same applies in *El desdichado en fingir*. Although Alarcón historically has been associated to the monstrous via his physical appearance, his play portrays monstrosities that comment on the cultural and political reality he was confronting. As such, his theater is a venue for the author to self-fashion, a space for him to recognize his voice as a playwright while in Spain.

Confronting the Monster in *Todo es ventura*

The influence of fortune in life events and the will of an individual to control his or her destiny are present in *Todo es ventura*, a play that takes place in Madrid. The plot starts in a somber

tone: don Enrique is forced to dismiss Tello as his servant because he is short of money to sustain him. Tello, a loyal servant and hidalgo, is left on his own to succeed in Madrid. Despite the sad beginning, Tello will be involved in risky situations that somehow always end advantageously. In this way, Tello commences as a disadvantaged hidalgo blamed for a murder but ends becoming a gentleman that earns the favor of the Duque and the love of Leonor. His successive good luck culminates in a final scene where he victoriously fights a bull. Although there are two noble contenders for Leonor's love, a Duque and a Marqués, she chooses Tello confirming his quick ascension in the social class and his newly acquired gentleman qualities. The charm of *Todo es ventura* is Tello's successive good fortune when the opposite is expected. His good fortune makes it easy for him to climb the social ladder.

The criticism behind *Todo es ventura* is varied. Antonio Castro Leal believes Alarcón composed the play once he arrived to Madrid. In his view, don Enrique reflects Alarcón: "En este personaje Alarcón puso todas sus simpatías y mucho de su modo de pensar y sentir" (108). The idea of don Enrique, an *indiano* as reflective of Alarcón is tantalizing, though I am more inclined to find parallels with Tello. King, on the other hand, highlights the representation of Chance in *Todo es ventura* when comparing Calderón's theater to Alarcón's: "Pero, a diferencia, por ejemplo, del teatro de Calderón, el de Alarcón se ocupa de la evolución de la vida y el carácter de la humanidad en un nivel menos exaltado, en el cual el curso de una vida está conformado por sucesos que ocurren casualmente o por la simple flaqueza humana, como se ve aun en los títulos de dos comedias, *Todo es ventura* y *La industria y la suerte*" (112). More recently, Serafín González has focused on the characterization of the protagonist Tello. He comments that: "Estamos ante el único caso, entre las obras que aquí se comentan, en que el protagonista no se destaca entre los

demás personajes de la comedia por sus cualidades de nobleza. Su identidad dramática se construye a partir de ciertos elementos que en principio le son ajenos” (51). Serafín González highlights the self-reliance in Tello’s ascension in the social ladder, and I interpret Tello’s actions a form of self-fashioning when he acquires traits that would confirm him as a *caballero* by the end of the play.

My analysis focuses on a known aspect of monstrous studies: the importance of vision regarding the monster. Sharing an etymology with the Latin “monstrum,” the monster was also understood as a symbol that is meant to show something (*mostrar*): According to Marta: “Al parecer de Cicerón, este vocablo derivaría de ‘monstro’, es decir, ‘mostrar’, un verbo que guarda una sólida relación con el terreno de lo visual” (Piñol Lloret 11). The visual aspect will be particularly significant when we consider Tello’s clothing in his character development. I argue that, like Arseno in *El desdichado en fingir*, Tello confronts a monster and his success confirms his new social position. In Tello, however, there will be elements of a transatlantic self-fashioning in his successive good fortune. I will start by analyzing specific moments of good fortune for Tello, each setting a milestone in his self-fashioning. I will also analyze how his actions are influenced by his transatlantic experience and his change is reflected in his clothing. My analysis will culminate in Leonor’s description of Tello’s bullfighting as an example of Tello confronting a beast. Both parts of my analysis, Tello’s self-fashioning and his change of appearance, culminate in this scene.

In the play there are six instances where Chance favors Tello: the first is when he is confused for the man who defended Leonor. As a consequence of the “heroic” deed, the Duque favors Tello even though he was not the brave person who stood up for Leonor. The second, is when Tello thinks the *alguacil* is going to detain him, when in reality they are after Leonor. His

face changes color due to cowardice, but it is misinterpreted by Leonor to mean bravery. The third instance is when Tello communicates the news to the Duque that the *alguacil* took Leonor away. Instead of getting angry, the Duque grants him the positions of *gobernador* and *camarero* as he sees this opportunity to escape with Leonor. In the fourth occasion, his exchange of clothing with Enrique saves him from being killed by the Duque's servants who were envious of him. This happens once he knows Leonor has an interest in him. The fifth time chance favors Tello is when the Duque asks Tello to fight a bull for a festivity he is planning for Leonor. He succeeds, even though he is reluctant at first. The sixth occasion concludes the play: it is when Leonor chooses to be with Tello as he returns from the bull fight. I consider the first, third and fifth occasions as drivers of the plot.⁹ The first sets the scene for the theme of the play, Tello's good luck. The third demonstrates how such good luck leads to social ascension by the favor of the Duque. The fifth is where he shows his acquired gentleman qualities as he confronts a monster. Equally significant is that the first mentions transatlantic voyages to New Spain, the second continues with navigation references, and the third represents Tello's ascension in the social ladder in clothing and behavior.

Tello's good luck in the play begins as a consequence of an unfortunate event. Enrique, his master, has decided to let him go since he cannot afford to pay him any longer. Enrique says: "Ya ha logrado / la fortuna su intención, / pues mi larga pretensión / me ha traído a tal estado, / que no puedo sustentar / los criados que solía" (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Todo es ventura* 1-5). Due to his circumstances and lack of resources, Enrique has to release Tello. Interestingly, he mentions that Tello's appearance may help him navigate Madrid: "Tú te ves agora, Tello, / de ese vestido

⁹ In the three instances, their consequences are expressed in *romance*, *quintillas*, and *octavas*, respectively. This contrasts with the composition of the remainder of the play that consists of mostly *redondillas*.

adornado, / no tienes más que esperar, / porque si roto lo ves, / ni hallarás amo después / ni yo te lo podré dar” to which Tello responds “Habrete de obedecer, / pues es mi fortuna escasa, / porque a ‘salte de mi casa’ / no queda qué responder” (35-44). In this sad scene, Enrique equates appearance in clothing with opportunities available. In other words, for Tello, as he is a poor hidalgo, he has to rely on his appearance. We have to keep in mind that in Madrid appearances mattered and often differed from reality. Tello confirms the association between appearances and Fortune when he says: “Bueno habéis quedado, Tello, / sin amo y sin un real, / sumado todo el caudal / en un vestido y un cuello. / Amigo no lo tenéis, / ni aun conocido en la corte, / pues si a dueño que os importe / entrar a server queréis, / ¿qué poderoso señor / para ello os ha de ayudar, / si en Madrid se ha de alcanzar / hasta el servir por favor?” (57-68). The fact that this happens within the first scene already sets out important elements. Tello is left by himself in a Madrid notorious for the lack of possibilities. Fortune has led Enrique to dismiss Tello, and in turn, it is Tello’s Fortune to only be well-dressed. Inner self-hood is judged by outward appearance. Furthermore, Madrid is recognized as a place where it is hard to ascend without connections.

Down on his luck, Tello has nothing to lose. And that is precisely how he will approach his situation. Shortly after being dismissed by Enrique, Tello will go to the Prado, to contemplate his bad luck. He sees two women whom he wishes to approach, but is hesitant for his lack of money: “Con ellas quiero un momento / mis desdichas olvidar, / mas no teniendo qué dar / me falta el atrevimiento. / Ya se ha llegado a coger / otro la ocasión” (73-78). Although he wishes to engage, he does not have the means to approach them. Instead, another *galán* approaches the women while Tello observes from a distance.

Tello will be gifted with successive good luck until the end of the play. The first time he gets lucky happens as he observes the women while another *galán* speaks of love to them. Tello and Enrique both observe as the *galán* becomes more persistent and aggressive in the way he approaches Leonor. Enrique decides to intervene, showing his noble behavior, and kills the *galán* while Tello observes hidden. As Enrique realizes he killed the young man, he decides to escape to avoid being detained. Tello tries to do the same in order to evade being blamed for the murder. Here is where his luck starts. Although the law follows Tello instead of Enrique, Leonor attributes the good deed to Tello. She asks the Duque to use his influence to free Tello. This would be the first of Tello's lucky incidents. It is worth noting that Tello does not try to take advantage of the situation. Instead, by honest means he tries to explain he was not the man who killed the *galán*. However, the Duque takes this as a sign of chivalry, and admires Tello even more. The Duque arranges with the law to free Tello in order to honor Leonor's wishes.

The sudden change of luck allows Tello to speak about himself. He explains his background to the Duque. Here is an indication of his self-fashioning:

TELLO. (¿Al fin tengo yo de ser
valiente por fuerza? Sí,
vaya. ¿Qué puedo arresgar?
Quizá me viene a buscar
la fortuna por aquí.)
Tened por cierto, señor,
que puede en mi pensamiento
más que el más grave tormento
la fe de vuestro valor,
que de un verdugo, hasta dar
el alma, pedazos hecho,
supiera callar mi pecho
lo que me hacéis confesar.
Fernán Tello de Meneses,
Excelso Duque, es mi nombre,
Cádiz mi patria, mis padres,

tanto como hidalgos, pobres.
 Luego que la juventud
 me ciñó al lado el estoque,
 fui soldado de la flota
 que los indios mares corre.
 Tres veces de Nueva España
 pisé los preñados montes,
 cuyos partos enriquecen
 de plata los españoles,
 y nunca de sus tesoros
 vi que una parte me toque,
 que también van a las Indias
 las desdichas con los hombres.
 Con esto determiné
 mudar de mi vida el orden,
 que en largas enfermedades
 se han de mudar las regiones.
 A Madrid vine buscando
 la fortuna; conocíome
 un indiano caballero,
 que está aquí en sus pretensiones,
 y supuesto que no pierden
 de su calidad los nobles
 en servir, y que no tuve
 otro remedio en la corte,
 entré a servirle ha seis meses. (296-337)

The verses serve to explain Tello's background as an hidalgo from Cádiz. Here he also mentions his transatlantic background, as a soldier of the fleet that travelled to the Indies bringing riches back to Spain. However, the riches never favored Tello.¹⁰ Instead he chose to come to Madrid for new opportunities. In Madrid he met with don Enrique, an *indiano*, who was forced to dismiss him. The similarities between Tello and Ruiz de Alarcón are worth noting here. Alarcón

¹⁰ The idea of the Indies not as a source of wealth but rather a source of misfortune is analyzed in Chapter 2. *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte* are two plays that include shipwreck or sea misfortunes that cause the protagonists to lose inherited wealth from the Indies.

travelled the Atlantic three times as Tello did. He also decided to go to Madrid seeking better opportunities, as his experience in his native New Spain was unrewarding.

Tello's words evince a reality little known, and that is that the New World does not mean riches for everyone: a reality Alarcón knew too well. But the scene also evinces a turning point in the play because Tello will start a series of fortunate events as a result of the Duque. It is worth noting that he tries to be honest, and declares he was not the man that committed the heroic deed of defending Leonor in the Prado. However, he decides to seize fortune as this opportunity was presented to him. As such, his first sign of good fortune is also marked by his transatlantic background.

The next main event that marked Tello's good fortune occurs between the end of the first act and the beginning of the second. Tello gives the bad news to the Duque about Leonor's imprisonment. The law has taken Leonor as they deduced that she was the reason for the murder that occurred in the Prado. Unsure of how his new friend would take the information, Tello tells the Duque: "Pues la nueva desdichada / es forzoso darte, ha sido / que en este punto ha salido / para Alcalá desterrada, / por el exceso del Prado, / tu Leonora triste y bella;" (895-900). To his surprise, the Duque responds in good will: "¿Y esa, Tello, es mala nueva? / Los brazos te quiero dar" (905-906). Seeing this as an opportunity to gain Leonora's love, the Duque recompenses Tello for these news with new posts, representing an ascension in the social ladder. Tello will now be the "gobernador" and "camarero", two posts that the Duque's servants were fighting for. Tello reflects on his good luck: "(En lo que entendí / dar pena, contento di: / todo, en efecto, es ventura.)" (940-942). Once again, he attributes his bright future to his "ventura."

The new positions raise Tello to a new standing, although it has all been built under the mistake that he is the man that defended Leonor in the Prado. To complement his new posts, Tello will also be asked to show knightly behavior. The Duque asks Tello to ride a horse and fight a bull. The Duque wishes to show how much he loves Leonor in this celebration. Tello tries to decline respectfully: “No sabré. / ¿Gustas de verme afrentado? / Jamás gobernó mi pie / más que el estribo quebrado / de una mula de alquiler. / Yo nací en puerto de mar, / donde es solo navegar / lo que se practica y sabe, / el caballo de una nave / sí me atrevo a gobernar; / cuando en líquida región / por pies lleva blancas velas, / riendas las escotas son, / el viento ministra espuelas / y presta freno el timón” (973-987). In this beautiful description of navigation, Tello again recurs to his transatlantic background when he favors sailing the sea over riding a horse. His background is juxtaposed with the equestrian practice and he is forced to confront his history for a new future. The new feat requires him to leave his comfort in order to succeed.

In the second to last occasion where Tello receives good luck from his deeds is right before the bull fight. This will contrast with the previous occasions, as Leonor’s love for Tello will be stronger and reciprocal. This places Tello in a tough situation: on the one hand he loves Leonor and would like to return her love. On the other, he must be loyal to the Duque, who is also pursuing Leonor. However, Leonor also has a third contender: the Marqués, but the love is not reciprocal. In an act of jealousy, Tello is arguing with Leonor about her interactions with the Marqués. The Duque walks in as they are arguing, overhearing Tello’s words: “Yo lo he visto y no lo creo, / ¿en qué te obligó el Marqués, / para que tan presto des / esperanza a su deseo? / Si por señor, ¿eslo más / que el Duque? ¿Pues si su amor / no merece tu favor, / por qué al Marqués se le das?” (2045-2052). Although Tello is expressing his own jealousy, the fact that he mentions the

Duque is mistaken by the Duque to mean loyalty. When he makes his appearance, Tello is afraid his love for Leonor will gain him punishment. To his surprise, the Duque congratulates him thinking the argument with Leonor was about him: “¡Ah, buen Tello!, ejemplo extraño / de prudencia y de valor, / pues sin que sienta el dolor / quieres remediarme el daño. / Dame esos brazos. Bien vi / que con Leonora reñías, / y enojado le pedías / celos del Marqués por mí” (2117-2124). Tello, now more than ever, believes that good fortune is purely chance: “Caso extraño, mi locura / ha aplicado a su afición, / que aun con la misma traición / sabe obligar la ventura” (2145-2148). He has learned to grasp his good fortune and go along with it as a lover of Leonor and contend to the Duque and Marqués.

The scene with the Duque is a decisive moment in the play, for Tello’s love for Leonor will be stronger. Shortly after this interaction with the Duque it will be time for Tello to prove himself. He will fight the bull while on a horse, an ultimate test to his recent ascension in society and behaviors. The anticipation of the fight can be associated with the monstrous as in *El desdichado en fingir*. Tristán hopes for a successful bullfight: “Dios quiera, Tello, / no nos des en qué entender, / y envuelto en polvo y en miedo, / no vengas rodando a dar / tanta risa a este lugar / como el gracioso de Olmedo” (1971-1976). Tello interprets this as a bad omen: “¿También Tristán se conjura / a agüerarme mal suceso? / Plega a Dios, Tello, que en eso / no descontéis la ventura” (1981-1984). Whereas a monster was often a bad omen in *El desdichado en fingir*, here, the monster will be represented in the beast that Tello must fight.

The event is described elegantly in the third act by Leonor:

En esto comenzó súbitamente
una cuestión de fieras cuchilladas,
y amontonado el pueblo mil espadas;
crece el marcial ardor, y de la gente

dos escuadras se forman encontradas;
esta apellida al natural Henares,
aquella al forastero Manzanares.

Sueltan un toro, medio ya postrero
contra la lucha y cólera encendida;
era barroso y grande, aunque ligero,
corto de cuello y cuernos, escondida
en un cerdoso remolino fiero
la frente, abierta la nariz hendida,
negro de extremos y de hocico romo,
de negra cinta dividido el lomo.

Tello, airoso, galán, gentil mancebo,
al mismo tiempo entró por otra parte,
confianza al amor, invidia a Febo,
amor a Venus y temor a Marte;
pardo el vestido mas con modo nuevo,
de diamantes tal copia le reparte,
que un diamante juzgaras el vestido
y que estaba de pardo guarnecido.

En un rucio andaluz, pisador, bello,
de grande cuerpo en proporción formado,
al ancho pecho igual el corto cuello,
de alta corva cerviz hermoheado,
riza la crin, la cola y el cabello,
el breve rostro alegre y sosegado,
anchas las ancas, de barriga lleno,
presto a la espuela y obediente al freno.

Y parece que el toro, de ofendido
de que el pueblo por él lo desampara,
parte invidioso y entra embravecido
al experto caballo cara a cara;
mas Tello, reportado y prevenido,
así el rejón a la cerviz prepara,
que se encontraron en la misma herida
a entrar al hierro y a salir la vida. (2541-2580)

To such description, the Duque responds: “Vuestros sutiles pinceles, / Leonor, la fiesta dibujan / de suerte que habéis vencido / la verdad con la pintura” (2581-2584). The retelling of the event paints a vivid picture for the Duque. The visual becomes an important element in the fight.

Equally important is that Tello is depicted with positive equestrian qualities as he kills the bull. He dominates one beast in order to kill another.

Leonor starts describing what may be a *juego de cañas*, a game typically accompanied by bullfighting that often served to reenact battles between the Spanish and Moors. In this case, the opponents are those representing the rivers Henares and Manzanares. In the middle of the spectacle, a bull is described in beastly qualities and contrasts the horse. This is intentional as both animals are supposed to represent opposite qualities: “The crux of the confrontation was often between the horse and the bull, as with the *rejoneo* (bullfighting on horseback) in today’s bull ring. It pitted the Spanish horse, domesticated, tamed by the rider’s skill, against a fearsome opponent, an untamed animal symbolic of irrational strength and bravery” (Ruiz 218). The bull, a beast that may represent no self-control is killed by the skill of Tello. His skill also contrasts his previous lack of experience in horse-riding and familiarity with the sea. It also shows control of his own destiny, appropriating behaviors that were foreign to him at the beginning of the play.

There’s no doubt that Tello is a new man by the end of the play. His new position in society is reflected in his clothing described as “modo nuevo” and adorned with diamonds. The description highlights the importance of the visual in the scene, but more importantly, it demonstrates Tello’s development. From a poor hidalgo to a “gentil mancebo”, Tello has benefited from his luck but his learning process and character transformation cannot be overlooked. He starts the play as a poor hidalgo who recently arrived to Madrid, and at the end he is esteemed over a Duque and a Marques. Showing courtly behavior while on a horse, he condemns the beast and marries Leonor.

Conclusion

Juan Ruiz de Alarcón has been described as a monster by his contemporaries and modern critics alike. His physical appearance and his place of origin were the source for some of the diatribes. However, in the paratexts to his first volume of plays he describes the readers as beasts when he refers to them as “bestia fiera.” This naming describes his readership as monstrous, hence he frames his published theater as *comedias* that confront a monstrous reader. Alarcón’s description of spaces, his reference to “rincones” in the first volume and “bancos” in the second volume, both nuance how he frames his published theater. While “rincón” implies periphery and intimacy, “bancos” brings about navigation and safety. Again, his published theater confronts dangers associated with his readership. Both prologues evince an anxiety related to the interpretation and fate of his work.

While his paratexts already introduce monstrosities in his work, his theater will have examples of monsters that comment on life in the metropolitan center. In *El desdichado en fingir* an exchange of a poem for a letter reveals concerns related to the role of literature and poets at the time. Alarcón presents to his readership and viewers the state and views of literature at the time. In addition, the Prince’s action of imposing an excess of imagination on Arseno exposes a political figure without the virtues he needs in order to rule. Such behavior may echo an epoch of political decline in the Spanish empire. Alarcón self-fashions as a poet that confronts the monstrosity of being a poet in a declining empire.

In *Todo es ventura*, we see a different confrontation with the monstrous. Tello is constantly the object of good fortune when the opposite is expected. This successive luck results in his improved social standing at the end of the play. His richer clothes and his equestrian skills when

confronting the monster contrast with his state at the beginning of the play as a poor hidalgo. When he describes his background, he also foregrounds his experience in the transatlantic fleet, associating his familiarity with the sea. However, his successful bullfight on a horse confirms his transition to a seasoned courtier. It is his fight with the bull, a confrontation with the monstrous, that authorizes his new social status. It may well be that the horse is the new ship he must master, while the bull may represent the dangers Madrid (once the sea). Ironically his enrichment comes not from his transatlantic voyages but from the winds of good fortune that blow in his favor in the Court.

The monstrosities in Alarconian theater provide a venue for Alarcón to self-fashion as a playwright. His paratexts describe the reader as a monster and his works as ships sailing through the perils of theaters and readers' interpretations, showing a concern with the fate of his theater. The monstrosities his protagonists face also show a concern with confrontations in courtly life, all of these confrontations that he had as a newcomer to Madrid. Alarcón is deviating from his own monstrosity and instead is displaying societal monstrosities from the courtly environment he confronted.

Chapter 2: The Indies in Alarcón

Rogamos a vuestra majestad (a Apolo) mande a media docena de sus luminares que busquen cuidadosamente a Don Juan de Alarcón, y le encarguen que no olvide el Parnaso por la América, ni la ambrosía por el chocolate, sino que escriba muchas comedias como la del *Mentiroso* y la de *Examen de maridos*, en la cual se examinó de doctísimo artífice; pues no habrá otro mejor en el teatro, como haga que algunos de sus segundos actos acaben con más vigor su carrera.
Fabio Franchi, *Exequias poéticas... a la muerte de Lope de Vega*, 1636¹

America, as a topic, was not popular among playwrights of the Spanish Golden Age. Fewer than thirty plays are known to deal with the discovery, conquest, and colonization of the continent (Zugasti 441).² It is not surprising that Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, a playwright who was born and grew up in New Spain, did not situate any of his plays in the Indies. However, the fact that none of Alarcón's plays take place in the Americas does not mean that his place of origin did not influence his theater. In select plays Alarcón makes diegetic references to cities and historical events in the Americas. In these references, Alarcón takes advantage of his upbringing and knowledge of the continent as a strategy to compete among his contemporaries. He does so by associating distance and misfortune with the Americas. Such characterization of the region contrasts with the way contemporary playwrights represented the continent. The references not only provide an

¹Willard F. King believes Fabio Franchi is a pseudonym for Juan Antonio de Vera y Figueroa, *Conde de la Roca* (211). The quotation is taken from Hartzenbusch, XXXVII. Franchi's anxiety about Alarcón's place of origin is interesting because it places Alarcón in the middle of two options: to stay in Spain and continue to write plays or to return to America but leave theater behind. Margarita Peña states the importance of Franchi's remarks with the following points: "a) Deja claro el origen americano de Alarcón; b) curiosamente, simplifica el título de *La verdad sospechosa* en el de *Mentiroso* . . . ; c) es temprano en el tiempo, anterior a 1639, año de la muerte de Alarcón, ya que le pide que escriba más y mejor, y d) alude elogiosamente a *El examen de maridos*, una de las comedias que, de acuerdo con su repetida impresión en forma de 'suelta', ya desde el XVII debió tener tanto éxito, en este siglo y los subsecuentes, como *La verdad sospechosa* o más" (*Juan Ruiz de Alarcón ante la crítica* 20).

² For more information on the corpus of American topics in Spanish Golden Age theater see Hector Briosó Santos's "Introducción".

alternative view of the Americas in the field of Spanish Golden Age theater, but are also tied to Alarcón's authorial strategies while in the metropolis, giving insight to how the *criollo* playwright used his American background to self-fashion.

Alarcón may have used his American background as a strategy to respond to the way he was perceived by his contemporaries. In these lands, his American background was seen as a vulnerability. And yet, Alarcón took part in the literary feuds among contemporary playwrights and authors. Francisco de Quevedo, for example, composed a *letrilla* particularly attacking Alarcón. Some of his verses comment on Alarcón's American background:

¿Quién para Indias cargó
espaldas, no mercancías,
y de allá trujo almofías
que por jubón se vistió
que cangrejo navegó
para volverse ranilla?
Corcovilla
Su padre fue picador,
Según dicen los poetas,
pues en él hizo corvetas
y no hizo un arador.
¿Quién es mirarle dolor?
¿Quién es mirarle mancilla?
Corcovilla.³

Quevedo's verses, though cruel, describe generalizations associated with Alarcón's American background and his physical deformity. Instead of transporting "mercancías" to and from the Indies, Quevedo mentions Alarcón carried his hunchback. Furthermore, he continues to poke fun at Alarcón's deformity referring to his father's profession as a miner in New Spain. Both attacks

³ The verses are taken from Willard F. King's Appendix, pages 250-254. King follows with Alarcón's response, "Pata Coja," which alluded to Quevedo's limp and some scandals related to Quevedo's life (254-264).

are framed within a mindset where the Indies represent a source of quick wealth, but not for Alarcón. The travel that typically represented fortune for Spaniards, represents misfortune for Alarcón and this is manifested in his physical deformity according to Quevedo.

Quevedo would not be the only literary figure to mock Alarcón for his American background and his aspirations in the Court. Earlier in the century, Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa speaks against Alarcón in his *Pasajero* (1617): “Siguese de lo apuntado que si el chico, aunque bien formado y capaz, debe hallar repulsa en lo que desea, si ha de representar autoridad con la persona, much mayor es justo la halle el jimio en figura de hombre, el corcovado imprudente, el contrahecho ridículo que, dejado de la mano de Dios, pretendiere alguna plaza o puesto público” (425). It is known that Alarcón was seeking a position in Madrid around these years, and so was Suárez de Figueroa. Later, Figueroa’s text describes a repulsion for anything that comes from the Indies:

Las Indias, para mí, no sé qué tienen de malo, que hasta su nombre aborrezco. Todo cuanto viene de allá es muy diferente, y aun opuesto, iba a decir, de lo que en España poseemos y gozamos. Pues los hombres (queden siempre reservados los buenos) ¡qué redundantes, qué abundosos de palabras, qué estrechos de ánimo, qué inciertos de crédito y fe; cuán rendidos al interés, al ahorro! ¡Qué mal se avienen con los de acá, observando diversas acciones, profesando diferentes costumbres; siempre sospechosos, siempre retirados y montaraces! (337)

Quevedo and Figueroa’s texts share a common view of those who come from the Indies, associating them with money, “rendidos al interés, al ahorro.” Perhaps it is this repulsion of what Alarcón represented in the eyes of his contemporaries that propelled the playwright to depict the

Indies differently in some of his works. In the plays analyzed in this chapter the distance and the perils of the Sea cause the characters to fail to receive an inheritance across the Ocean as a consequence of shipwrecks or accidents while on the ship. My analysis interprets these failed travels and other references to the Indies as Alarcón's intervention in the political environment, but also as a form of self-fashioning during his stay in Madrid.

I would like to highlight another trait from Quevedo and Suárez de Figueroa's diatribes: they refer to two kinds of mobility, crossing the Ocean from the Americas, and moving up the social scale to seek a position in Madrid. Using literature as a means for upward mobility is one of Stephen Greenblatt's central arguments about self-fashioning. Greenblatt explains that in the early modern period there "appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process" (2). He names mobility as a common denominator among the authors he studies: "We should note in the circumstances of the sixteenth-century figures on whom this study focuses a common factor that may help to explain their sensitivity as writers to the construction of identity: they all embody, in one form or another, a profound mobility. In most cases, this mobility is social and economic" (7). I believe that this shared social mobility makes a statement about the authors' necessary displacement from their place of origin in order to move up in the social sphere. They had to move from their home in order to self-fashion, and this is particularly relevant considering how Alarcón was judged for being a *criollo* and for his physical deformity in his arrival to Madrid. Furthermore, Alarcón crossed the Ocean three times: in 1600, as a young student, he travelled to the University of Salamanca from his native New Spain, returned in 1609 seeking a stable position as a lawyer in Mexico, then travelled once again to Spain (Madrid) in 1613 where he would remain until his death in 1639. While his visits to Spain

allowed him to live the Spanish reality, his experience travelling the Atlantic must have opened his spatial perspective. As a traveler of the sea, Alarcón more than other playwrights will have a very specific and particular characterization of the ocean. Additionally, his failed attempts to succeed in Mexico forged a desire to move upward in society while in Spain.

The references to the Indies in *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte* are few and brief. In general, the brevity and lack of references to the Indies in Alarconian theater have led to multiple conclusions from critics. These debates are inserted within the broader question of Alarcón's nationality. There are two prominent views: some critics notice that Alarcón makes so few references to his place of origin that he may as well be considered Spanish, while others claim that Alarcón's "Mexicanness" can be viewed in other aspects of his work. Menéndez y Pelayo, for example, justifies his judgment of Alarcón as an "americano españolizado" with the absence of the Indies in his work: "Ruiz de Alarcón ha de ser tenido por un americano españolizado, que sólo por su nacimiento y su grado de licenciado puede figurar en los anales de México. Toda su actividad literaria se desarrolló en la Península; son rarísimas en él las alusiones o reminiscencias a su país natal" (58). He elaborates on this stance, erasing Alarcón from his *Historia de la poesía hispanoamericana* because of his "total ausencia de color americano que se advierte en sus producciones, de tal modo, que si no supiéramos su patria, nos sería imposible adivinarla por medio de ellas" (58). According to Menéndez y Pelayo, the lack of American "color" in Alarcón's work points to his assimilation of a Spanish identity. It is of interest that Menéndez y Pelayo refers to "color americano" regarding Alarcón for the racial undertones associated with America even though he was a *criollo*. However, Menéndez y Pelayo makes a huge leap in his observation; he seems to suggest that one can read a playwright's nationality based on the number of references to

their place of origin. This may seem like an outdated approach, but with regard to Ruiz de Alarcón, it seems that remnants of this method emerge in some recent studies. Eugenia Revueltas, for example, remarks about Alarcón: "la patria de nascencia no forma parte de su horizonte artístico, pues las menciones que hace de ella son escasísimas" (100). Here, Revueltas follows a similar vein of thought as Menéndez y Pelayo: because there is a lack of references to the Indies, Alarcón's place of origin had almost no influence in his work.

On the other side of the debate are those in favor of a Mexican identity that try to find "Mexican" elements in Alarcón's work and include studies by Pedro Henríquez Ureña and Dorothy Schons among others. Explaining what he means when he claims that Alarcón belongs to the Mexican literary tradition, Henríquez Ureña begins his study with the following words: "Aquí vengo, señores, . . . a sostener una tesis difícil, arriesgada e imprevista, que no faltará quien declare carente de todo fundamento. Vengo a sostener, —nada menos,— que Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza, el singular y exquisito dramaturgo, pertenece de pleno derecho a la literatura de México y representa de modo cabal el espíritu del pueblo mexicano" (3). Perhaps influenced by a period of national identity formation after the Mexican Revolution, Henríquez Ureña claims that the *criollo* playwright may be the first Mexican author wherein the Mexican spirit lays. With a similar argument but different approach, Schons traces pre-Hispanic and colonial elements dealing with Mexican culture in Alarcón's work and concludes her study by stating: "The few suggestions made of the rather subtle influence exerted on Alarcón by his Mexican background should make it apparent that if Alarcón's plays are thoroughly Spanish on the surface, they have undercurrents here and there of a somewhat Mexican spirit" (64). It is not my intention to delve deep into proponents of either side as Antonio Alatorre has already examined their argumentation in his

"Para la historia de un problema: La mexicanidad de Ruiz de Alarcón".⁴ Rather, these examples illustrate how nationality and literary tradition have produced the binary system that judges Alarcón regarding his reference to the Indies.

I follow a different approach, one that does justice to the complex identity of Alarcón as a *criollo* of mixed ancestry who travelled twice to Spain and that also integrates his Mexican social background while in Spain. The debate between two nationalities attempts to use Alarcón's theater to define his nationality. Instead, I analyze the reference to the Indies as authorial strategies, strategies that would not be possible without his Mexican background. Reconsidering the way he depicts the Indies in his work is significant because a break with Peninsular depictions of America may represent Alarcón's appropriation of theater as a *criollo*. Born approximately fifty-five years after the conquest of Mexico and having crossed the Atlantic thrice, Alarcón is an early *criollo* cognizant of life in both worlds. He lived before other celebrated *criollo* writers such as Juan de Espinosa Medrano, Sor Juan Inés de la Cruz, and Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora, and had the opportunity to publish his own work in Spain. His theater, then, replicates common practices of theater in Spain during his time, but the manner in which he chooses to do so represents his self-fashioning. The complexity of this process is lost under a binary method of approach that focuses on his nationality. In this way, Alarcón's place of origin is important not only because it is a lens to analyze notions of empire, but also because it forms Alarcón's contextual background.

⁴ The case for Alarcón as emblematic of a national identity, as Alatorre mentions, has been touched on by notable critics such as Alfonso Reyes (172) and Ángel Valbuena Prat (184). Arguments in favor of a Spanish identity explain that New Spain was too young to have developed a national identity and therefore it follows that Alarcón belongs to the Spanish tradition. This is supported by critics such as Adolfo Bonilla (Alatorre 174), Ermilo Abreu Gómez, and Genaro Fernández MacGregor (Alatorre 189).

Pierre Bourdieu's approach to literature provides a balance between approaches that focus on the social-historical context and those that focus on the text of an author. Understanding the importance of both aspects in a subject, he states: "Trying to understand a career or a life as a unique and self-sufficient series of successive events without any other link than association with a 'subject' (whose consistency is perhaps only that of a socially recognized proper name) is almost as absurd as trying to make sense of a trip on the metro without taking the structure of the network into account" (258-59). Context is the fundamental aspect that drives my analysis of Alarcón's use of the Indies. More attention needs to be drawn to the condition of Alarcón as a playwright seeking upward mobility and to the possibilities available to Alarcón in the field of theater. Bourdieu's approach to literature may be helpful in analyzing notions of place in Alarcón because it brings together an internal and external analysis of theater in the Early Modern period, while also understanding the authorial strategies in Alarcón's work. The theatrical scene in 17th-century Madrid could be understood as a "field of struggle, and may thus be compared to a game: the dispositions, that is to say the ensemble of incorporated properties, including elegance, facility of expression or even beauty, and capital in its diverse forms – economic, cultural, social – constitute the trumps which will dictate both the manner of playing and success in the game" (10). Alarcón is situated in a competitive game, and as a player, he seeks to win against his contemporaries such as Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Vélez de Guevara among others. The end goal is to succeed in this field of struggle. Furthermore, and in contrast with previous critical work done on Alarcón and his references to the Indies, it is important to be aware that the references to the Indies in this chapter pertain to two early plays. Therefore, the value of these references present Alarcón's early situation as a "player" in the "game" of theater. The social and biographical context is primordial

because "[i]t is in relation to the corresponding states of the structure of the field that *the meaning* and the social value of biographical events are determined at each moment, event understood as *placements/investments* and *displacements/disinvestments* in this space" (Bourdieu 258).

To understand the "game" in which Alarcón was participating we must also understand the Madrid of his time, characterized by the competition for power and reduction in resources.

Alarcón submitted his first volume of works for publication in 1622. The year 1622, historically, was marked by Philip IV's recent ascent to the throne, and with him came the rise of his *privado* the Count Duke Olivares. Though it was a time of great artistic production, Phillip IV inherited a declining Empire, in part due to poor administration and leadership from his predecessors (Elliott 300-20). This can be observed through the maritime experience overseas. Abroad, the Dutch pirates had given Spaniards constant problems, and simultaneously the bullion from the Indies had decreased drastically since Phillip II's reign. Elliott explains that the "increasing cost of working mines, . . . the growing self-sufficiency of the colonists, . . . heavier expenditure by the viceregal governments in the New World, and . . . a fall in world silver prices" could have led to the "drying-up" of the Americas (322). As a native of New Spain and a member of a family that had a mine, Alarcón had first-hand experience with the drying up of the Indies. Alarcón's family had to move to Mexico City from Taxco after their mines were exhausted in the 1580's. The political tensions and the pursuit of positions of power had reached the realm of literature before and during the reign of Philip IV. As Elizabeth R. Wright suggests, the relationship between patron and writer was reciprocal during this time. A good author brought recognition to a sponsor, and a rich sponsor could benefit an emerging poet: "With the ambitious count of Olivares in the lead, the assembled aristocrats compare their poets—in number if not quality—and dismiss those who

cannot dramatize their positions as Maecenas" (Wright 13). The competition for political power influenced the relationship between Maecenas and artist. It is my contention that Alarcón's references to the Indies also have to do with seeking sponsorship while in Madrid. From analyzing the references and their association to positions of power, it can be concluded that Alarcón sought personal advancement in the literary scene as well as a position in the Council of the Indies.

None of Alarcón's plays are situated in the Indies. Rather, we are restricted to references and utterances used in his theater to conceptualize that place. The distinction in theatrical studies between the visible space, or the space represented using the stage as well as objects, and the space alluded to by the characters—but that is not visible to the audience—is helpful in this study. Michael Issacharoff has made a distinction between represented space and narrated space: "There are two major forms of dramatic space: onstage and offstage (mimetic and diegetic) . . . Mimetic space is represented onstage and made visible to an audience. Diegetic space is *described*, that is, referred to in the dialogue, and therefore confined to a merely verbal existence" (58). Literary critics such as José Luis García Barrientos and José M. Regueiro have used these terms to approach early modern Spanish theater. Issacharoff's distinction, essentially, is one between the visible and the invisible space. The spatial distinction is useful when studying theater through text rather than a performed function, although we cannot disregard the performative aspects of the plays where available. It also helps to put into perspective the text in regards to theatrical elements, especially considering that in Spanish Golden Age theater the spoken word was more important than the material elements in the play. For my study, it is useful in analyzing and comparing space and place: the visible places where the setting takes place, and the spaces referred to by a character.

The two plays analyzed in this chapter are *comedias de enredo*, or plays characterized by their complex plot, which often relies on a lie or guile that confuses characters and causes a conflict. The end holds the resolution, where the truth is often revealed. Most critics consider *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte* among Alarcón's first composed plays. Lola Josa dates the former as 1605 and the latter as 1611 (*El arte dramático* 300). King suggests later dates: 1610?-1616 for the former, and follows Bruerton's suggestion of 1620-1621 for the latter (140, 143). This chapter follows King's suggested dates.⁵ However, the dates are hypothetical considering the specific chronological order and dates of Alarcónian theater are still a mystery. With certainty, both were submitted for publication in 1622, with likely revisions from the original represented versions. The versions used for this study are modern editions of those published in Alarcón's first volume of works in 1628.⁶

El semejante a sí mismo

El semejante a sí mismo is about Don Juan de Castro, a volatile young man that questions the love his cousin doña Ana has for him.⁷ After her father died, doña Ana moved in with don

⁵ As King suggests "El elogio de Luis de Velasco, que murió en 1616, establece con toda seguridad el *terminus ad quem* de la fecha de composición. El segundo galán, Don Diego, declara haber estado doce años al servicio del archiduque Alberto (acto II, escena 13), y Alberto fue gobernador de los Países Bajos a partir de 1598. Podría concluirse que, si Alarcón contaba con esos doce años desde 1598 hasta el año en que escribía, comenzó a escribir la comedia en 1610" (140). As for *La industria y la suerte*, King agrees with Bruerton on the dates because the "toques biográficos" are not as present as in *La cueva de Salamanca* or *El semejante a sí mismo* (143).

⁶ For *El semejante a sí mismo*, I use Agustín Millares Carlo's edition and for *La industria y la suerte* I use a recent edition by Adriana Ontiveros Valdés.

⁷ Charles Perry explains don Juan's personality in context with Alarcón's characterization: "The comedy, and specifically the comic irony, of *El semejante a sí mismo* is relevant to the earlier stated notion that Ruiz de Alarcón's characters are motivated by reason, logic and common sense. It is, of

Juan and his father, don Rodrigo. Don Rodrigo orders don Juan to travel across the Ocean to the Indies, specifically to Lima, in order to bring an inheritance. Don Juan mistrusts his father with irrational jealousy and suspects that his father's order comes from a love interest with doña Ana. Don Juan is concerned about doña Ana's loyalty, so he begins a convoluted plot to test her love. He asks his good friend Leonardo to go to the Indies in his place to receive the inheritance while he disguises himself as his cousin don Diego de Luján. Don Diego was in Madrid after serving as a soldier in Flanders but Don Juan asked him to visit Seville masked as a servant by the name of Mendo. In this way, don Juan, disguised as don Diego, would live in Seville and would entice doña Ana: if she gives in to his temptations then his honor remains intact. If she does not, then he would know she is faithful. As the reader, or spectator, may imagine, the deceit becomes too complex for don Juan. Although don Juan and doña Ana are together by the end of the play, the failure of his plot is reflected in Leonardo's failed voyage to the Indies. After an accident that caused him to fall off the ship, Leonardo not only does not bring the inheritance back but devotes his life to religion.

The critical reception of *El semejante a sí mismo* is varied. Some scholars have a negative opinion, commenting that it is one of Alarcón's first plays and therefore his experience as a learned playwright had not yet coalesced. Castro Leal, for example, states: "Es, evidentemente, una obra juvenil. Su estilo no alcanza todavía los finos perfiles y la concentrada y puntual elocuencia que lo distinguen después" (98). Walter Poesse differs from Castro Leal, and sees the play positively: "given the purpose and nature of the *comedia* and the plot that Alarcón has chosen to

course, the very absence of these qualities in Don Juan that generates the comic action of the play. Sensible, rational behavior is not a property of Juan" (740).

develop, it is very well done" (46). The critical approaches are not only diverse in opinion but also in themes; some important approaches regarding space and the literary canon will be discussed below.

A strand of critics has focused on the references to the Indies, being the *comedia* with the only description of Mexico City in Alarconian theater. Jaime Concha, for example, examines the topic of monstrosity and the body in this play. His analysis focuses heavily on the verses that mention the Indies (Lima and Mexico City) claiming that those passages are "como los pilares de la obra, las bases firmes y medulares en que se sienta el inquieto edificio de esta comedia" (57). Related to the study of space, José Amezcua studies the diegetic places in *El semejante a sí mismo* and concludes that: "el espacio de *El semejante a sí mismo*, reproduce los signos dobles de la cercanía peninsular y de la evocación de tierras americanas" (56). In a more recent study, Gladys A. Robalino revisits the references to the Indies determining that: "La voz colonial en esta obra emerge, por medio de Leonardo, como una voz dislocada del texto, un exceso que lucha por afirmar su lugar y que al final es cancelado en el espacio peninsular" (37). The previous studies are examples of significant work regarding place and empire in *El semejante a sí mismo*. All mention or center their investigations on the references to the Indies.

Yet, other critics find value in the opinion that *El semejante a sí mismo* is derived from Cervantes's *El curioso impertinente*, a novella inserted in *Don Quixote*. The topic of jealousy and the fact that the protagonist is referred to as "celoso impertinente" in the play are mentioned as evidence by critics who believe Cervantes inspired Alarcón. Lola Josa, for example, takes it as a *desafío* to Miguel de Cervantes:

El ingenio de Cervantes provocó al de Ruiz de Alarcón, haciendo posible que el *Quijote* pasase a ser hipotexto del *Semejante a sí mismo*. Alusiones directas e indirectas a personajes y situaciones de la obra cervantina asientan la intertextualidad entre ambas obras, pero lo que convierte a la comedia alarcóniana en un hipertexto de la novela es el ser una *amplificación* de las últimas palabras con las que el cura de la venta concluye la lectura del *Curioso impertinente*. (*El Semejante* 601)

Alarcón, following Josa's interpretation, takes up the words of the *cura* in *Don Quijote* and creates a *comedia* with an analogous topic. Though it is possible that Cervantes influenced Alarcón, I am inclined to find similarity with an obscure play by Lope de Vega: *La octava maravilla* (1609). As we will see, Alarcón may have inserted a discourse of the drainage system in Mexico City as the eighth Wonder of the World in *El semejante a sí mismo* to be in dialogue with Lope. The dialogue between both works shows how Alarcón appropriates some theatrical elements from Lope as an authorial strategy. In this appropriation, Alarcón includes the reference to Mexico City highlighting the ingenuity behind the newly constructed drainage system.

The scene involving the Mexican drainage compares three different places: Seville, the Escorial, and Mexico City. As such, I will analyze the contrasts of these places as well as the character Leonardo. He seems to have close ties to the Indies because he describes the Mexican drainage in detail and he travels to the Indies as a favor to his friend don Juan, although he fails to complete his journey.⁸ The reference to Mexico City as well as the political figures in the

⁸ Leonardo's background is never explicitly stated. However, José Amezcua suggests Leonardo may be an *indiano* when he states: "Leonardo seguramente es un indiano, pues aunque no se da el dato con evidencia, como veremos después, demuestra conocer la Nueva España . . ." (50-51).

description lead to the conclusion that Alarcón not only inserts the Mexican drainage as an authorial strategy, but also to self-fashion in Madrid. The fact that Lope does this very well in *La octava maravilla* leads to this conclusion.

El semejante a sí mismo opens with the depiction of a pleasant spring day in Seville. Two friends, don Juan and Leonardo, and don Juan's servant, Sancho, are walking as they start a conversation:

DON JUAN. ¡Hermosa vista!

LEONARDO. Un abril
goza en sus puertas Sevilla.

DON JUAN. Es otava maravilla.

LEONARDO. Ya la fama cuenta mil,
porque a las siete del mundo
no hay quien la suya no aumente.

DON JUAN. Al Escorial justamente
le dan lugar sin segundo.

...

LEONARDO. Si veras hemos de hablar,
una quiero yo contar
que las demás obscurece.

DON JUAN. Ya mucho en sabella gano,
pues vos así la alabáis.

LEONARDO. Pues es, porque lo sepáis,
el desagüe mexicano.

SANCHO. Hable cristiano, señor. (Ruiz de Alarcón, *El semejante* 1-54)

From the start, there are three places considered as eighth Wonders of the World: Seville, El Escorial, and the drainage in Mexico City. Their conversation is only interrupted by Sancho's humorous interjection where he names other wonders such as "un caballero en Sevilla / sin ramo de mercader" (19-20) among others. Leonardo is reluctant to accept Seville as a Wonder of the World since everyone seems to add their own to the list. Don Juan responds by naming the Escorial as one of the many that people mention as an eighth Wonder. What follows the passage above is Leonardo's description, in sixty verses, of the process and the people involved in the

famous drainage system. But before moving to the description it is important to analyze how Alarcón contextualizes the drainage in the scene.

The drainage of Mexico City in the 17th century, according to Leonardo, has a higher worth of being recognized as a Wonder of the World. The engineering and teamwork behind the drainage surpasses the Escorial as well as Seville's beauty. In these comparisons, three cultural centers are described as wonders: the first through urban life, the second through architectural design, and the third through ingenuity and control of nature. This crescendo of places implies a hierarchy where Seville represents natural beauty, the Escorial political strength and Mexico City ingenuity. The drainage of Mexico City, nevertheless, is not easily understood or accepted by the *gracioso* Sancho, who responds: "Hable cristiano," either in astonishment that a drainage system could be considered a world wonder or to highlight the otherness associated with Mexico. Gladys Robalino understands that Sancho's response is highlighting the opposition between "lo 'mexicano'" and "lo cristiano y la necesidad de la función hermenéutica de Leonardo" (35). I agree that there are elements of otherness tied to Sancho's response, but I would also add that Alarcón is trying to make Mexico accessible to a Spanish audience by narrating a historical event from a distant city. A place familiar to Alarcón considering it is his place of origin; he enacts foreignness and channels the Peninsular anxiety towards Mexico through Sancho.

Leonardo will explain the process and elaboration of the drainage in Mexico City. This response to Sancho will provide Alarcón with the perfect opportunity to go into detail about the actions of the Viceroy of New Spain, the cosmographers, and the manual labor of likely indigenous people:

LEONARDO. México, la celebrada
cabeza del indio mundo,

que se nombra Nueva España,
tiene su asiento en un valle,
toda de montes cercada,
que a tan insigne ciudad
sirven de altivas murallas.
Todas las fuentes y ríos
que de aquestos montes manan,
mueren en una laguna
que la ciudad cerca y baña.
Creció este pequeño mar
el año que se contaba
mil y seiscientos y cinco,
hasta entrarse por las casas;
o fuese que el natural
desaguadero, que traga
las corrientes que recibe
esta laguna, se harta;
o fuese que fueron tales
las crecientes de las aguas,
que para poder bebellas
no era capaz su garganta.
En aquel siglo dorado
(dorado, pues gobernaba
el gran marqués de Salinas,
de Velasco heroica rama,
símbolo de la prudencia,
puesto que por tener tanta,
después de tres virreinos
vino a presidir a España),
trató este nuevo Licurgo,
gran padre de aquella patria,
de dar paso a estas crecientes
que rüina amenazaban;
y después de mil consultas
de gente docta y anciana,
cosmógrafos y alarifes,
de mil medidas y trazas,
resuelve el sabio Virrey
que por la parte más baja
se dé en un monte una mina
de tres leguas de distancia,
con que por el centro dél
hasta la otra parte vayan
las aguas de la laguna

a dar a un río arrogancia.
Todo es uno el resolver
y empezar la heroica hazaña:
mil y quinientos peones
continuamente trabajan.
En poco más de tres años
concluyeron la jornada
de las tres leguas de mina,
que la laguna desagua.
Después, porque la corriente
humedeciendo cavaba
el monte, que el acueducto
cegar al fin amenaza,
de cantería inmortal
de parte a parte se labra,
que da eterna paz al reino
y a su autor eterna fama.

DON JUAN. Tan insigne maravilla
muy justamente se alaba
por la primera del mundo. (54-119)

The amount of verses used to describe the drainage is striking considering the play does not take place in Mexico. Leonardo specifically highlights the different actors in the drainage: the Viceroy Velasco, the cosmographers and *alarifes*, and the one thousand five hundred laborers. Their teamwork controlled the flooding in about three years, causing it to be considered a Wonder of the World by Leonardo. There is no question that the play praises Velasco, comparing him to Lycurgus and briefly mentioning his three positions as Viceroy. Two points are of interest in Leonardo's description: the description of Mexico City as a physical body and the inclusion of Velazco as a new prudent Lycurgus.

Leonardo describes Mexico City as a physical body. He first states that Mexico is the "celebrada cabeza" of New Spain, then works his way down to the "garganta" referring to the incapability of water to drain from the city, and then resolves that "por la parte más baja" the water be drained to pass through the "centro" of the hill in order for the water to exit. This laborious

project involved the political conviction of the Viceroy, the expertise of the cosmographers, and the manual labor of "peones". Gladys Robalino reads this "body" as representative of the American continent: "La imagen que evoca este fragmento es la de un cuerpo que queda abierto, rasgado y sangrante. . . Resulta imposible no pensar que, por su relación sinecdótica, la alusión a la laguna y al monte tenga como referente todo el cuerpo territorial americano, cuya naturaleza feroz, bajo el control de la administración criolla, es finalmente sometida" (30). There is certainly an attempt to control fierce nature by authority, specifically through the Viceroy and his cosmographers. With a different interpretation, Jaime Concha's analysis of the "body" brings this passage closer to Juan Ruiz de Alarcón:

. . . es muy evidente que el pasaje del desagüe va configurando un diagrama corporal que, al aprovechar las circunstancias físicas del terreno, construye una nueva versión del espacio personal de Alarcón Con valles entre montañas, con minas bajo el monte, con una obra de ingeniería en las entrañas de la tierra, Alarcón habita una vez más, en el pórtico de su comedia, . . . un socavón del Nuevo Mundo, su laberinto mexicano. (67)

Using the metaphors of enclosed space, represented in the passage by the surrounding mountains and the excavated hole in the land, Concha explains how this is reflective of Alarcón's Mexican labyrinth. Here we observe how Concha ties the corporal reference to Alarcón's place of origin and his national identity.

Robalino and Concha both tie the description of the body to the Indies, the former through a colonial association and the latter through Alarcón himself. But Robalino's study, in extending the description to the Americas as a whole, is too general while Concha's allusion is too personal. The body mentioned here is strategic when we consider that Alarcón was new to Madrid

and was searching for an administrative position. The reference to the Mexican drainage and Velasco el Mozo is important for two reasons that refer back to Alarcón's contextual background. First, with regard to the declining empire and poor leadership of King Phillip III, the cohesion and efficiency between the Viceroy, the cosmographers, and the laborers express that working together yields results in solving problems. A body only functions when all its constitutive parts work together. This would be a positive response to a call for a better administration. The fact that Alarcón mentions that Velasco's prudence and success as Viceroy in the Indies led to his return to Spain in order to "presidir" is representative of a heroic return. Second, the specific adjective of "prudente" would also resonate with King Philip II. This is echoed in the comparison of the Mexican drainage with the Escorial, and requires specific attention.

When Leonardo describes Velasco as "símbolo de prudencia" it is impossible not to think of the connotations "prudence" would have in reference to King Philip II. Velasco is also described as coming from an "heróica rama" which highlights a sense of lineage among the Viceroys. By establishing this sense of inherited prudence between the Viceroy and his father, Alarcón is paralleling the relationship between Charles V and Phillip II. The parallel gains significance when we consider that Philip II was often compared to Solomon and, by extension, the lineage between Charles V and Phillip II was modelled after the lineage between David and Solomon. As Kevin Ingram demonstrates, the analogy between David/Solomon and Charles V/Phillip II, and the characterization of Philip II as prudent had religious concerns about peace and the Counter-reformation. The analogy was not only important because of the Jewish presence in the Iberian Peninsula, but also because it implicated the Dutch territories. Particularly, the characterization as "prudent" was important to the Dutch. Ingram mentions that: "Particularly

incensed by Charles V's recent clampdown on religious heresy, which had led to a spate of state executions, the Dutch wished to rehearse Prince Philip in his future duties to his northern subjects. They pointed out that as the warrior king David was succeeded by the prudent Solomon, so too the warrior Charles would be succeeded by his temperate son Philip, who would then rule, as the welcoming committee of the Flemish city of Tornay put it, 'in peace, honor and concord'" (130). These concerns of the Dutch subjects were transplanted in the construction of the Escorial, Phillip's greatest construction. When Ingram describes the façade of the Escorial basilica representing David and Salomon, he mentions that "David and Solomon were obvious allusions to Charles V and Philip II—the former a warrior king, whose bloodied hands precluded him from initiating the holy project; the latter, the prudent, pacific son chosen for the task. . . . Obviously, the implication was that Philip II completed this genealogical line of pious Jews" (138). The Escorial, as Philip II's greatest construction, represented a peaceful transfer of power from Charles V to Phillip II, and characterized Philip II as having qualities similar to the great Solomon.

Aspects of the Escorial and Phillip II as prudent not only spoke directly to the Dutch territories, but also expressed the vast Spanish empire with its American territories. According to Marie Tanner:

Philip also adopted Solomon's epithet "Prudent" as his own. His domination of the Americas reinforced this identity, for Columbus believed he had rediscovered there the fabled treasure of Solomon's Ophir. Others followed suit in perpetuating Philip's Solomonic identity, which became canonic through frequent literary repetition. So tenacious did it become that future Hapsburg rulers paid homage to Philip's precedence

over them in the Solomonic succession, while frequent architectural reminiscences of the model lent a similar authority to the Escorial's prestigious temple status. (168)

Both scholars bring about the prudent character that was expected of king Phillip II, keeping religious differences at peace in the vast Spanish empire. These expectations were reinforced in the construction of the Escorial where imagery would include parallel lineages such as David and Solomon as part of its architecture.

In this way, Velasco's description as prudent foreshadows the purpose of his arrival to Spain. The ruler of New Spain, the Viceroy, is a reminder to the spectators of Spain's prudent ruler, Phillip II. His newly acquired position as president of the Council of the Indies will come as a way of improving the Empire. The drainage is Velasco's legacy, an example of teamwork and ingenuity because people from different backgrounds came together to overcome the flooding. The drainage, in this way, is compared to the legacy of Philip II: the Escorial. If the Escorial was meant to transpose aspects of King Phillip II, then the drainage will also project Velasco's legacy as ruler. However, there may be another reason why Alarcón is praising Velasco. As Velasco was now the new head of the Council of the Indies, Alarcón may well be appealing to this political figure for self-interest.

Considering the reverence used to refer to the Viceroy I believe Alarcón is being strategic here in his quest of gaining a position in the Council of the Indies. Luis de Velasco II, also Marqués de Salinas, had served twice as Viceroy of New Spain and will later serve as Viceroy of Peru, two places referred to in *El semejante*. From 1610 to 1617, around the same time that Alarcón was composing this play, Luis de Velasco presided over the Council of the Indies. This is explicit in the description in the play, when Leonardo mentions that he arrived to Spain to

"presidir."⁹ It is highly possible that Alarcón was seeking sponsorship from a successful political figure by appealing to his heroic deeds. Furthermore, the Velascos had ancient familiar ties to the Ruiz de Alarcóns back in Mexico. As King mentions in her book, Velasco el Mozo was present for the marriage of Alarcón's parents, and he might have been in the position of aiding Alarcón in Madrid: "Si el objeto de este regreso a España era obtener un puesto en la burocracia del reino, seguramente Alarcón se estableció sin pérdida de tiempo en la corte, donde podía esperar una acogida amistosa de Luis de Velasco, testigo de boda de sus padres, más de cuarenta años antes, y presidente ahora del Consejo de Indias" (155). Hence, the reference to Mexico City not only considers the drainage as a Wonder of the World, but also serves to seek patronage from a political figure. As Alejandro García Reidy mentions: "en la Alta Edad Moderna la principal fuente legitimadora de los escritores no procedía del campo literario ni del mercado que lo sustentaba, sino de su vinculación al poder político a través de las dinámicas de mecenazgo y clientelismo" (47). It seems that aside from venerating the deeds of Velasco, Alarcón was writing theater to seek support from this known powerful figure. Velasco's positions as Viceroy characterize him as a transatlantic figure known to Alarcón. His position of power in Spain could have added stability to Alarcón's recent arrival to Madrid.¹⁰

⁹ Luis de Velasco had a few interactions with King Phillip II himself before being the president of the Council of the Indies. As Schwaller points out, Luis de Velasco, the younger, "left the University of Salamanca to join his brother as a member of Philips's entourage for the wedding to Queen Mary. He was inducted into the military-religious order of Santiago by the new King Philip himself, while resident in Brussels. He then traveled to Mexico to join his father" (47). However, his return to Spain in the play is used to highlight his new role as president of the Council of the Indies as it is mentioned it occurred after his services as Viceroy.

¹⁰ Interestingly, Velasco is not the only transatlantic character in the play that is praised. When Sancho describes the departure of the ship that would take his master and Leonardo to the Indies, he mentions that the ship was commanded by Lope de Díez Aux y Armendárez. He characterizes him as: "aquel a quien juzgan todos / por sus hechos y costumbres / digno que en cargos más

Finally, I would like to tie the associations between the Mexican drainage, Luis de Velasco, and King Philip II with Lope's *La octava maravilla*. It seems that Alarcón's inclusion of the Mexican drainage is in dialogue with Lope's piece, particularly in the descriptions of architecture and Wonders of the World. *La octava maravilla* is about Tomar, a King who wants to construct a temple to Mohamed after winning a battle. He invites various architects and each one describes different buildings worthy of recognition. Two of those architects in Lope's piece are Samuel and Leonardo: the former describes Solomon's Temple while the latter the Escorial.¹¹ Both include the same elements in their description. The play praises the Escorial as a Wonder of the World, while also praising political figures such as the Duke of Lerma and Philip III, among others. The elements that Solomon's Temple and the Escorial share in Lope's play are important in establishing a set of elements that Alarcón will repeat in *El semejante a sí mismo*.

In their descriptions of Solomon's Temple and the Escorial, Samuel and Leonardo mention: 1) the political figure behind the construction; 2) the year or historical event that marked the construction; 3) the location of the building; 4) the material used to construct the building; 5)

graves / nuestro santo Rey le ocupe, / pues tantas veces del mar / sujetó las inquietudes, / y ha hecho que flotas llenas / de plata a España tribute" (1003-1010). This is significant for two reasons: first it alludes to a historical figure with ties to Alarcón and that was in Spain at the time, just like Velasco. Second, it speaks of the relationship between center and periphery by mentioning the fleets of silver that Díez Aux y Armendárez comanded. King explains that Armendárez "Resultó un excelente servidor de la Corona . . . El hecho de que Velasco y Díez de Aux tuvieran fuertes lazos con el Nuevo Mundo predispuso sin duda a Alarcón a ver sus hazañas con especial orgullo" (71). Armendárez was also the *comandante* who was in charge of the fleet that brought Alarcón back to New Spain in 1608. Clearly, Alarcón is inserting strong references to the Indies along with historical people tied to his American background and at the same time seeking their support.

¹¹ It must be mentioned that the Escorial was commonly known as the eighth wonder in the late 16th and early 17th century. As Agustín Bustamante García writes about the Escorial: "Como Octava y única Maravilla comenzó a extenderse de inmediato la leyenda. Fray Lucas de Alaejos, en 1596, dedica una obra a la Octava Maravilla del Mundo laureada. Por supuesto, Sigüenza sigue el cauce y, tras él, Cabrera de Córdoba y hasta fray Lorenzo de San Nicolás" (643)

the time it took to build; and 6) information on the workers involved in the construction. The textual citations are as follows:

	Solomon's Temple	Escorial
Political figure:	De Salomón, y no admite competencia, porque es Dios el Arquitecto. ... (106-108)	Labrole el magno Filipo, rey universal de España, que hasta él ninguno tuvo su cetro de playa a playa. ... (175-178)
Year or event:	A tres mil ciento y dos años de la fundación primera del mundo le edificó, ... (111-113)	Dos vitorias que en su día tuvo este Rey contra Francia. ¹² ... (211-212)
Location:	fue el sitio donde David, en aquella pestilencia, vio el Ángel, ... (119-121)	Yace este templo que miras, famoso rey de Bengala, al pie de un excelso monte, cuyo nombre es Guadarrama, siete leguas de Madrid, ... (167-171)
Materials:	Piedra viva, y labrada de manera que no se oyó golpe en él ... pero fueron dentro y fuera cedro y láminas de oro con mil labores diversas. El pavimento era mármol, ... (127-137)	Mármoles blancos se sacan en las sierras de Filabres y en las de Estramoz y Navas, en Aracena y la orilla de Genil, junto a Granada, verdes, rojos, pardos, negros y de mil colores varias. ... (234-240)
Duration:	Siete años. ... (152)	Treinta y ocho años; si tarda cosa que la ve su dueño, ... (326-327)
Workers:	que para sola madera cortaban treinta mil hombres ... los que las piedras cortaban, ochenta mil hombres eran; ... (155-162)	A la fábrica ayudaron de Flandes y de Alemania artífices y pintores de los más raros de Italia. ... (241-244)

¹² Note that in this instance the event marks the cause of the construction. It references the victory at the Battle of St. Quentin in 1557 and this helps situate it historically, though the construction did not start until 1563.

The play includes more details about each construction, especially about the Escorial, but the above are some of the elements they share in common. It must also be mentioned that they do not follow the same order, but it seems that Lope gathered the important elements to describe these constructions.

If we compare these elements with Alarcón's description of the Mexican drainage as a Wonder of the World, we realize that Alarcón included the same features in *El semejante a sí mismo*. The political figure behind the drainage was Velasco (79-86), the year is mentioned as 1605 (65-67), the location is Mexico City (54-60), the material used was "cantería inmortal" (113-114), the construction took a little over three years (105-108), and one thousand five hundred laborers worked on it along with "cosmógrafos" and "alarifes" (89-92; 103-104). It is no coincidence that Alarcón includes the same elements in his play, following his successful contemporary. However, a close analysis of Lope's piece may suggest why Alarcón was interested in reproducing a vivid description of the Mexican drainage as a Wonder of the World with references to political figures. This would also explain how Alarcón's piece could be interpreted as a form of self-fashioning in his new home Madrid.

Lope's play glorifies the Escorial, king Philip II, his son Philip III, and the political figures such as the Duke of Lerma. In her study of Lope's piece, María Nogués Bruno alludes multiple times to Lope's attempt to appeal to the powerful figures in this play for support: "Lo que hace Lope es alabar a los personajes que en esos momentos estaban en el poder, concretamente, por las fechas en que fue escrita esta comedia, serían algunos de ellos los criados del duque de Lerma" (480); "En el texto encontramos dos verdaderos repertorios de grandes y títulos y aunque en la obra evidentemente no vertebran el conjunto dramático, sí que son de gran importancia . . . Estas

relaciones significativas junto al resto de las alabanzas reflejadas anteriormente revelan una indudable intención apologética que subyace de igual modo en las comedias consideradas "genealógicas" (480); and finally she concludes:

la comedia recoge una serie de hechos históricos fijándolos en clave: el valor simbólico del monasterio de El Escorial, el elogio a la familia real, el elogio a los Grandes y títulos de España y el elogio a la propia organización del Estado, que no debemos perder de vista. La obra entera puede considerarse, por tanto, como una exaltación a la monarquía hispánica. La comedia que Lope lleva a las tablas se puede definir como un texto con una finalidad propagandística que en algún momento y en algunas obras asumió su teatro; se evidencia asimismo su carácter político. . . . el Fénix en esta comedia buscaba sin lugar a dudas el favor de la nobleza y de altas instancias públicas. (481)

Lope de Vega uses this play to seek upward mobility by appealing to the political figures mentioned. Following Bruerton's dates of *El semejante a sí mismo* as 1610?-1616, it is possible to place it after *La octava maravilla* (1609). Therefore, it may be the case that Alarcón is following Lope de Vega in style when it comes to describing a Wonder of the World, not only to emulate Lope de Vega but also as a strategy of upward mobility. By appealing to political figures, both playwrights, Lope and Alarcón, attempt to succeed in the literary competition among authors.

As mentioned before, Alarcón's praise is significant because he characterizes the Viceroy as "prudente" and names his presiding century as "siglo dorado" calling him a new "Licurgo". Prudence as a characteristic would reverberate with King Philip II, known as the Prudent King, therefore the association between both "Wonders" is stronger. Finally, Alarcón concludes the description of the drainage with those involved "cosmógrafos y alarifes", the length "tres leguas"

and the time it took to construct "poco más de tres años". The correspondence between both plays, and the shift of political power, permits us to view Alarcón's piece as a response to Lope's. Here it is important to reconsider Leonardo and don Juan's reaction to the Mexican drainage in *El semejante a sí mismo*. Leonardo seems to suggest that the notion of an eighth Wonder of the World has lost its uniqueness because everyone likes to add one to the list: "Ya la fama cuenta mil, / porque a las siete del mundo / no hay quien la suya no aumente". Don Juan responds to Leonardo mentioning the Escorial: "Al Escorial justamente / le dan lugar sin segundo". Don Juan considers that the Escorial "justamente" is worthy to be considered as a world wonder. Contrast this to his response after hearing about the Mexican drainage: "Tan insigne maravilla / muy justamente se alaba / por la primera del mundo". While he considered the Escorial justly as the first wonder, he will change his mind saying that "justamente" the Mexican drainage is the first. Although Lope's piece praises Philip II, Phillip III and the Duke of Lerma, among others, Alarcón is strategic in praising Velasco considering his new position as president of the Council of the Indies. He is also associating Velasco with King Phillip II. While Leonardo's words of praise for Velasco also praise the Mexican drainage, and show his knowledge of Mexico City, he suffers an accident while on the ship that was to take him to the Indies. As such, he fails to receive the inheritance his friend don Juan had asked of him. The Indies, in this way, are represented as a place of prudent political figures, but also as a distant place marked by dangers when one travels to and from the continent.

Leonardo's accident is proof of the perils at Sea when travelling to the Indies. Upon his return, he describes his accident:

cuando llega ya la fatal hora
de cesar mi viaje, una mañana,
al tiempo que el crepúsculo a la aurora
tiende alfombras que pise de oro y grana,

una pena, cruel despertadora,
cambia en espinas la mullida lana,
y viendo que conmigo no me valgo,
huyo de mí y a la cubierta salgo (2691-2698)

In an ornate manner, Leonardo describes a morning in his voyage. Once he is stands on the ship he decides to sit by the edge of the ship:

Siéntome al bordo, solitario amante,
las piernas a la mar, la vista al cielo;
da un balance la nao, y en un instante
todo el costado entrega al blando hielo:
yo triste, inadvertido navegante,
que este súbito daño no recelo,
como ni de un cordel estaba asido,
caigo, y soy en las ondas sumergido (2699-2706)

As an “inadvertido navegante” he is not alert to his surroundings because he is preoccupied with other matters. This results in his slip from the ship and his consequential fall to the water. While struggling for his life in the water, he calls to God who responds with a *fragata*:

Sin esperanza de remedio humano,
con votos y promesas todavía
apelo a Dios, cuya piadosa mano
a darme vida una fragata envía,
que de las islas pasa al suelo hispano:
venme, y llegan los nobles pasajeros;
cógenme, vuelvo a España, y vengo a veros (2724-2730)

He interprets his safety as a result of his plea to God. He confirms his devotion at the very end of the play where his beloved Julia gives her hand to his enemy don Diego: "Yo no lo puedo impedir, / puesto que en la mar soberbia / de religión hice voto, / si Dios me librase della" (2941-2944).

It seems that his unfortunate accident in the ship parallels his lost love for Julia, as she unites with don Diego. But why would Alarcón have this friendly character fail at receiving and bringing back the inheritance? While the accident serves to illustrate the dangers of travelling at

Sea to the Indies, and therefore, the inheritance did not reach Spain, it may also parallel the failure of don Juan to disguise himself as his cousin and trick doña Ana. Leonardo's return occurs toward the end of the play when the truth about the whole disguise is revealed. Hence, the lack of the inheritance could be interpreted as a form of punishment toward don Juan for his desire to deceive doña Ana and his father, though it is also unfair that Leonardo suffered part of the consequences as his beloved Julia marries don Diego. Leonardo, the character who is knowledgeable of the Mexican drainage and the friend who will attempt to travel to the Indies to carry the inheritance for his friend don Juan, is the misfortunate character who suffers an accident on his way to the Indies. The accident could represent don Juan's failed attempt of his *enredo*, but it is more than coincidental that this misfortune happens to the character with close ties to the Indies. Therefore, the accident could also be interpreted as the consequence of the distance between the Indies and Spain, and the inheritance would be the cost of such peril. Similarly, another inheritance is lost due to the Sea in the following play, *La industria y la suerte*.

La industria y la suerte

La industria y la suerte, as the name implies, is a play about two opposing forces that are represented by two characters: don Juan and Arnesto. Both compete for the love of Blanca, but each represents the other's opposite. Don Juan is poor but of noble character and lineage while Arnesto is a rich merchant with big influence in Seville yet lacks nobility. Arnesto interrupts the love between Blanca and don Juan, using his money and influence to try to lure Blanca into marriage. The union between don Juan and Blanca is also disturbed by Sol, don Juan's cousin. She is in love with don Juan, and both had tried to marry in the past, but after he loses an inheritance

from the Indies due to a shipwreck he finds himself without the means to carry out the marriage. Beltrán, Blanca's father, is an authoritative figure and represents Sevillian norms. His views are revealed when he advises Blanca to marry Arnesto as she would keep her nobility and gain monetary capital. Arnesto, however, falls from a horse, representing his lack of *caballero* qualities, and from there on is disfavored by fortune. The protagonist don Juan, on the other hand, enjoys the outcomes of a series of events to his advantage. Through some work of luck, and a trick of *enredo*, don Juan ends up with Blanca while Arnesto is forced to marry Sol.

La industria y la suerte has similar elements as *El semejante a sí mismo*. Both are believed to be early plays of Alarcón and are situated in Seville. Furthermore, both involve an inheritance from the Indies that never reaches Spain. However, in *La industria* no character suffers an accident on a ship. Rather a ship suffers the consequences, as the inheritance never reaches Spain because of a shipwreck. The reference to the Indies is through this shipwreck and has implications in the plot of the play. In addition, Alarcón's self-fashioning will involve literary figures and rhetorical devices in *La industria y la suerte*. Likely, Alarcón is preoccupied in projecting his literary career within the literary circles of Madrid with this piece.

The few studies that center on *La industria y la suerte* show a variety of interpretations and topics. In his analysis, Antonio Castro Leal considers this play one of Alarcón's first and states:

En esta comedia empiezan ya a diferenciarse, no sin vacilaciones, los caracteres: el padre, el comerciante, el galán, la mujer que ama y es correspondida, y la que ama y es desdeñada.

Un poco más de habilidad para disimular los nudos de la trama y un mayor dominio y consistencia en la concepción de los caracteres y Alarcón habrá entrado al terreno en que podía dar mejores pruebas de su talento. (*Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* 105)

The critic speaks of Alarcón's ability to develop characters but states that this play does not quite show all of Alarcón's potential, relegating the play to an inferior position in comparison to other works by the playwright. Willard F. King favors the play over *El semejante a sí mismo*, and says: "es una comedia de enredo más convencional, inteligentemente concebida y estructurada sobre la oposición polar entre los dos pretendientes de Doña Blanca" (143). The structure and the development of characters are qualities that King praises in this play. The special attention given to characters extends to most of Alarconian theater and has led some critics to believe that the protagonists are masked versions of Alarcón.¹³ Very little has been written about *La industria y la suerte* in general, giving it less merit than others such as *La verdad sospechosa* and *Las paredes oyen*. The resolution and the characterization of don Juan de Luna, however, beg to be analyzed in a new light, one that delves into the concept of diegetic space in theater.

Don Juan is special because he is presented as an outsider of Sevillian life, although his origin is never explicitly mentioned. The play itself contrasts values from Madrid and Seville, placing both cities as centers of Spanish culture. Of particular importance is the reference to the Indies because it involves a shipwreck. The shipwreck is significant for two reasons: it influenced the possible marriage between don Juan and his cousin Sol, and it could be viewed as an example of the perils of the sea. The first reason implies a study of the notion of marriage in the play and the particular relationship between don Juan, Blanca, and Sol. Their names will be used in a series

¹³ Lola Josa comments about Alarcón's characters: "el continuo substrato de estoicismo en sus obras hace que la trama se tense por la presión de dobles fuerzas, que acaban por agrupar al elenco de personajes en enredosos y embusteros, o bien, en ejemplo de una moral estoica. A este último grupo pertenecen, especialmente, los galanes principales —a menudo, máscaras del propio Alarcón— por la conducta que adoptan ante las adversidades que siempre les obliga a sufrir nuestro dramaturgo. Pensemos en el Garci Ruiz de Alarcón de *Los favores del mundo*, en el Juan de Luna de *La industria y la suerte*, o en el Don Juan de *Las paredes oyen*" (*El arte dramático* 15-6).

of astronomical metaphors and coinage that invites further analysis on their characterization and Alarcón's self-fashioning. The second inserts this play in the literary tradition of shipwreck and could explain why the ocean may be an impediment to riches. As such, Alarcón's reference to the Indies has significant implications in the interpretation of the play.

I would like to start with a comparison of places between Seville and Madrid. If in *El semejante a sí mismo* the discourse of Wonders of the World was used to compare places, here manners and customs will be contrasted between both cities. This contrast of values will displace don Juan. As aforementioned, don Juan is contrasted with Arnesto, a rich merchant with a Sevillian lifestyle. It is apparent that don Juan has no power or influence in Seville, nor is his noble blood of any advantage in this context. Some of the first characters that allude to don Juan as poor and out-of-place are the servants of the *comedia*. On the one hand, Jimeno, don Juan's servant and *gracioso*, alludes to don Juan's poverty. When contrasting don Juan with his rival Arnesto, Jimeno states: "Señor, si quieres ser rico, / en Justino o Federico / trueca el nombre de don Juan, / que la fortuna crüel / siempre al noble aborreció" (26-30). The servant suggests foreign names to change his master's luck. Adriana Ontiveros Valdés elaborates on the foreign names with some historical context: "El nombre de Justino es de origen latino, y el de Federico es germano, lo que quizá sea una alusión a los banqueros genoveses y los fúcares (Fugger) alemanes" (32). The suggestion of foreign names clearly speaks of the influence and power external investors and merchants had in Seville at the time, and therefore, show an anxiety towards foreignness.¹⁴ It is ironic that the *criado*

¹⁴ As Antonio Domínguez Ortiz writes: "The case of Seville deserves special mention because it was so unique. It could boast no great middle-class tradition, which explains why most of the merchants we come across there were from the north of Spain or overseas. . . For all that we cannot help remarking a certain lack of self-confidence, which may stem from the absence of any

would suggest foreign names to don Juan, yet it evinces a sense of distance for don Juan: though his name is Hispanic he is immersed in a cosmopolitan city governed by commercial exchange.

On the other hand, Sancho, Arnesto's servant, alludes to the nakedness of don Juan: "¡Que quiera estorbar tu intento / este desnudo!" (3-4). *Desnudo* here points to don Juan's poverty, lacking proper clothes, but this characterization also implies a sense of honesty: there cannot be anything "up his sleeve".¹⁵ Though don Juan is poor, the play alludes to his noble heritage repeatedly as to highlight his rich morality. Following these characterizations don Juan is bare and unveiled, lacking the respect of his opponent's *criado*. As such, there is something genuine about don Juan, yet he is out of place.

Reference to don Juan's displacement is not limited to the servants' words or his physical state of being. Don Beltrán shows how out of place don Juan is when he orients him to the norms of Seville. When don Juan and Arnesto are about to duel in the first act, don Beltrán intervenes. Their interaction is worth repeating here:

BELTRÁN. ¿Qué es esto, don Juan? ¿Qué es esto?
¿Sabes que estás deste modo
a todo este pueblo opuesto?
Y digo a este pueblo todo,
pues todo lo manda Arnesto.
JUAN. Sé que yo soy caballero,
y cuando el lugar entero
a Arnesto agradar intente,

tradition or an insufficiency of capital, or the great risks of a traffic which was as much subject to the caprice of the authorities as of nature" (140).

¹⁵ Covarrubias defines "desnudar" as "quitar el vestido ... Desnudamente, claramente, sin velo, ni cubierta", giving a sense of transparency (*Tesoro* 461). Truthfulness characterized by nakedness could also be observed in contemporary depictions of Truth, such as Jan Collaert II's print *Veritas Temporis Filia* or Hans Holbein the Younger's *Time Bringing Truth Into Light*, where Truth is represented as the daughter of Cronos. Truth appears naked and is portrayed as the daughter of Time. For the motif of *veritas filia temporis* in Early Modern English theater, see Dawn Massey's "Veritas filia Temporis': Apocalyptic Polemics in the Drama of the English Reformation."

es un hombre solamente
 fabricado de dinero.
 ¿Qué tengo que saber más?
 BELTRÁN. Más tienes, te certifico,
 que en la tierra donde estás,
 es el linaje del rico
 el que a todos deja atrás.
 No se opone a la riqueza,
 si es pobre, aquí la nobleza,
 que si he de decir verdad,
 dineros son calidad
 y la pobreza es vileza.
 Mira, no te desenfrenes
 fiado a tu sangre noble,
 porque él, si a contienda vienes,
 más amigos tendrá al doble
 que gotas de sangre tienes.
 En la corte son fautores
 aquellos grandes señores,
 con razón, de la nobleza,
 que como en ellos se empieza,
 defiéndenla sus autores.
 Mas como en este hemisfero
 es el uso más válido
 tratar y buscar dinero,
 a todos es preferido
 aquel que lo halla primero.
 Y así, mientras pobre fueres,
 el ardiente orgullo doma,
 y pues que tan cuerdo eres,
 mientras en Roma estuvieres,
 vive a la usanza de Roma.
 Perdóname, que aunque lejos
 de culparme no estarás,
 que yo te dé estos consejos
 sin pedillos, ya sabrás
 la licencia de los viejos. (240-284)

When he contrasts Seville to Madrid, Beltrán's speech alludes to a lack of consensus of traditions and norms within the Spanish Empire. He mentions the different values that exist in both cities and advises don Juan to follow the norms of Seville. Beltrán's way of giving advice is strategic as it not only explains the setting of the play to the spectator but also instructs on the values of Seville.

In this way, Beltrán's words highlight don Juan's out-of-placeness. He refers to Juan as someone not familiar with the society of Seville and feels obligated to orient him. He first questions don Juan's actions, and by contrasting honor to money, he illustrates how they go against the norms of Seville. Don Juan attempts to justify his actions stating he is a "caballero" thereby defending his honor against "un hombre fabricado de dinero", represented by Arnesto. Such attempt could be understood as a way of defending his nobility, although he is poor, from Arnesto. As a mercantile city, however, Seville was run under different norms from those supported by Madrid. Beltrán makes sure to inform don Juan that money is the motor behind status, not nobility: "dineros son calidad / y la pobreza es vileza". He contrasts Seville with Madrid in his observation, and advises Juan to stick to the norms of Seville while he is there. As such, don Juan seems to be in the periphery of this society, knowledgeable of Spanish ancient notions of nobility but ignorant of the new practices in Sevillian life.¹⁶ The disconnection of don Juan is paralleled in Beltrán's distinction between the practices of Seville and Madrid.

Beltrán's emphasis on the description of Seville also displaces don Juan. In his discourse, Beltrán refers to Seville in diverse ways as if to differentiate it from other places: he first refers to it as "este pueblo", then "la tierra en donde estás", then "este hemisfero", and finally he metaphorically compares it to Rome "en Roma estuvieres". Beltrán's stress on distinguishing Seville

¹⁶ Serafín González considers don Juan as a marginal figure, albeit in theatrical terms. He states: "Parece darse, en la primera de las comedias del grupo que hemos mencionado, *La industria y la suerte*, una imagen poco espectacular del aspecto heroico del noble protagonista, quien no aparece ni siquiera como el personaje dramáticamente fuerte . . . Así pues, . . . le es arrebatado al héroe el papel protagónico, o al menos le es disputado, y esto hace que el héroe se encuentre participando en una situación que no sólo no le es favorable, sino que lo aleja del mundo ideal y lo ubica crudamente en la realidad. El personaje ocupa un lugar marginal o, al menos, tiene que compartir y disputar su espacio dramático" (19).

leaves the spectator to assume that Juan may not be from Seville. Furthermore, the contrast between Madrid and Seville and the repetitive use of the verb "estar" in reference to don Juan may also imply that don Juan is a recent visitor. Though this is never confirmed in the play, it is of interest that don Juan is expecting an inheritance from the Indies. This is significant as it may lead to characterize don Juan as a person with ties to the Indies. Here, as in *El semejante a sí mismo* with regard to Leonardo, we have a character associated with the Indies that is not favored by fortune.

If don Juan seems foreign to Sevillian customs and this, along with his poverty, displaces him from the centers of privilege, it is worth noting that his out-of-placeness could be attributed, in part, to his lost inheritance from the Indies. The reference to the Indies occurs during a conversation with Sol. Filled with jealousy after discovering don Juan is pursuing Blanca, she will remind don Juan about their initial plan to marry:

SOL. Mas si por haber tratado
los dos nuestro casamiento,
justamente el pensamiento
toda el alma te ha entregado,
viendo burlar mi esperanza,
esto que he hecho, traidor,
no es solicitar tu amor
sino culpar tu mudanza.

...

JUAN. Tratámonos de casar,
tratamos, yo lo confieso,
si me quisiste por eso,
la suerte debes culpar,
pues tu divina belleza
prohíbe a mi voluntad,
por ser nuestra calidad
igual con nuestra pobreza.

SOL. Cuando empezaste a tratallo,
¿cómo en eso no miraste?

JUAN. Sí miré, mas no ignoraste
que entonces, para intentallo,
toda la esperanza mía

estuvo solo fundada
en la herencia que la armada
de las Indias me traía.
Hízola un furioso viento
tesoro inútil del mar,
con que fue fuerza mudar,
si no el amor, el intento.
Que nuestros deudos han sido
deste parecer, de suerte
que aun el hablarte y el verte
estorbarme han pretendido.
Así que, a no poder más,
mudo intento; si pudieres
haz lo mismo, que si quieres,
mujer eres y podrás. (441-492)

Don Juan is clear in acknowledging that his poverty prohibits their union. When they tried to marry, don Juan's intention solely relied on the inheritance he was supposed to receive. His newly acquired money would complement their nobility and make their marriage possible. However, after the shipwreck, their "deudos" have prohibited their interaction, as he is poor. The inheritance from the Indies was don Juan's hope to fully integrate into the social life as a married noble man with money. Because of the shipwreck, don Juan is out-of-place.

The shipwreck broke the possible marriage between don Juan and Sol, so it is important to analyze how marriage is portrayed in the play. Don Beltrán, as the figure of authority in Sevillian practices, also describes his conception of marriage when counseling Blanca. He favors Arnesto because she already is noble, and considering Arnesto is rich, he would be providing her with a balanced increase in wealth and nobility:

BELTRÁN. En algo, Blanca, ha de torcerse el gusto,
la ley guardando y la razón siguiendo
de lo decente, provechoso y justo
BLANCA. Hacer tu voluntad solo pretendo,
mas piénsalo mejor, y por ventura
entenderás lo mismo que yo entiendo.

Por ser tan rico, Arnesto me procura
merecer la opinión, yo la confieso,
mas no hay hacienda en mercader segura.

Sin medida es su crédito, mas eso
es la misma ocasión de su rüina,
pues a gastar le obliga con exceso.

Y si la hacienda a su intención te inclina,
¿el cielo no te dio también riqueza?
¿Adónde el ciego desear camina?

No trueques a dinero la nobleza,
que esa ha de ser en un hidalgo pecho
última apelación de la pobreza.

...

BELTRÁN. Sí quedo, mas harete, no imperioso
padre sino amigable consejero,
Blanca, un advertimiento provechoso.

Algunas casas nobles, considero,
al señoril dosel entronizadas,
que dellas fue el autor solo el dinero.

Las edades presentes y pasadas
togas, armas y púrpuras sin cuenta
han visto con dinero conquistadas.

No puedo yo negarte que la renta
que me dejaron, hija, mis pasados,
con honra y con descanso me sustenta;
mas pasa de los padres los cuidados
el amor de los hijos ambicioso
a más que a conservarse en sus estados.

Si con mediana hacienda noble esposo
te doy, ¿qué te adelanto? ¿Qué acreciento
a tu heredado nombre generoso?

Si da copioso fruto el casamiento,
¿no es la disminución más evidente,
dividida tu hacienda, que el aumento?

Así no ha de admirarte que yo intente,
siendo tan rico Arnesto, su esperanza
cumplir, porque tu casa se acreciento.

Si nobleza a la tuya igual no alcanza,
tampoco a su riqueza iguala alguna:
lo que una baja, sube otra balanza.

Si dices que es sujeta a la fortuna,
¿cuál mira de su imperio exceptuada
el ámbito del cielo de la luna?

Piénsalo, Blanca, bien, que aunque me agrada

tu honrosa presunción, quisiera verte
menos resuelta y más considerada. (1873-1926)

These *tercetos* are significant for two reasons: on the one hand the use of *tercetos* in theater at the time was for serious matters, and on the other hand, the opinion of Beltrán is explained in these verses.¹⁷ He is consistent with his previous interaction with don Juan: money drives his preference for Arnesto. Beltrán offers a balance between nobility and monetary wealth: "lo que una baja, sube otra balanza". He explains to Blanca that by favoring Arnesto she will add monetary wealth to her noble heritage, whereas if she were to marry a poor but noble don Juan, she would not add any benefit to the family. He gives this advice led by reason to what is "decente, provechoso y justo" and against what is of "gusto". Even though it would be of *gusto* for Blanca to be with don Juan, Beltrán advises her to suppress that desire and instead think in the long-term for that is *justo*. As such, Beltrán's main idea is to keep their nobility and increment their wealth, and the marriage would make that possible. This balance is one of the definitions of marriage in this play. Blanca disagrees with this viewpoint. Her intervention here is important because she values nobility more than money since money is subject to luck. She is opposed to equating nobility with money, and this will be key later in my analysis when she is referred as a *blanca*, the *vellón* that causes controversy in early modern Spain. I will discuss this metaphor later in the study, but for now the viewpoint of marriage is key in Beltrán's words. This understanding of marriage explains why the shipwreck changed the course of events in don Juan's bad luck and out-of-placeness.

Given the importance of the storm that sunk don Juan's inheritance, I would like to devote some space to the analysis of shipwreck and other dangers in the sea. From a general standpoint,

¹⁷ According to Lope de Vega the *tercetos* were "para cosas graves" and here Beltrán uses them to set his daughter straight (*Arte nuevo* 312).

the shipwreck could serve as a reminder of a fragmented empire and the immense distance of travel between the two continents. This would add to the already existent comparison between Madrid and Seville in the play, adding spatial perspective. Madrid and Seville, though different cultural centers, are within a short distance from each other. Furthermore, travelling to and from each city does not entail great perils. The Indies, however, pose a different challenge considering there is an Ocean in between both territories. When a Spanish fleet crosses the Ocean it is susceptible to pirating or shipwreck, thereby affecting travel from these two points.

Aside from a sense of distance, the association between the sea and the Indies also influenced cultural production at the time. The concept of storm and shipwreck has been interpreted as a questioning of the notion of empire in at least two ways: through the literary tradition and through historical documents. On the one hand, shipwrecks recall the chronicles of the Indies. According to Fernández Mosquera, shipwrecks are a constant topic in the chronicles of the Indies: "Y es el naufragio uno de los elementos esenciales en casi todas las crónicas cuando obligadamente está presente un viaje" (46). The possibility of shipwreck and losing everything in the ship is inseparable from the experience of travelling on a ship. Perhaps one of the clearest examples is Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca's diary that chronicles his shipwreck along with his experiences in the American continent.

On the other hand, storms and shipwrecks are particularly present in the colonial literary tradition in works such as Ercilla's *Araucana*. Alarcón seems to sum in two verses—"Hízola un furioso viento / tesoro inútil del mar"— what Alonso Ercilla describes in his fifteenth canto of the *Araucana*: "Ábrese el cielo, el mar brama alterado, / gime el soberbio viento embravecido; / . . . / y la poca esperanza quebrantada / por el furioso viento arrebatada" (454-458). Ercilla is much more

elaborate in his description of the storm and shipwreck, but both authors characterize the "viento" as "furioso" and describe a misfortune at sea. The travel to the Indies is seen as a risk fueled by the pursuit of riches in Ercilla. The pursuit of riches and shipwreck as a danger are also present in other literary works related to empire. For example, in the Iberian literary tradition the relationship between empire and shipwreck is seen in Adamastor's threat found in Camões Os *Lusiads*: "Year by year your fleets will meet / Shipwrecks, with calamities so combined / That death alone will bring you peace of mind" (106). Just like the old man in canto IV, Adamastor warns men of their greed and pursuit of riches. In Iberian literary tradition, the shipwreck stands as the dangers of greed and the pursuit of riches.

Despite the rich literary tradition associated with shipwreck, it is important to acknowledge that references to the sea also have implications regarding Spain's *Armada*. Considering the sea not only as the space of merchandise and transportation of riches, but also as a space of combat, a shipwreck may also represent the failure of a strong thalassocratic power. The embarrassment of the Spanish Armada in the late 16th century is an example of a deficiency within the Spanish Empire. The naval failure opens the possibility of interpreting the problems at sea as yet another sign of weakness of the Empire. Josiah Blackmore has written about shipwreck narrative as a disruption of Empire and comments: "The shipwreck text, one of breakage, rupture, and disjunction, precludes the possibility of a redemptive reading, and in this messy openness presents the greatest blow to the predetermined success of national expansion and its textual analogue" (xxi). In his book, he explains that if "the ship is a symbol of empire and the full expression of maritime supremacy, of the uncontested ship of taste, a shipwreck represents the wreck to trade and empire and the threat to thalassocratic might" (54). I would argue that Alarcón's *La industria y*

la suerte dialogues with the previous associations of traveling the sea. Although the account of the shipwreck is short, it has strong effects in the plot. In the play, don Juan does not receive his inheritance, thereby losing his fortune to the sea. Socially, don Juan's poverty prevents him from marrying Sol and Blanca. Characters such as Beltrán and Arnesto disfavor him. These circumstances are the result of the shipwreck.

Shipwreck is an example of misfortune at sea, and don Juan responds in a responsible and valiant way: he will take the initiative and confront it. He first expresses this resolve when speaking to his servant Jimeno: "Mil confusiones me anegan. / Aconséjame, Jimeno, / que yo entre celos y amor / imito ya al marinero, / que con los fieros combates / de las olas y los vientos, / sin fuerzas tiene el timón / y sin sentido el gobierno" (1189-1195). It is significant that he compares himself to a "marinero" and is confronted with "fieros combates de las olas y los vientos" as if to reference the cause of the shipwreck. His motivation to have a greater power over his destiny, then, is reflective of his response to his lost inheritance. This comes at a significant point in the plot, considering that after consulting with Jimeno, don Juan will speak to Blanca to straighten their relationship and receive an honest answer. In their conversation don Juan realizes that Blanca must have confused him and his actions for Arnesto. The confusion leads don Juan to reach Blanca again: "Habladme claras razones, / basta que vuestro desdén / me mate, sin que también / me atormenten confusiones" (1501-1506). Blanca responds explaining that she confused don Juan for Arnesto, and therefore thought don Juan was a coward. It is after don Juan's will to action that he is able to defy destiny and give direction to his life, leaving his bad luck behind. During this first attempt, a series of metaphors related to the three characters' names (don Juan de Luna, Sol, and Blanca) and astronomy will serve as a method for Alarcón to self-fashion as a poet.

The series of metaphors need to be contextualized within the literary activity at the time. The sources of metaphors are two: astronomy and currency. The play on names is described as an example of great poetry by the characters themselves when compared to what other poets have written. Arnesto is the first to reference these symbolic onomastics when talking to Blanca before they all meet at Sol's house. He says: "Aun bien que estima / de suerte al Sol de una prima / cierta Luna en que os miráis, / que es fuerza que allá entendáis / en sus aspectos mi enima" (1094-1098). Arnesto is trying to warn Blanca about the love history between don Juan and Sol. Sancho, his servant, regards Arnesto as "discreto" and "agudo" after he hears the play on names (1109-1110).

Blanca will return to the play of names using astronomy. When they meet in Sol's house, Blanca associates the three characters' names with planets (Luna, Sol, and Blanca): "Señor don Juan, siempre vi / que para subir al cielo / del sol, es fuerza encontrar / el de la luna primero. / Y viendo la noche / correr tanto, dije luego: / a la conjunción del sol / irá a parar como a centro" (1215-1222). Blanca, here, is using astral onomastics to figure out if don Juan is interested in Sol. Their conversation is as follows:

DON JUAN. No corriera así la luna,
a no ser forzada a ello,
que ese cielo, primer móvil,
la obligó a cursos violentos.

BLANCA. ¿A dónde vais?

DON JUAN. A serviros.

BLANCA. Mirad que sois luna, y temo
que se ha de eclipsar el sol,
don Juan, si delante os llevo.

DON JUAN. Quisiera más una Blanca.¹⁸ (1223-1231)

¹⁸ Agustín Millares Carlo interprets this "Blanca" as the *vellón* coin in his edition of *La industria y la suerte*.

Don Juan is represented as fickle and changeable as the moon, so Blanca asks him where he is headed, what he desires. When he says he would follow Blanca, she cleverly answers that if this is so, he will eclipse the Sun (Sol). This astral imagery will leave don Juan perplexed in his conversation with Jimeno. During this conversation, Jimeno will respect Blanca's style, echoing Sancho's high praise for the "allegory":

JIMENO. ¡Con qué estilo tan discreto,
con qué cifras tan agudas,
con qué equívocos tan nuevos
te ha sabido dar favores
y de Sol pedirte celos!
¡Con qué términos tan propios,
tan breves y verdaderos
prosiguió la alegoría
de la luna, el sol y el cielo!
No como algún presumido,
en cuyos humildes versos
hay cisma de alegorías
y confusión de concetos,
retruécano de palabras,
tiquimiqui y embeleco,
patarata del oído
y engañifa del ingenio.
Que bien mirado, señor,
es música de instrumentos,
que suena y no dice nada. (1248-1267)

Jimeno goes beyond praise for the allegory. He contrasts this style with another of a poet who remains nameless. The style is characterized as "discreto", "agudo", "nuevo", "propio", "breve", and "verdadero". These characterizations stand in opposition to a poet who is a "presumido" and his poetry is characterized as "humilde", "cisma de alegorías", "confusión", "retruécano", "tiquimiqui y embeleco", "patarata", "engañifa del ingenio", and as not saying much. Though Jimeno never mentions the name of the poet, Millares Carlo suggests that it could be in reference to Lope de

Vega (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Obras* 932). Regardless of who this poet is, it is significant that Alarcón here is providing the spectator, or reader, with an opinion on contemporary literary styles.

Alarcón, clearly, is favoring the *conceptismo* style of literature, and *conceptismo* is characterized by the multiple meanings of a single word at play in the text. Here, the three characters represent the moon, sun, and the sky. However, if we consider that "blanca" could also refer to currency, we add another layer to the play on onomastics. This is supported by Jimeno who, before praising Blanca's poetic skills, says: "¡Bien haya quien te parió, / y bien haya el monedero / que supo batir a oscuras / blanca de tan alto precio!" (1241-1244). In this manner, Blanca does not only represent the sky in the "allegory", but she also comes to represent the infamous *vellón* coin. This reference is key because it involves the Indies and empire as it questions the "might" of the Spanish Empire.

Elvira Vilches has analyzed the use of gold and money from the New World in Early Modern Spain. She elaborates on the influence of the *blanca*, or *vellón*, coin in the Spanish economy and its relationship to the Americas:

With the acquisition of a great empire in America, Castilians began to think of themselves as a chosen people divinely favored with wealth and a global empire. Royal advisers and early New World historiography repeated this providential trope throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The popular imagination returned to the tantalizing exoticism and glittering treasures that "the economy of the marvelous" circulated in order to represent the Americas. The Indies not only epitomized wealth and luxury, but also embodied the idea of a paradise where it was possible for anyone to acquire fame and fortune. During the financial and political crises of the seventeenth century, the dealings of

the "economy of the marvelous" are present in the literary figuration of the Indies as a means to evoke the illusion of wealth so that the *vellón*, the intentionally overvalued copper coin, can shine as if it were gold. (94)

The *vellón* stood as a challenge to Spanish economy. It changed the rules of the game, whereas in the past the value of a coin was based on the metal composition, now a coin's worth was based on abstract value. Vilches later confirms how the Americas contributed to the economic crisis:

The gold and silver parity had remained 10 to 1 for centuries before the discovery of the Americas. The increase in the supply of silver destabilized this ratio by reducing the relative price of silver in terms of gold. The immense quantities of silver produced by American mines outdistanced gold production worldwide, thus causing a drop in the price of silver. The parity ratio between these two metals changed from 10 to 1 to approximately 15 to 1 by the middle of the sixteenth century. Controversy over the infamous *vellón* also accentuated the overvaluation of gold. (318)

The exploitation of bullion from the Americas helped promote the image of the Americas as a source of wealth. Simultaneously, it would also represent the destabilizing economy as Vilches points out. I believe Alarcón is aware of this double-sided coin, and decides to nuance the view towards the Indies. While the Indies could be seen as the source of wealth, they could also be the cause of an unstable economy.

The reference to Blanca as a coin in the play is more revealing when we consider how the *vellón* was viewed as a menace to honor. A clear example is in Alonso Carranza's *Aiustamientos* (1629), which includes Tomás de Cardona's vision of the problem with the *vellón* coin. Cardona implies a hierarchy between metals similar to that of honor. Gold and silver were portrayed as

noble while the *vellón* is seen as the destabilizer that breaks the hierarchy: "i digno de remedio el agravio que el oro i plata han padecido i padecen en la defraudacion de las costas, ià bien enterado del caso, tratè de venir a representar a la Magestad del Rei Phelipe III padre de V. Magestad, el dicho agravio por el año de 1602, quando se dio doblado valor a la moneda de vellon" (fol. 7 v.). Furthermore, he associates value with the place of origin of the metals: "los daños que resultaban del desprecio i vilipendio del oro i plata, frutos de España, i del excelsivo, è indebido valor dado a la moneda de cobre, metal estrangero de las partes del Norte" and "el gran daño que causa a V.M. i a su estendido Imperio el vilipendio que padecen los nobilissimos i primeros metales de oro i plata, i exterminada del comercio la perniciosa moneda de vellon" (fol. 7 v.). These descriptions of "agravios" and "vilipendio" created by the *vellón* against gold and silver use the same vocabulary as when honor is questioned among people. It is particularly interesting that this "vilipendio" is also associated with foreigners and the vast empire, adding to a sense of center and periphery. Gold and silver are "nobilissimos" making them honorable while the foreign influence have corrupted them.

In literature, the debate around the *vellón* coin is present in the poetry of Quevedo. His famous "Poderoso caballero es don Dinero" includes the following verses: "Mas ¿a quién no maravilla / ver en su gloria sin tasa / que es lo menos de su casa / doña Blanca de Castilla?" (35-38). Quevedo refers to the infamous *blanca* coin and alludes to the sudden inflated value of the coin. In theater, Lope de Vega provides an example in his *Dorotea*. In his "A mis soledades voy" Lope mentions: "En dos edades vivimos / Los propios y los agenos: / La de plata los extraños, / Y la de cobre los nuestros. / ¿A quién no dará cuidado, / Si es español verdadero, / Ver los hombres a lo antiguo / Y el valor a lo moderno?" (83). The "valor" refers to the new value of the *vellón* coin,

made of "cobre". In the past, silver was worth silver, now people rather than the material of the coin determine the value of the coin. The literary references, as well as Cardona's observation, correlate the devaluation of gold and silver with a sense of morality. In this way, the *vellón* influenced the Spanish economy, and as Cardona has pointed out, this change questioned notions of nobility and honor.

Given the association between *vellón* and dishonor, it may seem ironic that Blanca speaks against her father when he advises her to marry Arnesto in order to level her nobility with his money. After all, the *vellón*, as a destabilizing coin, ended with the honor of gold or silver. Under this interpretation, Sol would be nobler considering she would be associated with gold. However, it is important to note two points in order to understand how Blanca, though compared to the *vellón* coin, is consistent with her views on nobility: first, her value refers to her poetic ability, and, second, her representation does not lead Sol to lose her honor. Jimeno's metaphor of Blanca as a coin: "bien haya el monedero / que supo batir a escuras / blanca de tan alto precio", is in response to her value as a poet. His words precede the opinion of Blanca's style as "discreto", "agudo", etc. Hence, her "alto precio" is due to her literary skills. Her way with words, in this manner, determines the value of the *blanca*. This is confirmed when Jimeno tells don Juan "Mucho fía / Blanca de tu firme amor: cara se quiere vender" and don Juan replies: "Debe también de saber, / como yo, su gran valor" (2351-2355). The play does not "punish" Arnesto or Sol, though they tried to deceive Blanca and don Juan respectively. Although Sol attempts to marry don Juan through illicit means, she is aware that she would not lose her honor: "Y no es tan grande mi error, / pues junta el remedio al daño, / porque en lograr este engaño / está el conservar mi honor; / pues que si a don Juan entrego / la mayor prenda, le obligo / a que se case conmigo, / aunque esté por

Blanca ciego. / Que siendo yo su parienta, / en descubriendo el engaño / ha de remediar el daño, / pues que le alcanza afrenta" (2384-2395). Even though her plan does not work, she marries Arnesto, thereby fulfilling Beltrán's conception of marriage. In this way, Blanca does not destabilize Sol's honor. Rather, she will destabilize the power of *industria* over *suerte* introduced in the play.

The theme of the play is the triumph of *suerte* over *industria*. After Sol admits she wants to trick don Juan into marrying her, Celia, her servant, will say: "Quiera Dios que de ese modo / venza tu industria a tu suerte" (2396-2397). Arnesto and Sol are the characters that carry their intentions with *industria*. As he is plotting to take advantage of Blanca, Arnesto says: "Cielos, permitid que diga / yo que mi suerte enemiga / hoy con industria vencí" (2669-2671). However, both discover that their illicit *industria* is overcome by *suerte*. Arnesto is forced to confess this at the end: "Pues ya he visto cuán en vano / la suerte quise vencer / con industria y con engaño, / yo soy vuestro" (2909-2912). The consequence is the union between Arnesto and Sol. In a way, Arnesto's words summarize the argument of the play. Arnesto and Sol, characters who have the power to carry out their plans with money or deceit lose against those characters who rely on luck: don Juan and Blanca. Although don Juan was down on his luck after losing an inheritance from the Indies in a shipwreck, he ends together with Blanca. As Beltrán will say at the end of the play: "Es Luna en España ilustre, / y será bien que sus rayos / ahuyenten estas tinieblas / que en tu opinión ha causado" (2924-2927). It is significant that he uses the metaphor of "Luna" because it ties the use of astral onomastics in the play. Don Juan, a character marked by misfortune due to the distance between the Indies and Spain, will overcome his bad luck and consummate his love with Blanca. At the end, his representation as the moon will not be as fickle and changeable, but as "ilustre" and

it is his light that will brighten Blanca's reputation. It is also through the play of metaphors that Alarcón self-fashions literarily, commenting on literary styles of his time and critiquing poets. Blanca, then is the poet that will serve as the example of good poetry. Historically, the *blanca* coin is infamous for destabilizing the value of gold and silver. In the play, Blanca destabilizes Sol's intentions and her luck triumphs over Arnesto's *industria*.

Conclusion: ¿Qué más indias que inés?

Alarcón's diegetic references to the Indies in *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte* suggest a new depiction of the territory. While traditionally, the New World is depicted as a source of wealth, in both plays the Americas present an impediment to material wealth due to its distance. In both, an inheritance is lost or does not make its way to Spain. Interestingly, Alarcón will use these references to self-fashion. In *El semejante a sí mismo*, the Mexican drainage system is described as the eighth Wonder of the World, bringing a different kind of wealth, one associated with ingenuity. The same discourse praises Luis de Velasco as prudent for being the political figure behind the drainage. The style Alarcón uses to describe the drainage could be compared to Lope's *La octava maravilla*. Both playwrights are seeking sponsorship by praising political figures. Mexico City, in this way, is the mechanism by which Alarcón fashions his literary persona. In *La industria y la suerte*, Alarcón will use a shipwreck not only to the perils of distance at the sea, but also to characterize the protagonist don Juan. The shipwreck sunk don Juan's inheritance, and this loss represented his out-of-placeness in Seville. This also prohibited his marriage with Sol, leading him to fall for Blanca instead. In this way, the notion of marriage and the relationship between these three characters is important. Alarcón will use astrology and currency to start a series of metaphors

with the names of don Juan de Luna, Sol, and Blanca. This use of astral onomastics permits Alarcón to self-fashion poetically, commenting on literary movements of his time. This also inserts the Indies again as Blanca will be referred to as a *vellón* coin. Her value, however, is based on her use of metaphors. The use of metaphors supports the overall argument of the play, where *suerte* triumphs over *industria*.

Lastly, I would like to conclude with a description of the Indies in *El semejante a sí mismo* as I think it ties the arguments described in this chapter. Sancho will characterize the Indies in the following way: "¿Pues qué más Indias que Inés? / Por mostrarte el disparate / que era a las Indias partir, / a un poeta he de pedir / que tu belleza retrate. / Será el cabello el metal / rubio, y el blanco la frente, / una perla cada diente, / y cada labio un coral. / Pues, según esto, si ves / a pie quedo en tu belleza / cifrada tanta belleza, / di: ¿qué más Indias que Inés?" (1094-1106). Sancho's description follows a typical Petrarchan portrayal of a lady (Forster 6-10). But even in this Petrarchan description, the relationship between center and periphery in the empire is inescapable. As Lisa Rabin points out:

In Golden Age texts, the desires for a beautiful, unattainable beloved is often coupled with aspirations of empire. Not only Don Quijote frames his adventures with Petrarchan praise for the beloved. Columbus portrays the Western Hemisphere as a woman's breast: ... And in Góngora, the lady's eyes are given power over Spain and its overseas empire

In these texts, the Petrarchan desire to possess the woman translates into a desire to possess new territory. The *blasón* thus serves to kindle not only erotic fantasies, but also epic ones in the Spanish Golden Age: 'love' is a mere pretext for leaving home. Antonio de Nebrija declared in his prologue to Queen Isabella in the *Gramática de la lengua castellana* 'siempre la lengua fue compañera del imperio'. More precisely, however, the true companion of the Spanish empire is the Petrarchan beloved. (84)

Similarly, Henry Higuera mentions the imperial drives in don Quixote's love for Dulcinea del Toboso: "*Don Quixote* contains the greatest novelistic portrait ever penned of an important kind of

would-be conqueror. It shows how complex a phenomenon this conqueror is, especially in his Christian manifestation. Don Quixote wants to conquer the world out of love for Dulcinea del Toboso, his ladylove. His love for her, he thinks, inspires his whole imperial project" (185). The unattainable beauty becomes the drive for empire. Inés is described in lavishly rich terms and compared to the Indies. But such description cannot exist for women's hair is not made of gold, teeth of pearls, lips of coral, etc. Inés, therefore, like the Indies, is impossible to reach. Although she is wealth personified, it is an unattainable wealth, just like the inheritance that the protagonists in *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte* lost. Hence, Alarcón depicts the Indies not in terms of precious metals and materials, but rather as a distant place yet characterized by ingenuity as in the Mexican drainage system.

Chapter 3: Caves, Magic, and the Debate Between Art and Nature

CUEVA, lugar profundo cavado en tierra, o naturalmente cavernoso;. . . Cueva, la guarida donde se esconde alguna fiera o otro animal, que está cavado o hueco.
MINA, . . . En lengua Castellana mina llamamos la cueva que se haze debaxo de tierra, o para traer por ella el agua o para ofender a los enemigos con cierto género de stratagema. . . Y porque todo esto se haze cavando debaxo de tierra, los lugares donde se entiende aver oro o plata se llamaron minas, por cavar debaxo de tierra hasta hallar los minerales.
—Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua* (385; 805)

Although Juan Ruiz de Alarcón crossed the Atlantic Ocean thrice, it would be the enclosed spaces that would often have a prominent role in his theater. In the first chapter I studied how Alarcón's choice of the word "rincón" in his prologue, as the readers' place, implied monstrous dangers in the interpretations of his *comedias*. In this chapter I study the caves in two of his magic plays, *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas*, as places of transformation that are used to explore the relationship between art and nature: can art supersede nature or just strive to imitate it? The two plays have magic as an important theme and depict caves or enclosed rooms as the places where it is practiced and/or taught. The fascination with magic and enclosed spaces in Alarcón should not surprise the reader as references to caves and magic abound in Early Modern and Medieval Spanish literature. The relationship between caves and magic could be partially explained by the Muslim influence in Spain, particularly in Salamanca and Toledo where *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas* are located.¹ When Alarcón linked magic with caves in

¹ According to Samuel Waxman: "There were schools for the study of magic, where the great magicians were reputed to have learned their art, . . . but the most renowned of all were in Spain at Toledo, Seville, Cordova, and Salamanca. . . . There the Arabs and Jews kept the torch of learning aflame through the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries, and since such sciences as mathematics, astrology, astronomy, and alchemy were closely associated with magic both black and white" (1-2). Julio Caro Baroja explains that "En un diccionario moderno . . . se afirma, de modo rotundo, que la más antigua y famosa escuela de Magia de toda Europa fue la de Toledo (10). En otro artículo de la misma obra, dedicado especialmente a las 'escuelas de Magia' . . . se dice, en

his theater, he joined playwrights/authors such as Calderón de la Barca, Miguel de Cervantes, and Francisco Rojas Zorrilla. It has been argued that the “topos of the cave and the magician in the plays of the Siglo de Oro . . . attained its frequency in the *comedias* because it satisfied an intellectual need in the dramatist and addressed an intuitive curiosity in his public” (Lima 89). It was a win-win situation for dramatists and the audience: the caves and the theme of magic provided dramatists with a flexible place to question social norms and make the impossible possible. At the same time, the dramatists wrote plays for a public who was increasingly expecting visual effects such as burning explosives, disappearing characters, and mechanical innovations.

As opposed to the literary figures that he joined in this pursuit, Alarcón had a personal connection with subterranean spaces that is directly related to his American background. His family in Mexico owned a mine in Taxco that was exhausted soon after his birth and prompted the family to move to Mexico City. Due to this background, it is likely that Alarcón was familiar with the extraction of metals and natural resources from underground, a practice not only necessary for the exploitation of resources but also for the occult arts such as alchemy. He may also have been familiar with the importance of caves in Nahuatl mythology and medicine, something his brother Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón knew well.² According to the *Historia Tolteca-Chichimeca*, a Nahuatl

primer término, que la fama que tenían las españolas se debía a que cuando los musulmanes dominaban ciudades como Toledo, Sevilla, Córdoba, Granada e incluso Salamanca, en las escuelas adscritas a las mezquitas . . . se explicaban no sólo ciencias teológicas y filosóficas sino también otras, de las que se llaman ocultas, y Astrología y Alquimia” (14-15). Robert Lima also explains the story of the cave of Toledo: “after Rodrigo’s defeat at the hands of the Muslim invaders that his kingdom fell as a result of his desecration of the ancient tower/palace erected by the Greek hero. . . when the tower was no longer extant, the legend transformed it into a cave over which it had been erected” (74). He elaborates that Toledo was replaced by Salamanca as the “seat of magical operations” (77).

² In 1629 Hernando Ruiz de Alarcón wrote *Tratado de las supersticiones y costumbres gentílicas que hoy viven entre los indios naturales de esta Nueva España*, a treatise about the practices of indigenous

manuscript written between 1545 and 1565 that details pre-Hispanic as well as post-Conquest events, Chicomoztoc, or the place of seven caves, was the place of origin of all Nahuatl-speaking people. Either as underground mines to extract natural resources such as metals, or as birthplaces of Mesoamerican cultures, caves held a special place in the transatlantic Spanish empire. This is reflected in Alarcón's theater.

While caves and mines had a personal connection to Alarcón, magic certainly was an acquired interest that is mentioned in at least a third of his theater. Critics have listed the two plays studied in this chapter as "comedias de magia" or plays that deal with the occult arts, along with others such as *La manganilla de Melilla*, *El antricrosto*, *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, and *El dueño de las estrellas* (Espantoso Foley, *Occult Arts* III). Alarconian critics who have analyzed these plays tend to fall within two groups: those who study the use of magic itself and those who analyze the role of the magicians. In the first group, Espantoso Foley interpreted the use of magic and the occult arts in Alarconian theater as a "dramatic technique" (*Occult Arts* 33). For Eleonora Gonano magic is a tool to construct lies that threaten the social order of the plays (1). In the second group, Anne-Katrin Bermann studied the ethical actions of the necromancers in *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, *La prueba de las promesas*, and *La cueva de Salamanca*, to argue that the necromancers act in accordance to social virtues instead of following strict Catholic doctrine (49). Jules Whicker focused on the philosophical influence in the necromancers of *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas* arguing that they display neo-stoic philosophy and values ("Los magos neoestoicos . . ." 211).³ On the one hand, Alarcón uses magic as a mechanism to question societal

people where he describes certain cures practiced by the natives that required recitations, often referring to Chicomoztoc or the mythic place of the seven caves.

³ Individual studies of each play will be included in their respective sections of this chapter.

norms and take advantage of theatrical technology to entertain his public. On the other, his necromancers display a sense of moral virtue resembling neo-stoic values. I wish to look further into the space of the cave not only as a place of magic and the abode of these necromancers, but also as theatrical spaces that fashion Alarcón as a lettered man and playwright, exhibiting familiarity with the relationship between nature and art. As he self-fashioned a persona in his theater, he also nuanced the roles of appearance and reality in society.

When Stephen Greenblatt defines “self-fashioning,” he describes the term “fashion” as the use of art to mold nature: “This forming may be understood quite literally as the imposition upon a person of physical form—‘Did not one fashion us in the womb?’ Job asks in the King James Bible, while, following the frequent injunctions to ‘fashion’ children, midwives in the period attempted to mold the skulls of the newborn into the proper shape” (2). Thus, self-fashioning involves a manipulation of identity, either in appearance or characteristics, through art. In this relationship, self-fashioning embodies in itself the struggle between nature and art. How far can art go in shaping an identity, both in physical terms but also in personality? Alarcón evinces this same anxiety in the two plays discussed in this chapter. The caves are wombs where identities are manipulated, formed and fashioned through magic or art.

The central debate in this chapter is between art and nature, one that was prominent in the time of Alarcón because it was closely related to the relationship between appearance and reality. Could one use art to mold an identity, disobeying what one ought to be? In the debate between art and nature, comparable concerns about the natural world and their imitations through artifice appeared. Could art supersede nature? Or could it only strive to imitate? The Italian economist and diplomat Giovanni Botero (1544-1617), for example, speaks about this

debate and uses mines as a metaphor in his *Reason of the State* (1589), a work that was translated into Spanish by the chronicler Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (1549-1626) in Madrid (1592), and published two more times in Barcelona (1599) and Burgos (1603). From the start, Botero foregrounds the relationship between art and nature when he views a ruler as an artificer and the state as his material (3). He associates art with industry, and favors it over nature when he discusses how industry increases the power of a state: “Since art is the rival of nature I must consider which is of more importance to make a state great and populous, the fertility of the soil or the industry of man. Without hesitation I shall say industry” (151). In his view, craftsmanship far supersedes natural resources in economy and power. He takes the transatlantic Spanish empire as an example: “Such is the power of industry that no mine of silver or gold in New Spain or in Peru can compare with it, and the duties from the merchandise of Milan are worth more to the Catholic King than the mines of Zacatecas or Jalisco. Italy is a country in which . . . there is no important gold or silver mine, and so is France: yet both countries are rich in money and treasure thanks to industry” (152). As in alchemy, industry had the power to turn opportunity into “gold” and challenge economies reliant on raw material such as the Spanish empire.⁴ Art can convert nature into riches far more efficiently than regular mining, and thus it was a necessity for a ruler not only to know about the natural world around him but also to understand the practical use of natural resources. Nature, in the context of economics and politics, could, and should, be superseded by art. In other

⁴ In reference to Botero, Vera Keller highlights the hidden nature of the “above-ground mine” due to its imprecise location: “The mine of revenue drawn from industry and trade might not exist in any obvious location, and in that sense it was even more hidden than an actual mine. . . . Cunning political miners could locate such above-ground mines in order to perfect the mines of nature, turning base iron into gold” (195).

words, the importation of gold and silver from the Americas drove places in Europe to find wealth through other means, and by doing so, proved that art could supersede nature.

In this chapter I take the rivalry between art and nature in this time period as a starting point to analyze *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas*. Some critics have observed that the character don Juan de Mendoza from *La cueva de Salamanca* may resemble Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza, by name association, and therefore Alarcón may be self-fashioning through this character. Unfortunately, there is not a strong development of the character in the play as he is present only in the first and third acts. However, he plays a major role in what I consider alchemical elements present in the play. These elements serve to comment on the debate between art and nature by staging the potential dangers and theological implications of believing that art can supersede nature. Therefore, Alarcón's self-fashioning is not based on character formation but rather on the transmutability of identity in this play.

The second part of this chapter centers on *La prueba de las promesas*. Critics have long interpreted the events that take place in don Illán's study as an example of metatheater, or a play within a play (Castells 69; Espantoso Foley "The Structure.." 30; Navarro Durán 89). As Jonathan Thacker asserts, "life and theater intermingled" (1) during Alarcón's time and as such, "[t]here is a two-way traffic (social influence on/of drama) across the interface between art and life" (5). Therefore, I analyze how both, the wider play and the play within the play, interact in *La prueba de las promesas* where it is suggested that art or appearance supersedes reality or nature. Furthermore, the necromancer of the play, don Illán, is the one who orchestrates the metatheater. This characterizes him as a playwright, therefore, he is one of the characters who is aware of the "theatricality of life, who can act, who can play, who refuse to view themselves as predictable . . . in

a monolithic system” (Thacker 3). I argue that Alarcón is self-fashioning as an ideal playwright through don Illán in this play.

An Alchemical Theater in *La cueva de Salamanca*

Criticism agrees that *La cueva de Salamanca* is one of Alarcón’s early plays, composed approximately between 1600 and 1608, around the time Alarcón studied at the University of Salamanca.⁵ The setting takes us to this famous city and to this important scholarly center in Europe. Three young friends in search of an adventure—don Diego, don Juan, and don García—decide to play a prank on the officers of the law. They tie a rope close to the ground and simulate sounds of swords: the sound would alarm the officials and the rope would cause them to trip in their pursuit. However, Zamudio, a *gorrón* and fellow friend, ruins their plan. As he is being chased after stealing a toaster, he trips on the rope. This initiates a fight between the law, the owner of the toaster, and the students. The whole fiasco ends in the death of a sheriff. When things go awry, the group seeks refuge in a small abode located around the corner. Unbeknown to them, they have entered the famous cave of Salamanca, which is also the residence of Enrico, a mature professor, student, and necromancer. With the use of magic Enrico conceals the students to save them from the authorities. This initiates a relationship between the necromancer and the students; and this serves to develop the plot. Magic is used to pursue love, to mold identities, and to play with the laws of physics. It even becomes a topic for debate in the *comedia*. Considering the death of a

⁵ According to Agustín Millares Carlo there are several possible dates by critics such as Pedro Henríquez Ureña who suggests 1600-1608; Antonio Castro Leal postulates it was composed between 1602 and 1608; García Blanco recommends it was written between 1600 and 1605; and Harzenbusch even goes as early as 1599 (Alarcón 438-9). The play was published in 1628 although it was submitted for publication in 1621.

sheriff, the law seeks to investigate the incident. They petition for a *pesquisidor* from Madrid to personally examine the occurrence. The investigation reaches its climax in the third act, where the legality of magic is debated between Enrico and a friar in front of the audience. The play ends when Enrico admits magic is an illicit practice and the king pardons all the ones involved in the crime, even as practitioners of magic.

I am interested in the newly-wed character don Juan de Mendoza, who shares the same name as our playwright. He is an ephemeral character with a strong presence in the first act, absent in the second, and reappearing in the third act only to say a few lines. At first sight, it can be argued that Alarcón added this character in a rush, perhaps as he revised the play for publication. But it is particularly revealing that he named this character after himself. It may well be that Alarcón added this character to self-fashion, perhaps to stage a contrast between his mature self and his younger years as a student from Salamanca. I am attracted to the ephemeral presence of this character. Upon close observation it can be deduced that this don Juan has a concealed nature, he likes to remain hidden “behind the scenes” throughout the play. This veiling identity may explain why he partakes of another concealed science/art in this play: alchemy. An analysis of this character leads to alchemical elements, and they are directly related to the debate between art and nature. Hence, Alarcón self-fashions as the character who watches from a distance and forms part of an alchemical conjunction.

We may first notice don Juan’s hidden nature in the dispute that opens the play. I will discuss how this dispute sets the stage for an alchemical transmutation below, but for now I would like to focus on how don Juan presents himself. He mentions how he was the playful and mischievous partner in crime in the past: “¿Qué travesura intentastes / en que yo quedase atrás? /

¿En qué pendencia jamás / a ese lado no me hallastes?” (Ruiz de Alarcón, *La cueva* 25-28). Now he is more reserved, yet he cannot leave the past behind: “No se olvida todo junto: / el ser mozo no he perdido” (43-44). As such, he is presented already as a character who has undergone a transformation due to his recent marriage. When the friends are planning mischief, don Juan is their antithesis, being the cautionary character: “¿Para qué es bueno arresgarnos, / cuando podemos holgarnos / sin temer un mal suceso?” (98-100). His hidden nature is revealed in the chaotic scene where the students feud with the officials. He watches from a distance until he reconvenes with his friends in Enrico’s cave. When asked where he was, don Juan responds: “Seguro / de nuestros mismos contrarios, / escondido entre ellos mismos, / aguardé el fin deste caso. / Pero vos, ¿cómo escapastes?” (341-345). As such, he was “escondido” among the opponents watching how the dispute would play out until he joined his friends in Enrico’s cave. This behavior should not be interpreted as cowardice, but instead as a cautionary way of protecting his honor: “En la ocasión me pusistes, / y en ella debe un honrado / hacer como hacer me vistes. / No hallarse en ella es ventura; / quitarse della, cordura; / y salir bien ella, honor” (477-481). His concern with honor is reflected in his concern with appearances as honor often indicated personal worth in appearance and actions. After spending time in the cave, he exits from the first act with the pretext of having to write to his wife about the incidents: “A mi esposa es bien que escriba / destas nuevas un papel” (875-876). He will not appear physically again until the third act. He is mentioned once in the second act to explain his absence and hidden nature: “Por ser, como ves, / esta cueva para tres / aposento tan estrecho, / y por estar de su casa / cerca la Iglesia mayor, / retraído allí, mejor / estos infortunios pasa” (1106-1112). This is another example of how don Juan likes to stand behind the scenes. He reappears in the middle of the third act, when the

legality of magic is about to be debated. But even then, don Juan will show his hidden nature as he will take refuge in a “capilla”: “Ya viene el Pesquisidor, / y ya los doctores sabios, / luz del mundo, honor de España. / A esta capilla me aparto” (2391-2394). His last words in the play will be in praise of the king, after he pardons all those involved with magic: “A un rey tan amable y santo, / ¿quién habrá que no obedezca?” (2703-2704).

Based on his appearances in the play, don Juan is very present in the first act, where magic will be introduced. Though with a lesser presence, he also appears in the third act where magic will be debated. Furthermore, he disappears after he exits Enrico’s cave. It seems that don Juan is emphasizing that the important elements in the play are magic, the cave, and the concluding debate. Coincidentally, these sections of the play also reveal an art: alchemy. Therefore, don Juan’s presence, or lack thereof, in the play can be connected through parallelism to the alchemical elements. As such, I will analyze the practice of magic in Enrico’s cave in the first act to discuss how within magic lays alchemy. Don Juan plays a major role as he can be interpreted as “spirit” in the play’s transmutation. But as don Juan disappears, an important being will appear in the play that is closely related to alchemy: a bronze talking head. As I will show, this head submerges the play into matters of art and nature that lead to the concluding debate.

The first act of magic happens when Enrico uses his powers to hide don Diego and Zamudio from the local law in his abode. As the students ask for his help, a cloud appears from the ceiling that “disappears” don Diego. This prompts Zamudio to characterize Enrico as “santo” and he asks for his help “Viejo santo, santo padre, / yo me pongo en vuestras manos” (269-270). After they are saved from the law, don Diego also calls Enrico a “varón divino” and “varón santo” (347; 350). This could be one side of the image of Enrico, but he decides to correct it, claiming

that he is just a “pecador” when he introduces himself to the students and the audience (351). As he describes his origins, travels, studies, and background he explains that “Aprendí la sutil quiromancia / profeta por las líneas de las manos; / la incierta judiciaria astrología, / émula de secretos soberanos, / y con gusto mayor, nigromancia, / la que en virtud de caracteres vanos / a la naturaleza el poder quita, / y engaña, al menos, cuando no la imita” (387-394). He is portrayed as a humble and rational learned man. He also possesses knowledge of an art that has a special relationship with nature. Among the many “sciences” he learned, he lists necromancy as one that takes power away from nature, and either deceives or imitates it. He elaborates on the power that this art has over nature and natural symbols through, for example, the four classical elements:

Con ésta a los furiosos cuatro vientos
puedo imponer; los montes cavernosos
arrancar de sus últimos asientos
y sosegar los mares procelosos;
poner en guerra y paz los elementos;
formar nubes y rayos espantosos;
profundos valles y encumbrados montes
esconder, y alumbrar los horizontes;
con ésta sé de todas las criaturas
mudar en otra forma la apariencia:
con ésta aquí oculté vuestras figuras;
no obró la santidad, obró la ciencia. (395-406)

The detail in which he describes necromancy shows that this art is privileged over the others mentioned. He contrasts “santidad” and “ciencia” and he wants to be clear that it was the science or art of “nigromancia” that allowed him to hide the students in his studio, not a work of “santidad.”⁶ He also highlights that with this magic he can influence the appearance of all beings. Hence he is speaking of an art that can control and change nature or appearance.

⁶ To clarify, the term “nigromancia” specifically referred to bringing back the dead, as is used in Cervantes’ *La Numancia*, but many also used it as a synonym for all magic.

We may ask further about this “science” as it seems to describe another art related to magic, yet distinguished for its practicality and empiricism: alchemy. The fact that he mentions astrology before necromancy already brings about alchemy by concealment. Astrology, along with alchemy and magic were allied arts in the hermetic tradition and it would have been improbable that he only learned or practiced two out of the three. Furthermore, he specifies that with this art he controls the four essential elements: “cuatro vientos” (air) “montes cavernosos” (earth), “mares procelosos” (water), and “rayos espantosos” (fire). This control of the elements, albeit proclaimed by many magicians in the theater, including Circe in Calderón’s *El mayor encanto amor*, is often related to alchemy as the art strived to understand nature and endeavored to imitate and control it by examining how the four elements interacted with each other.⁷ Further proof that Alarcón may be referencing alchemy through necromancy is the fact that he claims he knows how to “mudar en otra forma la apariencia” because the transformation of natural minerals and metals into their “pure” state is at the center of alchemy.⁸ The philosopher’s stone, for example, was rumored to have the ability to convert any metal into gold and was often believed to be an elixir of life.⁹ The sense of “becoming” and transmutation in alchemy implies a forming or deliberate shaping of an

⁷ See Circe’s use of “rayos,” “montes,” “mar,” etc. in Calderón’s *El mayor encanto, amor* (Calderón 755-770).

⁸ See for example William R. Newman’s book *Promethean Ambitions* where he writes: “Even though alchemy was seldom if ever exclusively about transmutation, it came to be viewed as the transmutational art par excellence. The reality of the situation, then, is that medieval and early modern alchemical texts typically included a wide range of chemical technologies alongside the elusive goal of transmuting metals, and yet the discipline tended to be seen . . . primarily in terms of its transmutational goals” (XIII).

⁹ C. J. S. Thompson mentions: “The lure of the Philosopher’s Stone and the quest for the Elixir of Life provide the subject of many of the early romances, and much has been written not only of the legends of how the old have been made young again, but also of the stories of the search for the long-sought-for agent that was capable of transmuting the baser metals into gold, an adventure in which princes and philosophers shared alike” (68).

object into something else, or even the fashioning of a person through spiritual alchemy. Thus, alchemy was often used as an underlying structure in plays of the period, from Shakespeare's *King Lear* to Calderón's *La vida es sueño* and *El médico de su honra*.¹⁰

Transposing alchemy to human society, the science could be understood as a way to mold a persona.¹¹ The control of metals and minerals, and by extension of nature itself, led to some rumors that detailed how alchemists constructed automatons of metal or other organic materials that were said to have life of their own. With the knowledge of nature, alchemy showed how it is possible to use art to build on nature. More importantly, Enrico mentions that the art "a la naturaleza el poder quita, / y engaña, al menos, cuando no la imita" (393-394). Here, he is juxtaposing the power of the art and its influence on nature. He is ambiguous about the relationship between "necromancy" and nature by using three verbs "quitar," "engañar," and "imitar" that all imply different actions. If necromancy takes power away from nature, then it would be an art that supersedes nature. If it deceives, then it would be understood as natural magic, a magic considered legal and that had the power to deceive one's senses but never to change

¹⁰ The influence of alchemy in the literature of early modern England and Spain are well documented. For the influence of alchemy in English theater see Charles Nicholl's book *The Chemical Theatre*. For alchemical readings of Spanish classical texts see J. F. Burke's "Metamorphosis and the Imagery of Alchemy in *La Celestina*," Alan K. G. Patterson's "The Alchemical Marriage in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*," and Fred de Armas' "The King's Son and the Golden Dew: Alchemy in Calderón's *La vida es sueño*" and "Villamediana's *La gloria de Niquea*: An Alchemical Masque."

¹¹ As Herbert Silberer suggests, the transposition between human spirit and alchemy was behind the practice of alchemy: "Under philosophical influences the doctrine arose that metals, like human beings, had body and soul, the soul being regarded as a finer form of corporeality. They said that the soul or primitive stuff (*prima materia*) was common to all metals, and in order to transmute one metal into another they had to produce a tincture of its soul" (114).

true nature or coerce free-will. Lastly, he states that it can imitate nature, which would associate it with painting or poetry.

While this scene already introduces some elements that may be related to alchemy, the art also appears in two ways that relate back to don Juan's presence in the play. The first happens as a transmutation of don Juan and don Diego that may lead to the appearance of a brazen head that is rumored to be able to speak. The second occurs in the final debate regarding the legality of magic, marking don Juan's reappearance in the play. The first opens the play, as it starts with a conflict between two characters presented as opposites: don Diego and don Juan de Mendoza. Don Diego complains that the newly-wed don Juan has changed for the worse since his marriage. He has become boring and opposed to any mischief: "Don Juan, yo os prometo a Dios / que me tenéis enfadado, / que después que sois casado / no se puede andar con vos. / Si ver mujeres ordeno, / ninguna tiene buen talle; / si andar de noche en la calle, / os hace mal el sereno;" (1-8). This conflict of interests initiates the play, and don Diego blames don Juan's new marriage as the cause. While don Diego represents action and mischief, don Juan is contrasted as a mature, passive, cautious character due to his marriage. As such, the two friends stand at opposite ends and represent different interests.

This presentation of both characters as opposites invites the readers and audiences to consider that they may represent soul and spirit that are keys to the alchemical transmutation of the play. In alchemy, sulfur and mercury were two opposing materials necessary for a conjunction. Alchemists would often personify these materials with specific traits: "Sulfur was masculine, active, hot, and fixed, and corresponded to the soul; mercury (or quicksilver) was feminine, passive, cold, and volatile, and corresponded to the spirit" (Knapp 7). The traits of sulfur and mercury as

described by alchemists correspond to don Diego and don Juan's personalities respectively. Don Diego, like sulfur, will characterize himself as "colérico" and full of mischievous activity: "si al río quiero salir, / la humedad es mal segura; / si trazo una travesura, / miráis a lo por venir; / si colérico me veis, / entra luego el predicar; / y al fin, si riño, en lugar / de ayudarme, me tenéis" (9-16). Don Juan not only contrasts with the choleric, fiery and active don Diego, but his contrasts are characteristic of a cold and passive nature, categorized by the harm that the "humedad" would do should they decide to go to the river. Don Juan defends himself claiming that marriage is a "yugo ... / que al más bravo hace amansar" (35-36), but shows his passiveness when he agrees to do what don Diego wishes: "Por vos he de hacer extremos; / basta, al fin, quererlo vos" (47-48). His passiveness continues even after they run into their friend don García, another student that happened to be strolling through the night: "Digo que erré, y que callado / iré donde vos queráis" (75-76); "Decildo vos, don García, / que a vuestro voto me ajusto" (85-86). As opposites, both young men may represent sulfur and mercury, or soul and spirit, that will soon be used in an alchemical conjunction.¹²

The characters' alchemical nature is extended later in the play when they decide to play a prank on the local law that ends in a disaster. According to the tenets of alchemy, there are three common stages, represented as colors, to reach the final objective of the pure gold, elixir of life, or the *magnum opus*. They are *nigredo*, *albedo*, and *rubedo*. A close analysis of the character's interaction shows that what is occurring is an alchemical transmutation.

¹² Interestingly, don Juan may be compared to Mercutio in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. Mercutio is mercury or spirit that tries to refrain the more active character of Romeo. See Joseph Porter's *Shakespeare's Mercutio: His History and Drama*.

The *nigredo* is the blackening process in alchemy characterized by chaos or “the *massa confusa* that existed before the separation of elements” (Knapp 9). In the play, there are some indicators that the setting can be related to this chaotic and dark start. For example, it is evident that the starting scene takes place at night which would add the element of darkness. There is discord between don Diego and don Juan, signifying a disordered start. Their prank on the local authority further intensifies the chaos that initiates the play and leads the characters to run for their safety. Their flight could further be interpreted as the liquification process in the *nigredo* stage. The *nigredo* phase is also often described as cloudy. When don Diego and Zamudio reach Enrico’s cave, it will be no coincidence that the magician will use a cloud to disappear don Diego and keep him safe from the authorities. Chaos, night darkness, the death of an innocent man, and the cloud used to save don Diego are all elements that describe the *nigredo* alchemical stage in the first scenes of the play.

Albedo, or the whitening stage, is the process by which the elements are washed or baptized (Knapp 9). After the chaotic start and the pursuit, the young men enter Enrico’s house, also known as the cave of Salamanca. After Enrico saves don Diego and Zamudio by “disappearing” them in his cave, don Juan shows up shortly after. Enrico’s “magic” that saved don Diego and Zamudio can be understood as a washing process, as don Diego himself claims that their life has been restored: “Dadme los pies soberanos, / restaurador destas vidas” (336-337). The house will be a place of safety for don Juan and don Diego. This occurs as they come together as mercury and sulfur: “No tan poco el tiempo ha sido, / que en Salamanca he vivido, / gran don Diego de Guzmán, / que no haya a vos, y a don Juan / de Mendoza conocido; / cuanto más que desta casa / es segura guarnición” (444-450). Enrico, the necromancer, becomes the remaining material

necessary for the alchemical marriage: salt. In alchemy, salt was the “force that links body and soul” and therefore unites sulfur and mercury (Knapp 7). Once all three characters are in the cave, don Diego becomes interested in pursuing the art of changing form, wishing to devote his life to it: “Podemos desde este día / aprender nigromancia, / y escondidos aquí, ver / el suceso deste cuento, / pues que con su encantamento / Enrico nos asegura / de ser presos /.... / Y este francés puede darnos / y nosotros aprender / hechizos, para poder, / mudando formas, andarnos / por la ciudad” (516-529). Although the art referred to is “nigromancia”, as I mentioned before, it was also widely known that alchemy was the principal art responsible for “changing forms”. The young character is interested in the art to change his appearance and roam the city. There is a sense of identity formation with this artful manipulation of appearance. To continue the *albedo* process, the cave will be lightened twice as the morning approaches. The first is the arrival of the Marqués Enrique de Villena, an aficionado of magic and of Enrico. Don Diego will say: “¿Posible es que hayáis venido, / ilustre luz de Girón, / a darla a un pobre rincón / a la del sol escondido?” (637-640). The Marques brought his light and with his arrival came the morning. The second would be when doña Clara arrives to which don Diego says: “¿Un pequeño rincón triste y sombrío / cielo ya venturoso / es del sol más hermoso / que el que por inventor del claro día / tiranizó la humana idolatría?” (882-886). In addition, *albedo* is related to whiteness and clarity. Her name, Clara, further intensifies the *albedo* or washing of this stage.

Rubedo, or the reddening phase, is the final stage of the alchemical process and culminates in the much-sought masterpiece. It had many manifestations and one of those was the Philosopher’s Stone. It is no coincidence that within a cave all of these alchemical occurrences deal with earthly materials. The creation of the Philosopher’s Stone was “looked upon as a spiritual or

mystical substance from which the new man, the *homunculus*, would be molded. Referred to by the Gnostics as *Anthropos* or ‘divine original man,’ the homunculus was capable of transcending the old divisions of time, space, birth, and death, thereby uniting with a higher form” (Knapp 10). I argue that in the play, the talking metal head can be interpreted as a homunculus although the presence of the head is ephemeral. This head was a bronze statue that was rumored to live in the cave of Salamanca and be able to answer truthfully any question. The bronze color would add to the red *rubedo* stage, and the fact that it could answer to questions about the future adds to its control of time. But in the creation of a statue that talks, or a *homunculus*, the alchemists were at risk of usurping powers reserved only for God. It was one of the clear examples of the dangers of art superseding nature in alchemy.

How can we interpret this talking head? In the play itself, the head is seen two ways: either as an automaton created by the magical powers of Enrico, or as Enrico himself. The Marqués de Villena voices the first interpretation as a rumor he heard while in Madrid: “La parlera fama allí / ha dicho que hay una cueva / encantada en Salamanca, / que mil prodigios encierra; / que una cabeza de bronce, / sobre una cátedra puesta, / la mágica sobrehumana / en humana voz enseña;” (737-744). Don Diego provides the second interpretation:

Oíd de la cueva, Enrique,
la relación verdadera.
Retórica la fama, de figura
alegórica usando, significa
la verdad de la cueva en la pintura.
. . .
y la cabeza de metal que puesta
en la cátedra da en lenguaje nuestro
a la duda mayor, clara respuesta,
es Enrico, un francés, que el nombre vuestro,
el mismo devagar, los mismos casos
y el que tuvistes vos, tuvo maestro.

...
y porque excede a la naturaleza
frágil del hombre su saber inmenso,
se dice que es de bronce su cabeza.

...
En viéndolo, veréis, que ha sido escasa
la fama en metafóricos pregones,
pues la verdad sus límites traspasa. (775-812)

The head itself is only limited to hearsay up until the second act, just as don Juan's presence diminishes in the play. Clara will echo the first interpretation of the head in the second act where it will appear: "Hame contado don Diego, / que en la cueva donde está / retraído, hay una estatua / con cabeza de metal, / que, por un secreto aliento / de espíritu celestial, / disuelve, a quien le pregunta, / la mayor dificultad/ dice el estado presente / de los que ausentes están, / y de venideros casos / ciertos pronósticos da" (1669-1680). There is no doubt that the head is an occult presence in the play and takes many forms, either as Enrico or even don Diego in the second act. In Spain, the topic of a talking head may remind the reader or spectator of Miguel de Cervantes' story of the enchanted head in *Don Quixote*. In episode LXII, the bronze head, which is found in a hidden room, answers questions to the astonishment of the spectators.¹³ According to Hilaire Kallendorf, the enchanted head may be inspired by the Neoplatonist writings of Marsilio Ficino: "Según Marsilio Ficino, el neoplatónico más ilustre, la estructura artificial y material de un talismán o estatua puede deberse a que esté ocupado o animado por una entidad espiritual, un demonio" (208). Such a demon would be looked on with suspicion by the Inquisition, and thus cause trouble for its owner. In the play, Alarcón is careful to characterize the speaking abilities of

¹³ In this episode, don Quixote is in Barcelona and is in don Antonio de Moreno's house. Don Antonio shows him a bronze head that answers honestly to any question asked. Afterwards, the narrator explains how this was a hoax involving don Antonio's nephew.

the bronze head only as hearsay, since it never actually talks on stage.¹⁴ The lack of speech of the statue would diminish the certainty of demonic influences.

Aside from the demonic interpretation, the metallic head may also be associated with alchemists such as Roger Bacon.¹⁵ So famous was this association between the alchemist Roger Bacon and his talking head that it was referred to in early modern English theater. For example, Kevin Lagrandeur has studied the representation of talking brass heads in Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bugay* (c. 1590) and *The Comical History of Alphonsus, King of Aragon* (c. 1590). Stories of automatons made of metal date back to Greek and Egyptian times as well.¹⁶ Such stories have associated Vulcan, or Hephaestus in Greek mythology, with crafting metal beings capable of acting on their own. In the Middle Ages, Virgil was also rumored to have the ability to create self-acting beings of metal.¹⁷ These examples of bringing life from physical lifeless material demonstrate

¹⁴ In the play, there is a talking head but not made of bronze. It is all part of an enchantment as a prank played on Zamudio from the two necromancers in the second act. The head belonged to a dead body.

¹⁵ For more information on Roger Bacon and his talking head see A. G. Molland's "Roger Bacon as Magician" where he writes about Thomas Browne's interpretation of the brass head as an alchemical process: "This explanation—that the story is an allegorical account of an alchemical process—certainly has the merit of taking into account all the facets of the legend, including the wall of brass and the missed opportunity, and Bacon himself admitted that he was wont to write on alchemy in *aenigmata*" (450). He also names reasons why an alchemical explanation may not be the source behind the head.

¹⁶ In the *Iliad*, for example, Homer speaks of Vulcan's automata made of gold: "She found him sweating as he turned here and there with his bellows busily, since he was working on twenty tripods which were to stand against the wall of his strong-founded dwelling. And he had set golden wheels underneath the base of each one so that of their own motion they could wheel into the immortal gathering, and return to his house" (385). After Thetis asks Vulcan for help, it is said of his assistants that: "These are golden, and in appearance like living young women. There is intelligence in their hearts, and there is speech in them and strength, and from the immortal gods they have learned how to do things" (386). It is also important to mention that Talos, a man of bronze, is thought to have been one of Vulcan's creations. See also Kallendorf, pp. 208-210.

¹⁷ "A possible connection between these classical legends regarding wise men's automata and similar legends that arise in medieval Europe is the figure of Virgil. Many popular stories had

human obsession with creating a being with some human characteristics. While the robotic nature of these creations may show a sense of awe regarding technology, Lagrandeur explains how the brass talking head in Robert Greene's theater can also be a warning about the knowledge of man:

As already noted, tales about the creation of artificial, oracular heads grew around both Bacon and Gerbert, and legends about Albertus mention his fashioning of a complete automaton that could answer questions. All of these tales end in rather violent, frightening ways. Gerbert's head predicts his death, Bacon's is destroyed by his own error, and Albertus's automaton is smashed by a terrified pupil. (411)

All things considered, he concludes that:

Ultimately, the brazen head which Bacon attempts to animate represents an attempt to enslave forces of nature that are dangerously strong; it also signifies the natural philosopher's dance along the limits between the innovative and frightening exercise of human ingenuity. The various legends of the brazen head remind their audience that neither they nor those who innovate can lose sight of the basic disparity between the power of the maker and the power of his tool. (422)

The negative connotations regarding the talking head engage with the control over nature that the alchemists try to exert. By creating and molding life, they may be delving too deep in their art and using forces reserved for God. The power relationship between a human creation and one created by God echoes the debate between art and nature. The creation of automata and their tragic outcome stands as a warning of using human ingenuity to control or supersede nature.

arisen by the Middle Ages that this Roman poet had created mechanical marvels, such as a group of statues, called *Salvacio Romae*, that would automatically ring bells to warn Rome of the revolt of one of its provinces" (Lagrandeur 409).

While the talking metallic head may have a long tradition in literature and the occult arts, in the play the talking statue will simulate being transformed into a human being, thereby associating the automata with alchemy and the creation of a *homunculus*. The statue will be delivered to Clara's door, where she will ask questions about her love to the statue in hopes of a positive response. The metal statue is delivered in a wooden box, and upon seeing the statue, Clara closes the box. When she reopens it, the statue is transformed into don Diego and this startles her: "Déjame, encanto o visión, / que eras duro bronce agora" (1821-1822). In transforming the statue to a living being, the play may be staging the birth of a homunculus. Here, Alarcón is deep in matters of alchemy. As William Newman explains:

The homunculus, as artificial human, was the crowning piece of human creative power, making its artificer a sort of demiurge on the level of a lesser god. It has long been acknowledged that the Renaissance tradition of natural magic promoted a view of 'man the maker'; but as I shall also show, the use of the homunculus as a marvel of human art has its origin in a medieval debate focusing strictly on alchemy rather than magic. ("The Homunculus and His Forebears" 323).

Later he concludes that "the homunculus is not merely an artificial marvel in itself but a key to further marvels. It is the final expression of man's power over nature" (329). Far from an automaton, Alarcón is now staging how the art can be used to fashion a human being, an art only known to God in his time. The spectator may marvel at such a sight in theater, seeing how a human is formed from lifeless material.

The play does not fully develop the idea of this creation. Don Diego clarifies that it is all an illusion: "Yo soy la verdad, señora; / que el bronce fue la ilusión. / Por estar aquí Lucía / aquella

forma tomé, / porque solo deseé / verte sola, gloria mía;” (1823-1828). The act of illusion did not consist in turning a statue into a human being but rather a human being into a statue. In this scene, don Diego will try to influence Clara. But Alarcón makes it clear that at least in terms of free will, the occult arts have no power as Clara states: “de la victoria confío; / que sobre el libre albedrío / no tiene fuerza el encanto” (1862-1864). Indeed, don Diego will fail at forcing Clara, thereby showing that art can fashion but cannot supersede free will. While the transformation of a bronze statue to a human being in theater must have been tantalizing, Alarcón is clear in establishing limits and stating that art can be used to deceive but not to coerce. This contrasts with Enrico’s view when he states that the art can take the power away from nature. With the homunculus, the anxiety behind art and nature is staged and the same anxiety will return at the end of the play where the legality of magic is debated.

As I mentioned before, don Juan is absent during the second act but reappears in the third act to witness the big debate. During this act, Enrico will dispute the practice of magic with a friar at the University of Salamanca in front of all the students and the audience. After the chaos produced by the use of magic throughout the play, the king wants to have proponents for and against magic to discuss if it is legitimate. Enrico, in favor of magic due to its relationship with nature, states his stance:

Propongo desta manera:
toda ciencia natural
es lícita, y usar della
es permitido; la magia
es natural: luego es buena.
Pruebo la menor. La magia
conforme a naturaleza
obra: luego es natural.
La mayor así se prueba:
de virtudes y instrumentos

naturales se aprovecha
para sus obras: luego obra
conforme a naturaleza.

. . .

Esto deajo por notorio:
con que bien probado queda
que la magia es natural,
pues lo son los medios della;
y con esto, de que es justa,
se prueba, la consecuencia.
Añado más: si a los brutos
dio el cielo virtudes ciertas:

. . .

¿qué mucho que estas virtudes
por arte o naturaleza
tenga el hombre, rey de todos,
y criatura más perfecta?
Demás desto, al primer padre
le dio Dios aquesta ciencia,
y a Salomón la infundió,
como mil santos lo prueban. (2416-2596).

Enrico favors any “ciencia natural” because he claims that it functions according to nature.¹⁸ He is careful to omit that the art may supersede nature, as he did at the beginning of the play, but agrees that, as long as art begins and ends with nature, it is legitimate. His defense is filled with the words “naturaleza” and “natural” in order to make his argument plausible. When he mentions the virtues given by the heavens to “brutos,” he justifies that it is legitimate that humans have these virtues “por arte, o naturaleza.” That is, that it is legitimate for humans to use art to imitate virtues or qualities in nature. He justifies this with the fact that Solomon was given this science by God. This

¹⁸ His viewpoint is very similar to that presented in the *Book of Hermes* where it is argued that human works can match the natural ones. Newman comments on this and states how this pertains to alchemy: “Hermes concludes from this barrage of empirical evidence that art makes these multifarious products only by aiding nature. In a line that is astonishingly close to the viewpoint of Bacon, Hermes says that human works and natural works are identical as to essence (*secundum essentiam*), even if they differ according to their means of production (*secundum artificum*)” (“The Homunculus and His Forebears” 325).

is significant as it was believed that Solomon knew the art of alchemy and had written texts detailing it: “Solomon’s great wisdom must have extended to transmutation; therefore, the gold that supposedly came from far-off Ophir must actually have been produced using the Philosopher’s Stone” (Principe 181).¹⁹ Enrico uses similar arguments as alchemists about the legality of alchemy and its art in accordance to nature, although he never refers to alchemy openly.

The theologian’s response, on the other hand, will be more specific and avoids the thorny question of art and nature.²⁰ The friar says:

La mágica se divide
en tres especies diversas:
natural, artificiosa,
y diabólica. De aquéostas
es la natural la que obra
con las naturales fuerzas
y virtudes de las plantas,
de animales y de piedras.
La artificiosa consiste
en la industria o ligereza
del ingenio o de las manos,
obrando cosas con ellas
que engañen algún sentido,
y que imposibles parezcan.
Estas dos lícitas son,
con que este modo no excedan; (2511-2526).

Here, he states that there are three types of magic: natural, artificial and diabolical. The first two are legitimate forms of magic. He does not acknowledge the anxiety behind nature and artifice as he does not see them in conflict. This may seem strange given that earlier in the play Enrico stated

¹⁹ Steven Weitzman mentions in his book *Solomon: The Lure of Wisdom* that “. . . scientific works attributed to Solomon include treatises on mathematics, astronomy, and alchemy” (76).

²⁰ David H. Darst points out that in the debate there are two philosophies at play: “la diferenciación entre el idealismo platónico y el realismo aristotélico fue el instersticio intransigente que continuó separando el mago de los dictámenes filosóficos que se reconocieron como legítimos” (44).

that magic takes power away from nature, when it doesn't deceive or imitate it. Furthermore, the scene where a statue is turned to a human being, which I interpret as an alchemical *magnum opus*, leaves open questions about nature and art. The friar does not delve into what is at stake regarding the practice of artificial magic. Because the diabolical pact may come disguised as the two licit kinds of magic, artificial and natural, he argues that magic should not be practiced: “por virtud / de palabras esta ciencia, / obra prodigios, que admira / la misma naturaleza: / luego los obra en virtud / del pacto implícito en ellas, / contraído del demonio” (2439-2545). He refers briefly to actions that go beyond nature and explains that the devil may be behind them: “¿qué virtud, / qué actividad, qué potencia / tiene un caracter inútil, / corta línea o breve letra, / para formar de repente, / nubes, truenos, valles, sierras, / cosas que sin mucho espacio / no puede naturaleza? / Luego si su modo exceden, / los obran algunas fuerzas / sobrenaturales: luego / diabólica inteligencia” (2619-2630). The examples closely resemble those mentioned by Enrico at the beginning of the play where he said that necromancy allowed him to control the four elements and nature. Using a pact with the devil as an excuse to declare how magic should not be practiced, the friar states that when art exceeds nature, it is the work of the devil. In his rebuttal, the friar does acknowledge one argument from his opponent: “Que entre otras ciencias tuviesen / Salomón y Adán aquésta, / es verdad; pero tuvieron / las dos especies primeras, / natural, y artificiosa;” (2636-2641). There seems to be a disconnect between what the two are arguing. Enrico, on the one hand, agrees with what most alchemists before him would say. Namely, that art can and should be used to perfect nature, and that all creations that come from alchemy are legitimate because they follow nature. In other words, the gold produced through alchemy could be more perfect than the gold extracted from mines. Regarding the topic of this chapter, art can supersede nature and

therefore it is possible to self-fashion. On the other hand, the friar is agreeing that natural and artificial magic are legitimate. He adds that sometimes magic may be fueled by a pact with the devil, and therefore should be banned. This did not appear in Enrico's argument. Hence, the play although clear in condemning magic because a pact with the devil is reprehensible, does not really produce a clear response towards the nature and art debate except that both are legitimate practices.

After discussing the presence of alchemy in the play, we are left with an important question: why would Alarcón be interested in including alchemy? The answer may be in the character of don Juan. As we may recall, he is the spirit of the transmutation and his presence in the play signals the concealed elements of alchemy. As such, he is the mercury or the metal necessary for the conjunction. This brings us to metallurgy, a science Alarcón must have been familiar with considering his mining background and his upbringing in Mexico.²¹ The topic of metallurgy is also related to the representation of the cave in the play as caves and mines were underground spaces that housed precious metals. It was nature's way of providing riches to humans. However, art strived to create those riches as well. In this way, alchemy provided a practical purpose that could potentially benefit the Spanish Empire at a time when rich metals from the Americas were lost at sea or lost to other parts of Europe. As Eva Lara Alberola suggests, there is a distinction to be made between magic and alchemy in the political realm of early modern Spain: "Habría que distinguir, eso sí, las dos facetas de la magia 'cortesana' o 'política': por ejemplo, el uso de la astrología o la alquimia por su posible efectividad, por un lado, y la utilización de las

²¹ With the practice of mining and the study of metallurgy in the Americas, alchemy gained transatlantic status: "El amplio desarrollo técnico que alcanzó la minería y la metalurgia en el Nuevo Mundo estuvo en varias ocasiones, relacionado con la Alquimia" (López 187).

acusaciones de hechicería y nigromancia con la finalidad de desprestigiar, por otro" (571). This practical use may have earned alchemy great popularity during the Spanish Golden Age.²²

Alchemists were common figures in the courts of kings, including Phillip II and Rudolph II (Puerto 109). The Escorial had a room specifically devoted for such practices.²³ The Count-Duke Olivares is known to have searched for compensation through alchemy as well.²⁴ By using alchemy, Alarcón reached to the heart of the matter: caves and mines were natural creators of gold and silver. It was the purpose of art, or alchemy, to imitate and supersede nature by producing gold comparable to natural gold. Alchemical transmutation, then, could be related to human self-fashioning.

In other words, by using alchemy the play has staged how art can be used to fashion an identity. The stage represented by the cave provides the opportunity for Alarcón to self-fashion through don Juan. This converts the cave into a womb, similar to how Greenblatt described it in

²² Outside of politics, alchemy also played a prominent role in medicine and the debates around the best medical practices at the time. For example, John Slater informs that "[t]he antagonism between proponents of chymical medicine and Galenists, such as Vidós's great rival Nicolás Moneva, was the great medical drama of the 1670's and 1680's. It was a clash of medical cultures" (Slater 214). The efficacy of alchemy made it a more attractive approach to medicine and to cure ailments. The developments in alchemy and medicine were also present within an American context: "the language of alchemy lent a strongly transcendent, spiritual, and 'magical' character to the early modern 'hunt' for exotic spices and drugs in the early modern literature of the discovery of the New World" (Bauer 87).

²³ Eva Lara Alberola mentions: "la magia está estrechamente vinculada a la vida palaciega y política, bien por el deseo del regente de rodearse de astrólogos, alquimistas y nigromantes, como fue el caso de Federico II o Felipe II; . . ." (575). For further information see also García Font, *Historia de la alquimia en España*, 185-212.

²⁴ Juan García Font points out about the Count-Duke Olivares: "No sólo era ambicioso; su afán de poder, su locura de dominio se hallaban en consonancia con ese anhelo de dominar el curso de los acontecimientos, de cambiar unos metales en otros como promete la alquimia" (225). He later adds: "Olivares mostraba particular predilección por la posibilidad de transmutar cobre en plata" (227).

his discussion of the term “fashion.” The staging of the play could also be interpreted as a metaphorical alchemy. For example, Bettina L. Knapp argues that theater can be interpreted in alchemical terms, where a dramatist experiences a transmutation: “from the uncreated (amorphous) idea which lies buried with his unconscious to the externalized incarnation which is his play; from the alchemical integration of disparate forces on the physical stage (actors, director, sets, lighting, sound effects, and more) to the realization of a new unity in the dramatic spectacle” (2). At the level of literary production, alchemy was often hidden yet in metaphor provided a venue for literary figures to self-fashion. The cave, then, becomes the ideal site for a theatrical transmutation, a play within a play that shows the ability of theater as an agent of change. It is in the midst of the alchemical work that characters can self-fashion. In *La cueva de Salamanca*, then, don Juan is transformed into the ideal author who intervenes in his own work in order to bring about a self-reflective text that comments on the powers of creation and transmutation, one where an apparently passive character, a *mercurius*, has the power to bring out the gold of a harmonious resolution. Acting together with the magician, the author self-fashions as someone who can bring to Madrid the mines of Mexico, now transmuted into a cave that exhibits a new kind of gold, the immense capabilities of the human being who can develop an art that rivals nature.

While *La cueva de Salamanca* has magic as an important theme, there are certain elements in the play that are alchemical. For example, there is a conjunction of characters, don Diego and don Juan, that may represent sulfur and mercury. Enrico, the necromancer of the play, unites them together in his “cave” thereby representing the salt necessary for the conjunction. Each phase could be represented alchemically, with *nigredo*, *albedo*, and *rubedo*. I argue that the *rubedo* phase is characterized by the bronze head that is supposed to talk. The talking head has a long association

with alchemists and may present the dangers of attempting to supersede nature with art. Indeed, in the play, Alarcón will go beyond and make the statute a living human. The spectator may associate this with the *homunculus*, a human creation out of alchemy that stood as a testament to how art could supersede nature, or how art could mold an identity. At the end of the play, the legitimacy of magic will be debated, where the topic of art and nature will emerge once again. While Enrico argues in favor of magic, stating that it performs according to nature, his opponent condemns magic because sometimes it happens with a pact with the devil. Although Enrico and the friar seem to agree more than they disagree in the legitimacy of magic, the detailed presence of don Juan in the play has shown how art can be used to mold identities.

Cave as theater in *La prueba de las promesas*

From the limits of magic and alchemy in *La cueva de Salamanca*, I would like to turn now to *La prueba de las promesas*, a play that shares the topics of enclosed space and magic within Alarconian theater. This play appeared in Alarcón's second volume of works in 1634, although critics date it much earlier to the year 1618. This may place it at least ten years after *La cueva de Salamanca*. Different from *La cueva de Salamanca* is the fact that Alarcón modeled *La prueba de las promesas* after a Medieval text, don Juan Manuel's "Ejemplo XI." Don Juan Manuel's famous *exemplum* relates the story of a Dean in Toledo who was interested in learning magic. Although written several years after and with a medieval model that predated it, both plays share the representation and interest of the occult arts in Alarconian theater. Furthermore, both necromancers, Enrico and don Illán share neo-stoic philosophy in their actions.

Criticism tends to focus on the structure of *La prueba de las promesas*, specifically on how there's another play within it. The metatheater is orchestrated as an enchantment to test the promise of the protagonist don Juan. Don Illán, the necromancer of the play, begins the enchantment to test don Juan's gratitude once he asks to take magic lessons from don Illán. With his enchantment, don Illán is able to control time and space within the enclosed space of his study. Thacker's study about Spanish Golden Age *comedias* has already shown how there is a social concern behind metatheater: "The reasons behind this sharply perceived histrionic urge almost certainly have to do with anxieties about identity – an identity that can be broadly termed social. A poor performance could lead to a life devastated" (1). Indeed, the prime example of this "poor performance" would be the failure of don Juan in the meta-play. While criticism has focused on the metatheatricality, little has been written regarding don Illán. If indeed there is a play within a play, then that would mean that don Illán is not only a necromancer but a playwright that controls identities. This places him in a privileged position as a character that enters and exits the stage at will, perhaps to show Alarcón's vision of an ideal playwright: one that is in control of fashioning identities in theater. In this part of the chapter I analyze the debate between art and nature regarding theater studies. I first discuss how the debate between art and nature affected the poetry of the Spanish Golden Age as well as theater. Based on this influence, I then establish how the wider part of *La prueba de las promesas* can be interpreted as nature and the play within the play can be interpreted as art. Once these are established as art and nature, I observe how art is seen to overcome nature in the play by the artifices of don Illán. Alarcón favors theater as an art form that can influence life events, and therefore art is used to surpass nature once again.

La prueba de las promesas is simple in plot and follows the basic structure of don Juan Manuel's exemplum, "modernizing" some elements. Don Juan Manuel, in the "Exemplo XI" of his *Conde Lucanor* tells the story of a Dean that sought magic lesson from a wizard in a cave of Toledo. The name of the necromancer remains the same, don Illán; however, the Dean is now don Juan de Rivera. Don Juan, in pursuit of the love of Blanca, don Illán's daughter, seeks lessons of necromancy from don Illán. In exchange, don Juan vows to grant any favor or duty that the necromancer commands. Without telling don Juan, don Illán decides to test this promise with magic. When in his study, which closely resembles a cave, he simulates time and fortunate events that allow don Juan to attain high political posts. After each new post, don Illán begs don Juan to leave the vacant post to his son who is seeking a job in court. Lacking gratitude, don Juan denies such favors to don Illán until the magician's temper reaches a limit. Don Illán decides to break the enchantment and all the characters go back in time when they were all in his study. This return to the beginning shows don Juan as ungrateful and without the magician's help he loses Blanca to his rival, don Enrique, whom don Illán had favored from the beginning of the *comedia*. He justifies his preference for Enrique with practical reasons: Enrique and Blanca's marriage would put an end to the rivalry between both families. In this way, the enchantment served as a test to examine don Juan's character as either selfish or gracious.

Before going into the textual analysis, I would like to first discuss to what extent we can analyze the relationship between the inner play and the outer play in terms of art versus nature. I will start by situating the debate within literary studies as well as the time period. It has been observed that the debate between art and nature touched on many subjects, including visual art, theater, and poetry, and became more popular in the Baroque period:

El cariz de esta idea —que el arte pictórico puede igualar y aun superar a la naturaleza, llegó a ser casi un tópico entre los autores barrocos, pero hubiera sido del todo impensable entre los vates del Renacimiento. El apunte que aquí comentamos es, más que una anécdota y tiene incidencia en un agudo cambio en la percepción, no sólo en relación a la pintura, sino sobre todo en la dialéctica entre las realidades y las ficciones o la naturaleza y el artificio. (García Gibert 13)

The relationship between art and nature could be assimilated to the dialectic relationship between “realidades” and “ficciones.” The same critic announces that there were political and religious factors that favored artificiality over nature in this time period and affected other fields such as poetry and theater (16). The relationship between art and nature, and by extension appearance and reality, also gave way to a skepticism towards art’s product, referring to it as artifice. As Covarrubias shows in his definition, “artificio” was also associated with deception or lies: “la compostura de alguna cosa o fingimiento” (*Tesoro* 154). While art may surpass nature, artifice should be viewed with skepticism since it implies deception of the senses. Thacker echoes this sentiment in theater: “Metatheatre, in the Golden Age, makes manifest the constructed, predictable nature of social life, by demonstrating the ease with which society can be deceived by characters’ self-dramatization, their metatheatrical strategies” (18). Metatheater could be seen as a painting, or an artifice, that imitated life in such a way as to deceive the viewer.

The battle between nature and art can also be seen in poetry, where it almost always refers to how portraits, as a form of art, improve and perfect the natural look of a person. For example, in Bartolomé de Argensola’s sonnet “A una mujer que se afeitaba y estaba hermosa,” he writes: “Pero tras eso confesaros quiero / que es tanta la beldad de su mentira / que en vano a competir

con ella aspira / belleza igual de rostro verdadero. / Mas, ¿qué mucho que yo perdido ande / por un engaño tal, pues que sabemos / que nos engaña así Naturaleza?” (5-10). The painting is characterized with the words “mentira” and “engaño” that show the woman prettier than her “rostro verdadero.” However, the poetic voice realizes that Nature works in the same way; it has the same deceiving tactics as art. The painting, although a lie, is so beautiful and perfect that the real face competes in vain, and one is deceived both by art and nature.

Similarly, Francisco de Quevedo writes in his sonnet “A un retrato a una dama”: “Tan vivo está el retrato y la belleza / que Amor tiene en el mundo por escudo, / que, con mirarle tan de cerca, dudo / cuál de los dos formó Naturaleza” (1-4). Quevedo’s poem claims that the portrait is so well done and alive, that in detail it is hard to determine which one is nature’s work and which one is artifice. More famously, in Quevedo’s “Al pincel” he tackles the same issue but from a different viewpoint: “Tú, si en cuerpo pequeño, / eres, pincel, competidor valiente / de la Naturaleza: / hácete el arte dueño / de cuanto crece y siente” (1-5). Here, Quevedo directs his poem to the tool that makes art possible, the “pincel.” The poem states that the “pincel” competes with Nature, and art makes it the victor over nature. In both poems, Quevedo alludes to the relationship and superiority of art versus nature or appearance and reality.²⁵

While the previous two poets focus on the visual aspect of portraits and deception, another famous poet, Luis de Góngora, attributes the superiority of art to the fact that a portrait lasts longer than human life in his “A un pintor flamenco”: “Hurtas mi vulto y, cuanto más le debe / a

²⁵ Adrián J. Sáez compares Quevedo’s approach to art and nature with Lope de Vega’s: “Así, Lope vuelve a insistir en esta facultad de renovación de la pintura ([. . .] con arte parece que reformas / de la naturaleza los defectos’ vv. 26-27), mientras Quevedo recrea la imagen de la disputa del arte con la naturaleza y hace al pincel –y al pintor– ser ‘competidor valiente’ (v. 2)” (*El ingenio del arte* 127).

tu pincel, dos veces peregrino, / de espíritu vivaz el breve lino / en las colores que sediento bebe, /
. . . / Los siglos que en sus hojas cuenta un roble, / árbol los cuenta sordo, tronco, ciego; / quien
más ve, quien más oye, menos dura” (1-15). Góngora also favors art over nature, and highlights
that a portrait lasts longer than a lifetime. These poetic examples illustrate the fact that Baroque
poets were using the relationship between art and nature to describe how art perfects nature in
portraits. By alluding to the visibility of a portrait, the poets highlight the influence that artifice
had in the senses. However, some highlight a sense of skepticism as artifice brings about a
“feigning” nature.

But in the poems about portraits, there is also an underlying notion of the “sisterhood” of
poetry and painting as arts in the early modern period.²⁶ Such poetry may be influenced by the
notion of *ut pictura poesis*, where poetry and painting are seen as sister arts. Derived from Horace’s
Ars Poetica, this notion would equate poetry and painting in prestige.²⁷ Therefore, it follows that if
painting can surpass or perfect nature, then so can poetry. By extension, this would include theater
since it could be interpreted as poetry, especially because of its imitative nature: “Y tal hermandad,
que igualaba en la génesis del proceso creador al pintor y al hombre de letras, . . . , procedía, como
es sabido, de la teoría de la imitación” (Arredondo 152). Theater was widely understood as an
imitation of life during early modern Spain. That is how one of the greatest playwrights of the
time, Lope de Vega, phrased it: “Ya tiene la comedia verdadera / su fin propuesto, como todo

²⁶ Adrián J. Sáez already alludes to this in the case of Quevedo (“Entre el pincel y la pluma” 388-391).

²⁷ According to Stephen A. Larrabee “The Horatian simile, however interpreted, asserted the likeness, if not the identity, of painting and poetry; and from so small a kernel came an extensive body of aesthetic speculation and, in particular, an impressive theory of art which prevailed in the 16th, 17th, and most of the 18th c.” (882).

género / de poema o *poesis*, y éste ha sido / imitar las acciones de los hombres / y pintar de aquel siglo las costumbres” (49-53). According to Lope, theater was also immersed in the topic of art and nature as it “imitates” actions of everyday life and “paints” customs of society. However, as Anthony Cascardi has remarked, theater is based on illusion. In many ways the illusion of theater may allow the spectators to come to terms with the illusory aspects of their reality (ix). Theater can then have a didactic purpose in order to influence the spectators. At the same time, the artifice of theater can negatively influence the viewers if the practices represented in theater were deemed as improper, as many moralists at the time argued. Theater, as poetry, imitated everyday life so it served as a mirror of society and therefore created “life” out of artifice.

With this background about theater, and art and nature, we can analyze how in *La prueba de las promesas* artifice is used to influence the truth and also to deceive or create an illusion. In this case, artifice takes the form of magic that serves to stage deceiving information. For example, when don Illán wishes his daughter to favor Enrique over don Juan, he advises Lucía to invent lies if necessary: “Y si se ofrece tratar / de don Juan, ponle defetos / importantes y secretos” (Ruiz de Alarcón, *La prueba* 169-171). In exchange for this favor, don Illán offers Lucía money. With don Illán’s permission to lie, Lucía will tell don Juan’s enemy, Enrique: “ved qué oficio, / qué invención o qué artificio, / qué exceso queréis que haga” in order for Blanca to favor him (270-272). With this permission, Lucía will lie to Blanca stating that don Juan has fake teeth, foul-smelling breath, and scrawny legs. Interestingly, she resorts to physical attributes to paint a bad image of don Juan and influence Blanca’s perception. “Artificio,” then, is used to deceive and contradict the truth and the sense of sight in order to influence Blanca’s perception of don Juan. We know that this is an act of “artificio” on behalf of Lucía because the play will tie sight with art:

“ ‘Pues en esta parte / —dijo— no perdiera nada, / puesto que a la vista agrada, / como la verdad, el arte;’ ” (435-438). Art and truth both please sight, and in this case Lucía is seeking to displease Blanca with the sight of don Juan. In this way, don Illán, an authoritative figure, encourages Lucía to use artifice in order to deceive the senses and influence the occurrences of the play.

However, don Illán is not so indifferent as to place his daughter’s future in the hands of Lucía. He will have a much stronger way of convincing Blanca to marry Enrique instead of don Juan. Through artifice, he will orchestrate a spell that will transform his underground study into a theater and test the character of don Juan: “Bien está / trazado desta manera. / Darle quiero, por encanto / y mágicas apariencias, / riquezas, honras y oficios / para probar sus promesas” (821-826). Lillian von der Walde has interpreted the relationship between this subplot and the play in terms of “fábula” and “marco”: “se observa la aparición de una suerte de teatro (la ilusoria fábula de la ‘prueba’) dentro del teatro (otra fábula ilusoria, que es la ‘realidad’ en la ficción: el marco). Y para que no quede duda de que todo es artificio artístico, *La prueba de las promesas* concluye con unos versos . . . en los que se evidencian. . . algunos elementos empleados en esta ficticia creación dramática” (205). This “artificio” then, culminates in the inner play and continues the topic of deception present in the beginning of the play. We can imagine this subplot in theatrical terms based on the way the necromancer describes the illusion:

D. Illán. (O será vana mi ciencia
o han de hacer los desengaños
que a quien amas aborrezcas
en los minutos de un hora;
que en solo el tiempo que resta
para ensillar al caballo,
con las artes hechiceras
he de cifrar muchos días
y epilogar muchas leguas
en la esfera desta casa;

y a cuantos están en ella,
sin salir de sus umbrales,
les tengo de hacer que vean,
en varias tierras y casos,
la prueba de las promesas.) (1020-1034)

He details the length of the process as one hour and comments that many days and distances will appear in one space. The viewers, without moving from their seat, will see in different lands a “play” called *La prueba de las promesas*. In synthesis, he refers to the playwright’s power to control time and space when staging a play, and includes the audience as an important component. This brings the notion of life as drama in theater, which may have a stoic root. For example, Epictetus wrote in his *Encheiridion*: “Remember that thou art an actor in a play, of such a kind as the teacher (author) may choose; if short, of a short one; if long, of a long one: if he wishes you to act the part of a poor man, see that you act the part naturally; For this is your duty, to act well the part that is given to you; but to select the part, belongs to another” (241). Epictetus’s words would correspond with don Illán’s stoic character, a trait that assimilates him to Enrico from *La cueva de Salamanca*. The topic of life as a play may be more clearly analyzed in Calderón’s *auto sacramental* entitled *El gran teatro del mundo* which came years later after *La prueba de las promesas*. Specifically, the topic of appearances in life as a play is present in Autor’s words: “y porque en fiesta igual su parte tenga / el hermoso aparato / de apariencias, de trajes el ornato, / hoy prevenido quiero / que, alegre, liberal y lisonjero, / fabriques apariencias / que de dudas se pasen a evidencias” (Calderón 58-64). This places Autor as the overseer of the play just as don Illán is overseeing the occurrences of his own play. Both Alarcón and Calderón share the interest of staging life and the concept of free-will in theater, and they both leave the final decision to the person. In other words, while metatheater, or magic, can influence free-will it cannot coerce it. This is clearly stated in

Alarcón's *La prueba de las promesas* when Enrique describes the influence of magic in the following manner:

¿En la magia hay potestad
de obligar la voluntad
y hacer favor del desdén?
No. Mas puede en las criaturas
fingir varios accidentes,
puede imitar los ausentes
con fantásticas figuras.
Puédenos representar
en un hora muchos años,
y que ve pueblos extraños
el que se está en un lugar.
Y así, pues el albedrío
la causa extrínseca mueve
para que elija o repruebe,
que podrá poner confío,
con engaño o con verdad,
don Illán en los sujetos
tales gracias y defetos
que muevan voluntad. (1182-1200)

Enrique states how magic with “engaño” or “verdad” can place virtues or defects that move the “voluntad” or free-will. Therefore, Alarcón equates magic with the practice of writing theater, and takes it a step further by stating how theater or magic can directly influence in one’s free-will. As opposed to *La cueva de Salamanca*, Alarcón here is being more upfront about how free-will is easily influenced by external forces and has decided to use theater as his tool.

It seems that magic is a way to refer to theater and the actions under magic influence the occurrences of the play. For example, art is used to test the veracity of don Juan’s promise by gifting him with luxurious posts and riches. This only serves to influence don Juan in forgetting his promise and disrespecting don Illán at the end. After his disappointment, don Illán ends the spell by word and writing: “Bastante prueba / de tu ingratitud he hecho. / Los caracteres deshago”

(2674-2676). At that moment don Juan along with all the characters are found back in Toledo in the enclosed place the enchantment started in:

DON JUAN. Pues ¿dónde estoy?
DON ILLÁN. En Toledo,
en mi casa y en mi estudio.

He explains that all the posts and fortune he acquired were illusions: “¿Luego tuvistes por cierto / ser marqués y presidente / y privado? Todas fueron / fantásticas ilusiones / que en sola un hora de tiempo / que tardó en aderezar / Pérez el Hijo de Fuego, / os representó mi ciencia / sin salir deste aposento, / para conocer así / las verdades de dos pechos” (2687-2697). The “fantásticas ilusiones” is what don Juan lived but his punishment comes as a consequence of his ungratefulness and his decision to not reciprocate don Illán’s favors. Blanca, on the other hand, now that she has witnessed the “true” nature of don Juan will choose Enrique over don Juan. Very different is his behavior during the spell than at the beginning of the play where don Juan had a genuine interest in learning magic and a genuine love for Blanca. Hence, the magic subplot not only staged another play, but also succeeded in influencing Blanca’s will at the end and molding a different persona out of don Juan. Art, understood as theater, has surpassed nature with deceit and illusion. In the politics of 17th-century everyday life, appearance mattered more than reality. Even more than social codes since don Juan and Enrique were both regarded with the same social privileges as don Illán himself acknowledges: “Yo confieso que don Juan / es muy deudo del marqués / de Tarifa, y digo que es / rico, discreto y galán; / y que tuviera mi hija / en él venturoso empleo, / mas, con todo, mi deseo / es que a don Enrique elija; / que, demás de que no tiene / menos partes que don Juan / de rico, noble y galán, / esto a la quietud conviene” (137-148). In artifice, don Illán brought a nonexistent future to prove don Juan’s ungratefulness and influence Blanca to choose Enrique.

The end of the play will show to what extent appearance and reality influence actions. For example, Tristán will have a better fortune than his master don Juan. He ends the play in an ironic tone when he says: “Seré lacayo primero / que se casa en la comedia / no casándose su dueño. / Esta verdadera historia, / senado ilustre y discreto, / cuenta el *Conde Lucanor* / de un mágico de Toledo” (2739-2745). His words already mark this “comedia” as special since it seems to break the norms of theater. The servant gets married while the protagonist not only loses Blanca but is ashamed of his actions during the enchantment. His reference to “comedia” further reminds the spectator or reader that life in effect is a play. In the end the spectator may also be at odds when Tristán states that what the spectator or reader just witnessed is a “verdadera historia” told by the Conde Lucanor. Don Juan Manuel’s *ejemplo* is not a “verdadera historia” nor was the inner play that was initiated through an enchantment, yet they are regarded in such a way by Tristán. His remarks only serve to further blur the fine line between life and theater, or to show his incapability of distinguishing between appearance and reality.

However, there is one character who can distinguish theater from life: don Illán. As the orchestrator of the metatheater, don Illán is special as he can enter the metatheater at will. According to Thacker, characters like don Illán “often develop a close relationship with the spectators that is based on mutual understanding” (3). In his book, he states how this “role-play permits a dramatic debate on the state and nature of society in seventeenth-century Spain” (3). The audience can sympathize with don Illán as they both are the only ones witnessing the metatheater. As such, Alarcón is utilizing this theatrical tactic to comment on the ideal playwright, one that stages a blurred division between appearance and reality, yet is able to penetrate both at will. It is no coincidence that one of his victims, don Juan, is guided by appearances. His apparent good

luck in gaining high political posts and his refusal to commit to his promise only served to intensify his downfall at the end of the play. This conforms the social anxiety behind the metatheater: the notion of seeking a post while at Court, an anxiety Alarcón was familiar with as it took him approximately ten years to gain a position in the Council of the Indies. Although appearance can influence actions, appearance should come with a grain of skepticism as the reality might be very different. Only a learned playwright, one that would understand the dividing line, could entertain the public and show the characters' true colors at the same time. This is Alarcón's self-fashioning as an ideal playwright.

Conclusion

Alarcón's *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas* share many elements. They both have scenes that take place in legendary caves, one in Salamanca and the other in Toledo. They both deal with magic and include a necromancer. But most importantly, they problematize the Baroque debate between art and nature in different contexts. At the beginning of the chapter I mentioned how Greenblatt seems to suggest that self-fashioning implies using art as a way of molding against nature, either physically or psychologically. Alarcón stages this rivalry in two ways. Although never explicitly mentioned, *La cueva de Salamanca* has certain characteristics that are associated with alchemy. The character don Juan de Mendoza, named after the playwright, leads the spectator to the alchemical elements. Along with don Diego and Enrico, they represent a transmutation summarized in three stages: *nigredo*, *albedo*, and *rubedo*. The statue that turns into a human in the stage could be interpreted as another alchemical creation, the *homunculus*. These elements present in the play are directly related to the rivalry between nature and art. In the debate

between Enrico and the friar that concludes the play, they seem to agree that magic performs according to nature and therefore it is legitimate. However, the play is also clear in showing that art can fashion an identity. Don Juan is transformed into the ideal author who intervenes in his own work in order to bring about a self-reflective text that comments on the powers of creation and transmutation. Acting together with the magician, the author self-fashions as someone who can bring to Madrid the mines of Mexico, now transmuted into a cave that exhibits a new kind of gold, the immense capabilities of the human being who can develop an art that rivals nature. In *La prueba de las promesas*, the rivalry between art and nature is staged as a more obvious form of metatheater. Using the fact that theater imitates life, Alarcón creates a play within a play to simulate life and test the character of don Juan. The art of staging theater is compared to the art of magic. The character of don Illán may show Alarcón's view of an ideal playwright. Hence, both plays stage the rivalry between appearance and reality, and in both instances magic serves as the mediator.

One may interpret the occurrences in the enclosed spaces of these plays as a wider commentary on the political matters and concerns of appearance at the Spanish Court during Alarcón's time. After all, don Diego admires the Marqués de Villena for visiting Enrico in his humble studio and learn more about the legend of Enrico. Don Diego says: "Gran don Enrique, jamás / para hazaña tan honesta / a príncipe destes tiempos / vi calzarse las espuelas, / trocar las fiestas y gustos / al trabajo de las letras, / y el encanto cortesano / por una encantada cueva: / acción de príncipe heroico, / acción, en efeto, vuestra, / que sois quien del gran Maestre / el valor y sangre hereda" (761-772). We may also add Zamudio's words once he comes back from Madrid: "Señor, si a la corte vas, / lo aborrecerás del todo" (1079-1080). Both comment negatively on

Madrid. Such critique of courtly and political reality is not distant from *La prueba de las promesas* where Court is described as “inquieta” on two occasions: “troqué el ocio de Toledo / a la inquietud cortesana” and “¿La multitud, / el cortesano bullicio, / la grandeza y la inquietud / os ofende o os agrada?” (1535-1536; 1713-1716). In the play, the social anxiety behind the arduous, and often futile, drive to attain a post further critiques life at the Spanish Court. However, more than a negative commentary there is also a hope for a manipulable art that may direct circumstances in a different direction: A self-fashioning that would require a labor similar to unearthing a mine to discover knowledge, or engage in an alchemical transmutation. For in these caves instead of finding natural resources we find moral neo-stoic values.²⁸ In these caves Alarcón conceals the secret of his theater. While for Giovanni Botero industry provides more riches than mining ever can, for Alarcón theater provides a different richness: a way to self-fashion, and indirectly a way to show others the powers of transmutation.

²⁸ For example, Enrico’s servant, Andrés, asks him when he will stop being poor as a teacher. Enrico responds: “Cuando salga de ignorante, / que el saber es gran riqueza. / No es el fin, Andrés amigo, / del estudio, enriquecer; / fin del estudio es saber: / si eso alcanzo, lo consigo. / El que riquezas procura, / con la fortuna las ha, / cuyo buen efeto está / no en saber, sino en ventura. / Rico, eminente en saber / pocas veces lo verás; / saber pobre quiero más / que ignorante enriquecer” (211-224). Enrico’s priorities are a different kind of richness. Similarly, don Illán’s enchantment gifts don Juan with new lucrative posts. He warns don Juan: “Con el aumento de estado, / y la mudanza de edad / más de alguno conocí, / que la memoria perdió” (623-626). He repeats this same idea in the play: “Bien está / trazado desta manera; / darle quiero por encanto / y mágicas apariencias / riquezas, honras, y oficios, / para probar sus promesas” (821-826). The traits that led don Illán to end the spell are also traits associated with the pursuit of riches: “vos le mostrastes tan vano, / tan ingrato y tan soberbio” (2698-2699). Jules Whicker has recognized the neo-stoic presence in both plays and associates them with a didactic purpose: “Though in this, and in other respects, these plays are identifiably neo-Stoic in conception, it will be seen that the presentation of magical illusion in Alarcón’s plays is not simply a metaphor for the material world as viewed from a neo-Stoic standpoint, but it also has a didactic potential akin to that claimed for the *comedia* by its apologists when used with wisdom and prudence” (*The Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* 108).

Chapter 4: Alarcón's Ludic Self-Fashioning

Ya sabéis – dijo Florino – cómo la Contratación es una Audiencia Real y depósito, donde viene a parar todo cuanto baja de las Indias, y donde juntamente se despachan negocios tocantes a navegación. Pues, advertid cuánto se parece a ella la del juego, donde se manifiesta y descarga la mayor parte de oro, plata y riqueza que de allá viene; derramándose después con el exceso que habemos visto. Y más, que de aquellas provincias lo que se trae en barras y tejos no es tan corriente, como aquí lo ofrece el juego, hecho ya moneda. Pues, decir la gente que destas casas se despacha a las Indias, no sé yo cuál otra de contratación haya permitido pasar allá tantos hombres, como por momento salen tahures de la casa del juego, que parece haberse hecho las Indias refugio desta gente perdida. Y de aquí es que los de allá, cuando vienen a España, son tan celebrados, cual acontece entre los grandes letrados que vienen de universidades famosas. De donde también nace aquella antigua competencia: quién tenga más primores en el arte: los criollos del Pirú o albureros de Nueva España, por ser sus fullerías más que ordinarias. Averigüenlo ellos, por cuya cuenta corre.
(Luque Fajardo, vol. 2, 231-232)

On his last transatlantic voyage, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón chose Madrid as his destination. From the milieu of Mexico and after failed attempts of attaining a stable position, Alarcón was forced to adjust to the overwhelming centrality of Madrid. Surely, court manuals such as Juan Boscán's translation of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il cortegiano*, or Gracián Dantisco's *Galateo español* provided appropriate guides for Alarcón to know how to navigate the Spanish Court. These court manuals and other conducts of behavior had informed people on how to act, dress, and address others for years. However, by the time Alarcón reached Madrid near the end of 1613, many of these manuals were already outdated. What he may have read would not compare to his personal experience and acquired ideas about how a courtier should behave in contemporaneous Madrid. These ideas may be reflected, and challenged, in his theater. In this chapter, I interpret sections of Alarcón's two most famous plays, *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*, as court manuals. Characters in these plays find themselves new to the Court and seek guidance from an experienced character. This figure takes the place of the manuals and helps to navigate different situations. Furthermore, the approximate time of composition of these plays may speak to Alarcón's personal

code of behavior based on his experience in Madrid. *Las paredes oyen* is one of Alarcón's earliest comedias and most closely related to his biography. *La verdad sospechosa* came shortly after, at a time when Alarcón had already lived in Madrid for a few years and gained some renown as a playwright. Together, they give a preview of Alarcón's experience as a courtier and portray ludic elements that few critics have noticed or analyzed.

Criticism often alludes to the theme of *engaño* or deception in *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*, and therefore some debates center on whether these plays are didactic or have a moral purpose.¹ Some critics focus on the negative consequences of lying and slandering in Madrid. Others have linked both plays to the topic of mendacity. In terms of character development in Alarconian theater, it has been affirmed that don Mendo from *Las paredes oyen* is a precursor of don García from *La verdad sospechosa*.² Other interpretations have categorized these plays as autobiographical, mostly focusing on *Las paredes oyen* because the protagonist is named don Juan de Mendoza and his "ugly" appearance as well as his social status seem to fit with Alarcón's biography.³ Regarding *La verdad sospechosa*, don García feigns being an *indiano* thereby

¹ For *Las paredes oyen* see for example Leonard M. DiLillo "Characterization and Ethics in Ruiz de Alarcón's *Las paredes oyen*." For *La verdad sospechosa* see John G. Morton, Leonard M. DiLillo's "Moral Purpose in Ruiz de Alarcón's 'La verdad sospechosa,'" Robert L. Fiore, and Adriana Lewis Galanes, among others. James A. Parr ties *La verdad sospechosa* and *Las paredes oyen* through the topic of "honor-virtue" arguing that in both plays it is "a corollary of Stoic-Christian self-mastery and of the related but more secular concept of *noblesse oblige*" (173).

² Joaquín Casaldueiro writes: "El protagonista Don Mendo está inventado según el trazado de Don García, el primer galán de *La verdad sospechosa*. Don Mendo es un maldiciente doblado de embustero y como Don García hizo bueno lo de que en la boca del mentiroso llega a no creerse ni la misma verdad, así Mendo confirma el dicho que sirve de título a la comedia" (253).

³ See Chapter 1 for 19th-century critics who associated *Las paredes oyen* with Alarcón's biography. I discuss other critics later in this chapter.

establishing a connection between Alarcón's American origins and this deceitful character.⁴ Lastly, criticism has also connected these plays because of their *graciosos*: "The two best-known *graciosos* are Tristán of *The Truth Suspect* and Beltrán (*The Walls Have Ears*), who are, indeed, more serious, and serve as sober and learned counselors and companions to their respective masters, although not without a quiet, dignified brand of humor, but they do not contribute materially to the development of the plot" (Poesse 111). I disagree with Poesse's last assertion. As we will see, the *graciosos* play a key role in the ludic language and plot development of both plays. Although their dates of composition are not certain, *Las paredes oyen* has been dated as 1616 making it one of the first Alarconian plays composed after his arrival to Madrid. *La verdad sospechosa* would come a few years later in 1620 published under the name of Lope de Vega, and republished in 1634 by Alarcón himself. It has been regarded as a masterpiece of Spanish Golden Age theater both by his contemporaries and modern critics alike.

As we have seen, the topic of mendacity and morality has yielded significant studies in Alarconian theater regarding these plays. However, there may be more ways of approaching them. Building upon the relationship between the *graciosos* and the protagonists, I analyze how each *comedia* has a character that is new to the Court and therefore another character is openly asked to serve as guide for him as he navigates Madrid. This may open the possibility of reading these plays as court manuals, or as works that dialogue with such books. Furthermore, these two plays also share a biographical element that has not been studied: Alarcón's affinity for games and a playful

⁴ Margarita Peña has seen some correspondences between don García and Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: "No está por demás reparar en que don García, personaje magistral, presenta, al igual que otros de la saga dramática alarconiana, puntos de coincidencia con su creador: el que en su discurso mentiroso diga que es un indiano, que ha contraído matrimonio secreto en Salamanca, que domina las artes mágicas" (*Juan Ruiz de Alarcón ante la crítica* 278-279).

lifestyle. *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa* are among the Alarconian plays with the most references to games. Upon close inspection, the *comedias*' lexicon on games reveals aspects of the protagonists' self-fashioning.

With existing documentation about Alarcón's life and character, we can confirm that he had an interest in games. An anonymous letter details that on the 4th of July of 1606 Alarcón participated in a festivity in San Juan de Alfarache near Seville.⁵ This occurred during Alarcón's first trip to Spain. He competed with twelve poets, each having to write verses for distinct comical situations, so he composed four *décimas* followed by a *redondilla* directed to a woman in distress because her hands sweated too much. The letter mentions that Alarcón "mostró su persona . . . y sus cuatro *décimas*" showing an early attempt to self-fashion as a poet (Fernández Guerra y Orbe 1280). Later that night, he entertained the audience by playing a character named Don Floripando Talludo, príncipe de Chunga. The letter describes his presence in the following way:

Presentaron apriesa los premios a sus damas, porque ya se acercaba mucho el ruido de un sonoro pito, que hizo estar a todos atentos hasta ver salir por un lado del patio *un correo*, causa de este estruendo, y tras dél *un embozado* de menos que mediana estatura. Venían en dos caballos, o por mejor decir, los caballos venían en ellos Desta suerte dieron una presurosa vuelta al patio, y se volvieron a salir por otra puerta; dejando esta aventura suspenso en los altos a las asomadas damas, y en los bajos a los caballeros mirones. . . .

. . . . A este tiempo se oyeron voces de que el *Príncipe de Chunga* . . . se acercaba a torrear, y que era el embozado que hizo la entrada en los caballos que os dije. Con deseo

⁵ Aureliano Fernández-Guerra y Orbe published the letter in 1864 and attributed it to Miguel de Cervantes. No modern critic believes the letter to be from Cervantes.

de conocer este nuevo aventurero, volvimos todos el rostro, a tiempo que ya él entraba en el patio haciendo piernas, con unas armas de pasta, color de hierro, recamadas de oro; el penacho de la celada era un manojo de hojas de cañas, tan verde como las que aquel punto se acababan de cortar dellas; sus calzas eran, en el fondo, de papel amarillo, con cuchilladas de lo propio, aunque coloradas, con diversas labores hechas dello y del más fino y sonoro papel que ha producido Flandes ni visto Alemania. (Fernández Guerra y Orbe 1296-1298)

The details of the letter describe Alarcón's physical figure as "mediana estatura," and comment on his affinity for theatricality. We can conclude that he liked poetic games and engaged in self-laughter while participating in festive events. The end of the letter mentions that Alarcón, or don Floripando rather, won an award for "el de más extremado en la folla," attesting to his jolly nature (1301). The incident in Alfarache showcases Alarcón's early interest in the literary environment. Furthermore, it shows that Alarcón was already using theatricality and his body as a way of gaining publicity in the literary circles of his time.

One aspect that stands out from the Alfarache incident is the specific language used for Alarcón's pseudonym. Some critics have interpreted this pseudonym as a concise description of the *figura* of Alarcón, referring to his physical deformity and his aspirations of nobility status by adding "don" to his name.⁶ However, the pseudonym can also highlight Alarcón's expertise in

⁶ Jaime Concha, for example, says about the name of the character: "Tras la burla del disfraz, todo el drama de Alarcón se presenta ya concentrado en la estupenda síntesis de un seudónimo dolorosamente suyo. El *Don* principesco que flota inaccesible, muy por encima de su posición efectiva en la sociedad; esa *Flor* quebrada y rota, que imita el perfil de sus corcovas, llegando a ser una condensación de su propio cuerpo; este *Talludo* enfático y peyorativo a la vez, qué más que al buen talle de la época parece remitirnos al tallo deficiente de la flor; y finalmente su *Chunga* natal, país o territorio que busca únicamente suscitar la irrisión: es esto lo que nos revela Alarcón en un mote que, bufonesco y todo, se inscribe como un prematuro epitafio de sí mismo" (Introducción 37).

naipes and other games. We are certain that Alarcón engaged in the game of cards because Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, in his *El pasajero* (1617), describes him in the following manner: “[e]l ánimo era un trasunto de miseria; la organización de estatura mínima, y ésta, muy vellosa y con espesas barbicas. Si perdía jugando, rabiaba y maldecíase; si daba naipes, excedía al más riguroso garitero en quitar pieles, en chupar sangre. Tras esto, quería caballerear, quería para sí aquella tan difícil unión de honra y provecho” (141). He later adds: “[t]odo era mofarle, todo escarnecerle, todo gastarle, pasando muy buenos ratos con su figura” (142). Suárez de Figueroa’s physical and emotional description of Alarcón, although it refers to his behavior years later in Madrid, is consistent with that mentioned in the anonymous letter. Alarcón liked to have fun, even if it was at the expense of his “figura,” and he must have been good in *naipes* as he exceeded the most “riguroso garitero,” another word to refer to an expert in the game of cards. It is here where the lexicon of *naipes* and other games explains an aspect of Alarcón’s persona that has not been studied. The “garitero’s” role was to lure people into betting in addition to scamming other players in a game setting (Chamorro Fernández 104). According to Suárez de Figueroa, Alarcón exceeded the *garitero* in “chupar sangre.” In the *naipe* lexicon, “sangre” can refer to the money that is lost while playing (Chamorro Fernández 134). It is of interest that Suárez de Figueroa mentions that Alarcón “quería caballerear” and wanted to have both “honra y provecho,” an attempt of upward mobility and courtly behavior, albeit through a game of cards. This information adds a new dimension to his initial alias “don Floripando Talludo, príncipe de Chunga” because it could also be tied to the game of *naipes*. As María Inés Chamorro Fernández suggests, the term “Flor” is used

either to refer to a card game or an “engaño” within the game of cards (102; 156).⁷ Furthermore, “Talludo” could also refer to the verb “tallar” which in the lexicon of games means “[l]levar la banca en los juegos de azar” (Chamorro Fernández 137). This would introduce Alarcón as an avid trickster/player in order to earn money and ascend the social ladder in Spain, an aspect that has not been analyzed by Alarconian criticism.

With the purpose of playing the gentleman and gaining “honra y provecho,” Alarcón was not only interested in upward mobility but also in how games are intimately related to society and may instruct the individual. We may approach this topic as a form of self-fashioning as well. As I mentioned before, in the two plays studied in this chapter the duke Urbino and don García are new to court and seek advice about how to behave and navigate the Court. As Stephen Greenblatt writes: “self-fashioning acquires a new range of meanings: it describes the practice of parents and teachers; it is linked to manners or demeanor, particularly that of the elite; it may suggest hypocrisy or deception . . .” (3). Court manuals enabled self-fashioning as they described manners and behaviors to be followed by the elite. Nobility would no longer be restricted only to lineage, which made it easier for an outsider to blend in and behave like a courtier. In this new way of behaving, games and leisure were of importance for their opportunity to instruct and entertain. Only those games that had *provecho* and did not lead to vice or gambling were favored. Games were supposed to instruct in social interactions, and therefore, often resembled social life. But a clear distinction between play and life was necessary: “In addition to facilitating reflection upon the physical impulses and the ordering aspirations of the mind, the independence of the game from quotidian

⁷ Compare, for example, the name Floripando to that of the *tahúr* Florino, one of the main characters in Francisco de Luque Faxardo’s *Fiel desengaño contra la ociosidad y los juegos*.

concerns allows for an understanding of the relationship between reality and the play sphere” (Scham 14). As we will see, Alarcón not only self-fashions as a player in the different representations of games in *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*, but the protagonists’ interactions often depend on their ability to distinguish between game and real life.

To understand how Alarcón builds a court manual in these plays and self-fashions as a player, I will start by giving background information on court manuals to contextualize their influence in literature and their respective authors’ views on games. Then I analyze *Las paredes oyen* where don Juan and don Mendo serve to instruct the Duke Urbino about life at court. I argue that don Juan and Beltrán’s references to chess, dice, cards, and physical games guide their interaction. Alarcón self-fashions through don Juan in this play and the ludic references serve to contrast Medieval games with newer ones, depicting don Juan as a player in games of chance. At the same time, the specific reference to the “sota” card in the play foreshadows an intertextual relationship with Lope de Vega’s *Los donaires de Matico*. Hence, the ludic argot of the play is a tool for Alarcón to self-fashion as a player-playwright. My analysis then moves to *La verdad sospechosa* where Tristán serves as a guide to the Court for the newly-arrived don García. From the beginning of the play the authoritative figure Beltrán exhibits anxiety towards the deceit found in Madrid, which seems to be embodied in his son don García. This anxiety is often expressed in ludic language in the play, and the father attempts to save his son with Tristán’s guidance. But even with Tristán’s advice, don García shows himself to be a true *tahúr* when he is described as “arrojado” by multiple characters. This daring may go along with his lying nature, as only a true *tahúr* is good at hiding the truth in a game. I argue that don García fashions himself as a player in the Court and attempts to gain

“provecho” out of his lies in the play. In other words, don García approaches life as a game, which is his attempt to be successful in a city full of deceit.

Court Manuals and Games

The topic of court manuals in early modern Europe is a vast one that includes as many texts as ideas about customs and behaviors. According to M. F. Rusnak, it was within the Renaissance courts and cities of Italy “that writers first began to reflect on and record the characteristics of the ideal courtier and sophisticated behavior not bound to the spiritual and chivalric codes of the medieval period” (xiv). Courtesy books stood as reference for the changes that characterize the Early Modern period and as a contrast to the chivalric way of life.⁸ To some extent, these books permitted individuals to self-fashion as nobility, and thus made them less reliant on inheritance and more on customs, practice, and appearance. The corpus is too vast to list here, but some common manuals that arose in this time period are Machiavelli’s *Il Principe*, Della Casa’s *Il Galateo*, Girolamo Muzio’s *Il gentiluomo*, and of course Baldessare Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano*. Through translations, some of these texts made their way to France, Spain, England, and Germany among other locations. In Spain, due to their uniqueness, some of the translations are considered as independent works. This is the case for Juan Boscán’s *El cortesano*, Luis de Milá’s

⁸ This is not to say that the Medieval influence on behavior ended sharply and people started to behave “modernly” with the advent of these texts. As Judit Tekulics writes: “El libro de Gracián Dantisco se introduce en la serie de aquellas obras maestras de la literatura que, a partir de la vigilia de la edad moderna, contribuyen a la transformación de la sociedad caballeresca (guerrera) en cortesana, de la cual nacen la sociedad y civilización modernas. Todo eso, desde luego, no significa una ruptura con el pasado o con las tradiciones medievales y caballerescas, sino una evolución hacia un modelo social más complejo que incorpora elementos de la tradición del pasado que le convienen” (17).

El cortesano, and Lucas Gracián Dantisco's *El galateo español*. But reducing such books to the genre of manuals would not do justice to the high rhetoric portrayed in them. These books were not only manuals but also examples of high prose and were emulated and used as reference by authors and playwrights throughout Europe.

Some courtesy books commented on the role of games and leisure in courtly life. After all, Castiglione's discourses about the ideal courtier developed as a "juego."⁹ According to Castiglione, a good courtier should play games that instruct the mind about social matters, such as chess, and avoid gambling or developing a vice out of games (127).¹⁰ In Boscán's translation the hierarchy between chess and other games is expressed through Federico: "Pero aquellos otros juegos que vos decís que saben, demás del axadrez, quizá son como muchos que yo he visto hacer a gente baxa, que no sirven sino para hacer estar al vulgo con las bocas abiertas" (252).¹¹ It is clear that certain games connote class and could lead to immorality in life at the Court. In a similar vein, Dantisco enforced such views in his *Galateo*: "Y por esto no se deve dar el que pretende ser galateo y bien quisto, a jugar con cobdicia de ganar, especialmente naipes, pues se vee claro que quien consume su tiempo y hacienda en esto, no le queda lugar para usar de la cortesía, trato y conversación amable, conforme al buen intento de este tratado" (126). Evidently there is a hierarchy between games and their respective purposes: chess being privileged over other games such as those of

⁹ In Boscán's translation: "Así que, por castigar muchos locos, los cuales piensan ser buenos cortesanos si van cargados de presunción y hacen mil desenvolturas fuera de propósito, paréceme que hará al caso que agora sea nuestro juego escoger alguno de la compañía, esplicando en particular todas las condiciones y calidades que se requieren para merecer este título" (120).

¹⁰ When Gasparo asks Federico if games such as cards and dice are a vice, he answers: "I do not, unless he should do so too constantly and as a result should neglect other more important things, or indeed unless he should play only to win money and to cheat the other player" (127).

¹¹ Interestingly, Boscán chooses not to name cards or games of dice in his translation despite Castiglione's inclusion of those games in the same passage.

chance that involved cards or dice. Hence, where, what, and with whom you played spoke about how you were perceived in courtly society. Leisure activity was an indicator of your honor and social status.

It is important to note that in European literature the hierarchy between games was not widespread despite Catiglione's distinction. In the Iberian Peninsula, for example, *naipes* did not always have a negative connotation. As Jean-Pierre Étienvre notes, some authors took advantage of *naipes* to honor God: "Menudean, sin embargo, los poetas que, moralizando los naipes, se escapan de esa corta referencialidad. Estos poetas no censuran el juego, sino que se aprovechan de él para honrar a Dios y a sus santos" (16). These references "a lo divino" seem to be one example of how *naipes* and literature intermingled in Spain: "En la poesía de la Edad de Oro, se habla poquitas veces, en realidad, *de los naipes*; se habla muchísimas veces, en cambio, *con los naipes*" (15). Hence, *naipes* became metaphors, or a way of speaking about other matters in literature and theater.¹² It is in this way that the topic of play and games is understood in this chapter. Alarcón constructs the *comedias* sometimes using lexicon related to games to speak about courtly manners and customs in

¹² The argot of *naipes* and other games is particularly present in theater. According to Louis C. Perez: "En las obras teatrales del siglo de oro los naipes juegan un papel importante cultural y artístico. Dejan su sello en lo más mínimo (el vocablo aislado), y en lo filosófico-estructural de la obra" (143-144). About Calderón de la Barca's theater, see María J. Ortega Máñez, or Paula Casariego Castiñeira's study where the references to *naipes* in *Nadie fie su secreto* are understood as a "estrategia dramática que conforma el enredo" (462). For a study on Tirso de Molina see Wolfram Nitsch, where the scholar argues that in *La villana de Vallecas* "no sólo hay un nexo evidente entre el juego teatral y otros juegos, particularmente los de azar, sino también un contraste llamativo entre diferentes interpretaciones y valoraciones del proceso lúdico" (937). Outside of theater, the use of games has been analyzed in Miguel de Cervantes (Jean-Pierre Étienvre; Frederick de Armas "The Artful Gamblers"; Michael Scham) and Luis de Góngora (Domingo Ynduráin) among others. For more on the lexicon of *naipes* see Encarnación Podadera Solórzano and María Inés Chamorro Fernández.

the two selected plays, and these references in return are symbols that speak about the self-fashioning of the characters, and the playwright himself.

“El monstruo con su figura” in *Las paredes oyen*

Las paredes oyen was staged in Madrid in 1617, hence it is reasonable to assume that it was composed around 1616 or before, although it was not published until 1628 in Alarcón’s first volume of plays (Castro, Introducción 1). Multiple critics have seen a correspondence between the character don Juan de Mendoza and Alarcón himself, arguing that there are various autobiographical elements in the play. On the one hand, according to Castro Leal, “Ya se ha observado que en Don Juan de Mendoza puso Alarcón algo de sí mismo. Don Juan triunfa sobre su brillante y apuesto rival por virtudes de las que se sentiría dueño nuestro poeta: discreción, valor, amor fiel y apasionado, y malicia e ingenio para aprovechar las ocasiones favorables” (Introducción 5). On the other hand, Willard F. King sees Alarcón’s legal background in the play:

Para el lector o espectador, una de las principales gracias de la comedia [*Las paredes oyen*] es la sutil pero sólida cadena de pruebas que se va formando y que, por la vía racional, lleva a un desenlace muy humano y eminentemente satisfactorio. No hay duda de que en la firme estructura, en la compleja, sentenciosa y bien matizada argumentación, en la equilibrada racionalidad del teatro de Alarcón, ha influido bastante su educación jurídica. (79)

Ruth Lee Kennedy not only sees Alarcón in don Juan, but also adds information about his love life: “That Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza had himself in mind when he sketched its protagonist, don Juan de Mendoza, is to me inescapable. Equally inescapable . . . is the conviction that *Las paredes oyen*, in which the poor but noble hero wins the virtuous and charming widow, is at once an answer to his detractors and a reflection of the love he felt for some woman at this time” (148).

More recently, Gloria Bodtorf Clark employs disability studies to approach don Juan de Mendoza and Alarcón himself: “Don Juan de Mendoza furthers the connection with Ruiz de Alarcón with those descriptive words, *pobre*, *feo*, and *de mal talle*. Each of the words is evocative of Ruiz de Alarcón’s own human experience of poverty and being called ugly and deformed by a number of his contemporaries” (108). As we can see, criticism has rightly associated *Las paredes oyen* with different aspects of Alarcón’s life, particularly through the character don Juan. I would like to add that Alarcón’s ludic curiosities are also present in this play, and it serves as a way to contrast Medieval codes of conduct with newer ones in Madrid. These allusions to games foreshadow another contrast present in the play related to the practice of writing theater. A reference to *naipes* shows that Alarcón is also self-fashioning as a new playwright, contrasting his theater with that of his contemporary Lope de Vega, just as he did in *El semejante a sí mismo*.

At first sight it is easy to glance over the ludic language in *Las paredes oyen* in favor of the morality and twists that the *comedia* offers. The play is about don Juan de Mendoza and his love success despite his unpleasant appearance. The setting is in Madrid, around Midsummer’s Day, at a time that is contemporaneous to Alarcón. Don Juan, a poor and ugly but noble *galán*, is in love with doña Ana, a recent widow. But Ana favors his opponent don Mendo, a handsome, rich, and noble *galán*. Don Mendo is a slanderer and this places him at odds with Ana once she accidentally overhears a conversation between don Juan, don Mendo, and the Duke Urbino. While don Juan speaks wonders of her, don Mendo slanders her in an attempt to dissuade the duke Urbino from laying eyes on doña Ana. In contrast, don Juan realizes that the Duke’s love involvement could be

to his advantage to win Ana's love. In an act of sacrifice compared to a fencing technique,¹³ don Juan plans to spark a love interest in the Duke Urbino for Ana. His reasoning is that with three possible suitors it will be easier to lure Ana as her attention will be divided among the three. This results in success as Ana sees beyond don Juan's physical appearance and notices virtues that contrast with don Mendo's slandering habits. At the end, Ana chooses don Juan over the Duke Urbino, and don Mendo is thus "punished."

Of interest is the role of the Duke Urbino, a secondary character in the play, that is new to court and wishes to behave accordingly. He seeks advice from don Juan and don Mendo. His name may serve as reminder of the Duke in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, thereby associating the play to court manuals. Stronger than name association, however, is the Duke's language about his lack of experience in Madrid. He presents his situation with the following words:

Hombre que a la corte viene
recién heredado y mozo,
pájaro que estrena el viento,
nave que se arroja al golfo,
que a los ojos de su rey
y a los populares ojos
ni debe mostrar flaqueza,
ni puede esconder el rostro,
ha de regir sus acciones
por los expertos pilotos,
obligados, por parientes,
por amigos, cuidadosos.
Con esta ley os obligo,
y con esta fe os escojo
capitanes veteranos
deste soldado bisoño.
Acompañadme los dos,
advertidme lo que ignoro,

¹³ "Esa es cautela que enseña / el diestro don Luis de Pacheco, / que dice que está la espada / más flaca en el movimiento" says Beltrán after hearing don Juan's plan (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Las paredes* 1274-1277).

decidme el nombre, el estado
y la calidad de todos;
y en lo de las cortesías
principal cuidado os pongo,
advirtiéndolo que con nadie
pretendo pecar de corto . . . (808-831)

In the eyes of the king and while in court, the Duke Urbino wants to make sure he is up to date on the state of Madrid's inhabitants as well as the "cortesías" or customs that are practiced. He admits to his ignorance by calling himself "soldado bisoño" and has chosen don Juan and don Mendo to be his guides to navigate the Court. From here, the outcome of their interaction may be interpreted as a guide to Madrid, where the new customs, developments and social relationships will be challenged and showcased.

Don Juan and his servant Beltrán anticipated the meeting with the Duke Urbino in what seems to be war and ludic terms to describe a love affair. As they speculate, Beltrán will start using references to a pawn and a knight in order to describe that a love interest may be behind Duke Urbino's calling: "Que, noche de San Juan, hallo, / si un peón sabe embestir, / que suele solo rendir / más que treinta de a caballo; / que hay mujer que en el engaño / que en esta noche previene, / librados los gustos tiene / de los deseos de un año" (716-723). The fact that it is "noche de San Juan" may already introduce a carnivalesque tone to the scene. The reference to "peón" is interesting because it could refer to ". . . el soldado de a pie, dicho infante, y de allí se dixeron los peones del axedrez" (Covarrubias, *Tesoro* 861). In other words, Beltrán compares himself to a soldier that could be advantageous over a "caballo" or knight which in this case would be the Duke Urbino. But the reference is particularly revealing because, as Covarrubias mentions, the influence

of this soldier can also refer to the piece used in the game of chess.¹⁴ This would also be consistent with the Duke Urbino as the “caballo” or knight. Comparing himself to a pawn in chess, Beltrán is not only highlighting his skills, although he is a servant, but he is using a game that mirrored order, class, and society. This language should not surprise us coming from Beltrán as early in the play he proves to have an affinity for education and erudite references: “Y si las historias creo / y ejemplos de Autores graves, / pues, aunque sirviente, sabes, / que a ratos escribo y leo” (17-20). Don Juan confirms Beltrán’s peculiarity when he describes him as “agudo” later in the play (1144). Chess was a Medieval game that was seen as more “provechoso” than others such as dice because it could only be mastered with skill. As Michael Scham writes: “It hardly needs to be emphasized that the relationship between chess and the existing social structure was highly complementary, the former reflecting and reinforcing the latter. Chess was an elitist game, reserved for the first two estates” (76). Elsewhere, Louis C. Perez describes it as a game “que mejor refleja la sociedad rigurosa y estratificada de la época medieval, donde cada persona, sea ésta peón, caballero, rey, reina, reconoce su función y hace su papel en la vida. Y por lo tanto es el ajedrez el que más se encuentra en las metáforas de los autores del medioevo” (139). Beltrán, although a servant, will use chess as a metaphor to frame the relationship between don Juan and the Duque Urbino. Skill and planning are key in this game that mirrors the rigidity and order of Medieval society. The use of chess in this way is seen in other plays contemporary to Alarcón. Lope de Vega for example, refers

¹⁴ The association between war, chess, and love is corroborated by Étienvre who writes: “No cabe duda de que, entre todos los juegos de sociedad, el que suele equipararse más frecuentemente con la guerra es el ajedrez. . . . el español Luis Ramírez de Lucena había explicado ya, en los versos latinos que preceden su *Repetición de amores y arte de ajedrez* (Salamanca, hacia 1496), que amor y ajedrez son figuraciones de la guerra, justificando así la reunión —aparentemente incongruente— de los dos tratados en un solo libro” (229).

to the game of chess in his play *Los locos de Valencia*. For Teixeira de Souza, the game of chess in Lope de Vega “puede compararse a las metáforas, ya que ambos poseen reglas rígidas enmarcadas por convenciones. En este sentido, se puede pensar que los personajes – del mismo modo que Lope de Vega y su público – compartían las reglas del juego de ajedrez, es decir, el valor de las piezas y de los posibles movimientos que hacen en el tablero” (226). The use of chess implies order in society based on a system of power, and the purpose of Beltrán’s metaphor may be to highlight a sense of structure and societal norms in the play.

Don Juan, however, will respond referring to a different Medieval game, one based on chance: “Quien los encuentros enseña, / encuentre con un azar” (740-741).¹⁵ With this, he is making direct reference to the game of dice, or a game of chance played with cards. Here the use of “azar” as a game contrasts with the previous reference to chess not only by technique but also because their respective players typically belonged to a different social status. According to Scham: “Because games of dice are chance-determined, they are inherently more egalitarian and, according to Luque Faxardo, more purely recreational than games of knowledge and skill” (83). In other words, dice are not as “provechoso” as chess. We may even begin to see Alarcón’s American background in the choice of the game of chance.¹⁶ He is referring to a change of fortune in his

¹⁵ In this complex metaphor, Alarcón plays with the double entendre of “azar” and “encuentro.” As Chamorro explains, “azar” is the losing card in a game (74) while “encuentro” is when the matching card is found and therefore represents a win (98). As a note to his edition of *Las paredes oyen*, Agustín Millares Carlo mentions how the terms apply to games of dice where “azar” is when the resulting dice don’t match, representing a loss, while “encuentro” is when they do, representing a win (Ruiz de Alarcón, *Obras completas* 959). In the same note he lists literary references that use the same play of words in works by Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Miguel de Cervantes.

¹⁶ Some scholars have shown a link between New Spain and the games of “azar” in Colonial times. Eduardo Flores Clair mentions that the “juegos de azar” were the game of choice for “real mineros” in New Spain: “En los reales mineros existen diversos testimonios sobre la atracción de

affinity for chance. The fact that the game of dice is egalitarian is important because as we may remember, don Juan is at a disadvantage with his physical appearance and social status. This may be the reason why don Juan is a player of games of chance. From the beginning of the play Beltrán associated chance with don Juan. When don Juan complains about his ugly appearance, Beltrán responds: “Que diste en el punto, creo, / de que proceden tus males. / Si Fortuna en tu humildad / con un soplo te ayudara, / a fe que te aprovechara / la misma desigualdad. / Fortuna acompaña al dios / que amorosas flechas tira; / que en un templo los de Egira / adoraban a los dos. / Sin riqueza ni hermosura / pudieras lograr tu intento: / siglos de merecimiento / trueco a puntos de ventura” (43-56). From the opening scenes of the play, don Juan was associated with luck and chance. The flexibility and randomness of chance (dice) contrasts with the rigid society (chess) he faces in Madrid. His ugly body serves as a catalyst in his relationship with luck because although it put him at a disadvantage in Madrid, it also made him more receptive of luck as opposed to structure and rigidity.

The references to chess and dice are key because they were games practiced at least since the Middle Ages.¹⁷ As we may remember, Alarcón brings them up in a conversation between Beltrán and don Juan as a way to precede the meeting between the three characters, where the

usar distintos artilugios para alcanzar la suerte y beneficiarse en los juegos de azar” (11). In a later time period, Teresa Lozano Armendares mentions that: “La gran afición de los novohispanos de todas clases y condiciones por los juegos de azar no podía pasar desapercibida a los ojos de las autoridades reformistas” (69). In the context of South America, specifically Colombia, Yoer Javier Castaño Pareja comments on how Colonial subjects had an affinity for games of chance: “Blancos, mestizos, negros, mulatos e indios mostraban preferencia por juegos de dados y de naipes mediante los cuales no sólo buscaban imponerse sobre el adversario gracias a ciertas habilidades y destrezas, sino ser favorecidos por el ciego veredicto de una fuerza abstracta e insensible: la suerte o la fortuna, que bien podía favorecerlos o desdeñarlos” (116).

¹⁷ “El espíritu medieval parece reflejarse en el juego del ajedrez y en el de los dados” (Perez 139).

Duke Urbino asks don Mendo and don Juan for guidance in Court. The old precedes the new, and as such, the Medieval games precede the newness of Madrid. While the conversation between don Juan and Beltrán start as games, it will soon cross that threshold of real life. For example, Beltrán continues their conversation referring to the need of work and money in Madrid. He starts to list people and their respective means of earning money: “¿Es el azar encontrar / una mujer pedigüeña? / ... / Todos, según me imagino, / piden, que para vivir / es fuerza dar y pedir / cada uno por su camino: / con la cruz el sacristán, / con los responsos el cura, / el monstruo con su figura, / con su cuerpo el ganapán, / . . .” (756-763). From “azar” to “dar y pedir” Beltrán crossed the world of games to that of real life where work and money are part of daily life. Beltrán’s words about reality serve to gauge don Juan’s blind faith in chance. Out of his various examples of ways of earning money, one may stand out to the reader or spectator as it speaks directly to don Juan: how the “monstro” relies on his “figura” for income. This harsh truth about don Juan de Mendoza echoes his earlier self-description as “pobre y feo / y de mal talle” in the play (11-12). Given the direct reference to don Juan’s reality and his physical appearance, it is hard not to think of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón himself and his situation at the Court. Often, he was recognized more for his “figure” than his potential as a lawyer or his education. If we understand don Juan as the “monster” in the play, then Beltrán is foreshadowing that don Juan will earn his living with his body or “figura.” Hence, games turn to reality via the body in the play. Don Juan’s corporeality will be his way of earning a living. The reference to the monster precedes the actual conversation between don Juan, don Mendo, and the Duke Urbino when he asks them to guide him in Madrid:

Al fin los dos sois el hilo;
 la corte, el cretense monstruo:
 por mí corren mis aciertos,
 y mis yerros por vosotros. (848-851)

As such, Madrid stands as a monster to be confronted by the Duke Urbino, but also by don Juan due to his appearance. Chance, or don Juan, meets the rigidity of Madrid to instruct the Duke Urbino.

As the “court manual” develops the interactions among the characters, it illustrates how slandering is perceived negatively while humility is valued. Don Juan is humble but don Mendoza gossips about people and the customs of the Court. This conveniently happens as doña Ana is at her balcony where she states her reasons for not liking don Juan: “¿Cómo puedo yo querer / hombre cuya cara y talle / me enfada sólo en miralle?” (942-944). Soon she realizes that don Mendoza’s slandering is much more harmful, and unattractive, than don Juan’s physical appearance. As the tables are turning, Don Juan, Beltrán, and Duke Urbino continue to walk through Madrid in the second act, and it is here where the ludic language will continue, but this time referencing modern and physical games where the body plays a major role:

DUQUE. ¿Cómo los toros dejáis?

DON JUAN. Viéndome sin vos en ellos,

Estaba de los cabellos.

Del juego, ¿cómo quedáis?

Que era robado el partido.

DUQUE. Cogiéronme de picado.

He perdido y me he cansado.

DON JUAN. Mil cosas habéis perdido,

el descanso y el dinero

y los toros.

BELTRÁN. ¡Que haya juicio

que del cansancio haga vicio,

y tras un hinchado cuero,

que el mundo llama pelota,

corra ansioso y afanado!

¡Cuánto mejor es, sentado,

buscar los pies a una sota

que moler piernas y brazos!

Si el cuero fuera de vino,

aun no fuera desatino
sacarle el alma a porrazos. (1050-1069)

It seems that both were involved in games, don Juan watching a bullfight while the games that the Duke Urbino was involved in are omitted. However, it is revealed that the Duke Urbino is not the best at playing because he lost money. Beltrán's intervention in their ludic conversation attempts to teach don Juan and the Duke. He critiques the active game of ballplaying, privileging the game of cards because it does not involve physical activity or being outside.¹⁸ This may be interpreted as comic relief from the *gracioso*. Because their conversation involves bullfighting, *naipes*, and ballplaying, Alarcón is bringing about a newer set of games found in Madrid compared to dice and chess, as if to contrast old times with newer customs. According to Perez, *naipes* were representative of the time period and a choice of game for poets in Alarcón's time:

Aunque el ajedrez sigue mencionándose en la literatura del siglo de oro, poca duda hay que son los naipes y el lenguaje de ellos lo que más se destaca en las obras del siglo dorado. . . . Es posible que la preferencia por los naipes se deba a que reflejan con más precisión que el ajedrez, los cambios políticos, filosóficos, psicológicos, históricos y culturales de una nueva época; y es posible también que la popularidad de los naipes se deba a una razón económica (139-140)

Naipes were full of new possibilities: like chess, they reflected social order and required skill. Like dice, cards could be used in games of chance. Perez highlights this later when he says that “el juego

¹⁸ Beltrán's stance on physical games may be interpreted as immoral because it negates the positive attributes of outdoor activity. According to Scham: “Physical exertion also imposes a natural limit on the activities, attenuating the excesses of gambling. Not only are physical recreations well-suited to the daily endeavours of peasants . . . ; the skills developed in such play are a sign of individual virtue” (100).

de naipes que nace en España poco después de la época de Alfonso (1252-1284), no es otra cosa que una conjunción de dos factores: la suerte, representada en los dados, y la inteligencia, reflejada en el ajedrez” (140). He attributes the popularity of cards to the printing press as printing cards commercially would allow *naipes* to be widespread. The newness of the popularity of cards contrasts with the previous references to chess and dice made by Beltrán and don Juan. There is an attempt in the play to contrast the old with the new.

Beltrán becomes serious with his rampage against physical games referring to Seneca and comparing it to hunting:

Séneca lo comparó
al vano presuntuoso,
y esa semejanza ha dado
sin duda al juego sabor,
porque no hay gusto mayor
que apalear un hinchado.
Mas si miras el contento
de un jugador de pelota,
y un cazador que alborota
con halcón la cuerva al viento,
¿por dicha tendrás la risa
viendo, que a presa tan corta
que, vencida, nada importa
corre un hombre tan de prisa,
que apenas tocan la yerba
los caballos voladores?
¡Válgaos Dios por cazadores!
¿Qué os hizo esa pobre cuerva? (1080-1097).

Tristán questions the “provecho” of physical games, especially hunting. This is interesting because similar to the way that chess represented society, hunting was often seen as a sport that prepared men for war. This is corroborated by the Duke Urbino when he defends hunting as a sport: “De la guerra has de pensar / que es la caza semejanza, / y así el ardid, la asechanza, / el seguir y el alcanzar / es gustoso pasatiempo” (1099-1103). Scham highlights this aspect of hunting stating that

“Hunting was perhaps the favourite physical recreation of early modern Spain, and it carried an impressive array of associations, benefits and potential hazards. . . . Since nobles bear a greater degree of social responsibility, they are more in need of recreation than others. And class identity is an extension of universal hierarchy, as the hunt reaffirms man’s primacy over the animal world” (105-106). Beltrán is highlighting the bestiality and cruelty behind hunting; he does not see it as “provechoso” even when compared to ballplaying. There seems to be a questioning of values in the progression of games. While hunting was seen as *provechoso*, it can also be a sign of cruelty and unfairness to the animal.

I would like to return to the reference of the “sota” in Beltrán’s initial contrast of ballplaying and *naipes*. He stated that he prefers playing cards and finding the “pies” to the “sota” than to play ball as to avoid physical activity. The reference to the “sota” has been interpreted with erotic undertones in the Spanish Golden Age. For example, Luis de Góngora mentioned the same card in a verse that led Ynduraín to conclude that the “sota” connotes eroticism: “En mi opinión, los versos reproducidos arriba tienen un sentido fundamentalmente erótico, que es el primario y real; la referencia al juego de cartas es una comparación y, como tal, está al servicio de aquella intención” (124). Furthermore, there is a peculiarity about what the “sota” represented within the *naipes*. According to Etienvre: “La sota es, efectivamente, la carta más ambigua de la baraja. Corresponde teóricamente al soldado de a pie en la jerarquía de las figuras; y representa en realidad, para los españoles de los siglos XVI y XVII, la mujer deshonesto, ésa que precisamente deja asomar sus pies (e incluso sus piernas, cuando tiene ‘faldellín’) en actitud provocativa” (23). Certainly, Beltrán refers to the card in this manner as he mentions “pies” to refer to a woman. If we consider the remainder of the play, there may be more behind Beltrán’s use of this card.

Alarcón's critique of Lope de Vega's theater will precisely involve women that reveal too much of their bodies in theater. I believe that with this card, Alarcón is also fashioning himself as a new playwright who can represent the contrast between the old and the new that was occurring earlier in the play. Alarcón directly critiques Lope de Vega's *Los donaires de Matico* when Celia refers to the women in Lope's play in the following way: "Con tal condición / o con tal desdicha nacen, / que en viendo un hombre, al momento / le ruegan, y mudan traje, / y sirviéndole de paje, / van con las piernas al viento" (2363-2368). This is in response to doña Ana who believes it is improper if she confesses her love to don Juan. Celia uses this to contrast doña Ana's propriety with that of the women in Lope's theater. I believe that "piernas al viento" in Celia's words refers back to the "sota" card Beltrán mentioned. Alarcón is critiquing woman dressed as men that show their legs in Lope's theater. Games here are used as a self-fashioning in theater. Alarcón is self-fashioning to the audience as a new playwright that contrasts with the old work of Lope de Vega. He is transgressing the threshold of *naiipes* and applying it to real life Madrid.

While the "sota" card may point to Alarcón's self-fashioning as an emerging playwright, it does not describe what is particularly innovative about Alarcón's theater. This is reserved for another point in the play where Beltrán suggests to don Juan to compose plays as a source of income. Offering advice on how to overcome his hardships, Beltrán provides the ironic suggestion to don Juan: "¿Por qué, señor, no has pintado / caballos, toros y suertes? / Que con eso, y con tratar / mal a los calvos, hicieras / comedias con que pudieras / tu pobreza remediar. / A que te cuenten, me obligo, / seiscientos por cada una" (1180-1187). In the sequence of opportunities presented in theater, Beltrán mentions the "caballos, toros, suertes" which are all elements present already in *Las paredes oyen*. Alarcón is including aspects of his actual experience of composing

theater as a means of earning money in this play. At the same time, Alarcón will take this opportunity to voice his ideas of an ideal playwright when he responds to Beltrán's suggestion: "Pues supongamos que en una / eso que me adviertes digo; / en otra ¿qué he de decir? / Que a un poeta le está mal / no variar, que el caudal / se muestra en no repetir" (1188-1193). This may speak directly to the critique of Lope de Vega's theater. As a poet and playwright, Alarcón is declaring what he considers to be good theater. A good poet must vary, not repeat. His use of ludic language in the play may be one of such variations, tying theater to games. After all, according to Nitsch, theater is just another form of game: "aparte del juego de azar y frecuentemente cercano a él, el teatro es considerado como la manifestación más importante e inquietante de una omnipresente actividad lúdica. Hay, pues una amplia reflexión barroca sobre el teatro como juego en la cual compiten tres perspectivas distintas, partiendo cada una de un concepto diferente de juego" (934). Alarcón is self-fashioning as a new poet in contrast to Lope, and he chose the language of games to show how he varies his theater.

The contrast between chess and chance, physical games and those within a room, and hunting versus ballplaying all reflect a contrast between Medieval times and the 17th century, or order and chance. They also serve to foreshadow Alarcón's theater, seen as new in comparison to Lope de Vega. The play is full of contrasts between the new and the old in Madrid. For example, the novel fencing techniques of Luis de Pacheco Narvaez will influence the resolution of the play. Don Juan explains to Beltrán that he wishes to have the Duque Urbino as well as don Mendo pursue the love of Ana, for this will increase his chances of gaining her love. It can be understood as a tactic in his quest. Beltrán will compare it to a fencing technique: "Esta es cautela que enseña / el diestro don Luis de Pacheco, / que dice que está la espada / más flaca en el movimiento"

(1274-1277). Alarcón is known to have been a follower of Pacheco and he wrote *décimas* in the preliminaries of Pacheco's *Historia ejemplar de las dos constantes mujeres españolas*. However, here Alarcón is praising Pacheco's new art of fencing. Once again, don Juan is relying on chance and skill to succeed. He has nothing to lose and so much to win in this move. This can be understood as Alarcón's method of portraying new ideas in his theater and allying himself with prominent figures in the Court of Madrid.

While *Las paredes oyen* has typically been studied in light of Alarcón's deformity, it also shows another trait particular to Alarcón: his affinity for games. It can also be interpreted as a court manual considering the Duke Urbino's situation in Madrid and the advice that don Mendo and don Juan provide him with. In this court manual we notice an opposition between chess and dice, medieval games that serve to fashion don Juan as a player of chance games. The contrast between medieval games and newer ones such as *naipes*, hunting, and ball-playing, mirrors the contrast between Alarcón's theater and that of Lope de Vega, where a reference to the "sota" card foreshadows a critique of Lope's *Los donaires de Matico*. Alarcón is self-fashioning as a new emerging poet that values originality and innovation.

Towards a Ludic Self-Fashioning in *La verdad sospechosa*

La verdad sospechosa, Alarcón's most studied play, hardly needs an introduction. It was composed around 1620 or before and has a peculiar publishing history. The oldest edition known was published under the name of Lope de Vega. Alarcón would then claim authorship over *La verdad sospechosa* in his second volume in 1634, publishing a revised edition. It paints the life of Madrid and depicts a most striking character in Spanish Golden Age drama: don García. I focus on don García, his arrival to the Court and his behavior to argue that he fashions himself as a

tahúr. He internalized the deceit and world of games that characterized Madrid at the time. As Enrique García Santo-Tomás puts it: “La sociedad cortesana de los Austrias es una sociedad de constantes transacciones materiales, y la práctica del juego se filtra en la cotidianeidad del madrileño desde la primera instauración capitalina en 1561” (169). I interpret don García as a player and this is as a result of his father’s anxiety towards deceit in Madrid. Hence, part of my analysis also focuses on García’s interactions with his father. Don García is similar to don Juan in *Las paredes oyen* insofar as they both value originality to succeed in a world full of deceit.

The plot of *La verdad sospechosa* is simple: don García is a young student who arrives to Madrid from Salamanca after the death of his older brother. His father has high aspirations for him in the Court, and is prepared to correct any negative aspects of don García’s character. He is distressed once he hears from García’s tutor that he has one defect: not telling the truth. As García navigates Madrid he feigns being an *indiano*, he lies about a banquet he supposedly orchestrated, and deceives his father by telling him he married in Salamanca, among other lies. However, he is victim of a misunderstanding once he falls in love, and confuses the name of Jacinta for Lucrecia. Due to this confusion, he is forced to marry the other and less desirable woman, Lucrecia, at the end of the play; and yet, she is described as prettier and perhaps more mature than Jacinta by other characters.¹⁹

The significant critical debate regarding *La verdad sospechosa* has to do with the poetic justice, or lack thereof, in this play. That is, if don García is punished for his lying, and if so, if he is rightfully punished by marrying Lucrecia. Louise Fothergill-Payne summarizes it thus: “Ahora en

¹⁹ For example, at the moment that don García will confuse Jacinta for Lucrecia, Tristán says: “Pues a mí la que calló / me pareció más hermosa” (565-566).

‘La verdad sospechosa’ tenemos un problema en cuanto al desenlace: o bien se nos antoja simpático don García y hablamos de la ‘rigidez del castigo’ que contrasta con ‘la gracia y vivacidad del personaje’, o bien damos grande importancia esa ‘costumbre fea’ suya, la cual, por consiguiente, calificamos de ‘el vicio de mentir’” (588). Criticism has also focused on the lying of the protagonist: the reasons behind it, if they are justified, and if he learns from his mistakes. For James F. Burke, the answer is not so clear. He states that while don García

is affected by a serious moral vice, lying, he never appears to abandon his evil inclination.

At the end of the play he is exposed as a liar and receives a kind of poetic justice when he is forced to marry a woman not of his choosing. Alarcón, however, does not present the kind of moral anagnorisis which is so common in the theatre of the period and leaves his public to wonder whether García has really learned anything at all. (52)

Although there have been engaging studies regarding *La verdad sospechosa*, there may be other ways of approaching the play and its protagonist. One of those ways is by analyzing the play as a courtesy manual, where Alarcón is portraying how to succeed in a city full of deceit. The references to gamblers and games shows that a possible way to live is by taking real life situations in a similar way as a game.

In this part of the chapter I interpret the arrival of don García to the Court as an opportunity to read the play as a court manual similar to *Las paredes oyen*. Don Beltrán, García’s father, starts the manual once he advises Tristán to guide García in Madrid. However, Beltrán’s actions are also guided by an anxiety: his fear of a fashionable identity in Madrid. I focus on this anxiety as well as the references to games regarding the figure of don García to claim that he self-fashions as a *tahúr* or player. I conclude that don García approaches life as a game, particularly

because he is described as “arrojado” multiple times in the play. In his behavior, he crosses the threshold between game and real life, and approaches life as a game.²⁰

From the opening scene it is apparent that don García has an inventive nature due to the heat of the summer, as he himself claims: “El calor / del ardiente y seco estío / me ha afligido de tal suerte / que no pudiera llevarlo, / señor, a no mitigallo / con la esperanza de verte” (Ruiz de Alarcón, *La verdad sospechosa* 3-8). For Frederick de Armas, “The element of fire, connected to García’s choleric disposition, exacerbates his imagination and leads him to trick and deceive. It also leads him to imagine fiery things, from the stars in the heavens to the more demonic fires of gunpowder as used in fireworks and pistols” (Celestial Visions 265-266). While the heat may characterize his inventive nature, his arrival to Madrid defines him as an outsider. Not only is he described as “bisoño” by his father, but he is assigned Tristán as his guide to the Court: “Dueño tienes / nuevo ya de quien cuidar, / sirve desde hoy a García, / que tú eres diestro en la Corte / y él bisoño” (11-14). The same use of the word “bisoño” may remind us of *Las paredes oyen* and the Duke Urbino. Tristán confirms his role as guide when he replies: “En lo que importe / yo le serviré de guía” (15-16). This may allow us to see the play as a court manual similar to *Las paredes oyen*. Don García will use the guidance of a smart servant to navigate Madrid in an attempt to replace his deceased older brother. His inventive nature will combine with his inexperience to show the audience how to navigate Madrid.

Immediately after García’s welcome, Beltrán will speak with García’s mentor about García. He is upset once he hears that his son is a liar: “¡Jesús, qué cosa tan fea / en hombre de

²⁰ I differ somewhat from Jesús A. Ara’s viewpoint that “la falta de don García es más bien un desprecio por la verdad exterior, debido a que, desconociendo lo que se lleva en la corte, no se da cuenta de que infringe lo sancionado por esa sociedad” (85).

obligación!” (157-158). He wishes don García had a different vice, including being a gambler and trickster: “Créame que, si García / mi hacienda de amores ciego / disipara, o en el juego / consumiera noche y día, / . . . / no lo llevara tan mal / como que su falta sea / mentir: ¡qué cosa tan fea!, / ¡qué opuesta a mi natural!” (205-216). Beltrán’s reactions to García’s character only serves to project his repulsion and fear of deceit, prevalent in the surrounding city of Madrid. He confesses this as he is talking to García’s mentor: “Casi me mueve a reír / ver cuán ignorante está / de la Corte: ¡luego acá / no hay quien le enseñe a mentir? / En la Corte, aunque haya sido / un extremo Don García, / hay quien le dé cada día / mil mentiras por partido” (181-188). The father’s fear is that his son is as corrupt as the city he inhabits. He goes as far as to deny the lineage of his own son when he says that his son’s behavior is “opuesta a mi natural.” His anxiety between behavior and inheritance is repeated later in the play when he asks don García: “¿sois caballero, García?” (1396). Don García responds that he must be, for he is Beltrán’s son, to which Beltrán responds: “¡Qué engañado pensamiento! / Sólo consiste en obrar / como caballero el serlo” (1401-1403). Beltrán is aware that in Madrid, lineage is not an indicator of nobility. Actions will speak louder than blood. That is, one is free to self-fashion as a noble instead of relying on their family’s past. But this is not to say that reputation is not important anymore. Negative behavior will still have repercussions in matters of honor. This is why he shows a preoccupation with García’s character, as it may also affect his reputation as a father. By association, García incarnates his father’s fear of a fashionable identity in Madrid.

In a moment of despair, Beltrán mentions that he would rather his son be a *tahúr* than a liar. One may wonder why Beltrán prefers such a thing, especially at a time when gamblers were

just as sinful as liars.²¹ Don Beltrán will be more specific about his fear when he talks to García. As he reproaches García for his bad habit, he says:

¿Posible es que tenga un hombre
tan humildes pensamientos
que viva sujeto al vicio
mas sin gusto y sin provecho?
El deleite natural
tiene a los lascivos presos,
obliga a los cudiciosos
el poder que da el dinero,
el gusto de los manjares
al glotón, el pasatiempo
y el cebo de la ganancia
a los que cursan el juego
...
Todos los vicios, al fin,
o dan gusto o dan provecho,
mas de mentir, ¿qué se saca
sino infamia y menosprecio? (1444-1463)

He lists some vices, including gambling, and explains that each one has “provecho” or “gusto” as their product except for lying. This explains that his anxiety has to do with the “provecho” that comes with vices, and not the immorality behind them. In his eyes, García’s lies have no “provecho” and therefore only serve to denigrate his character. This also explains why he would rather have a son that spends night and day playing games. The comfort of having a gambler son is twofold. On the one hand, the son would be able to distinguish between games and real life. That is, the son would partake in an agreed activity with its own rules and “provecho.” On the other hand, playing and gambling involve the voluntary will of a person within a demarcated space and with the materials required to play. Outside of that space, the game ceases to exist. Beltrán’s fear is

²¹ “Los moralistas tenían por pecadores no sólo a los naiperos sino a todo el que acudía a las casas de los tahures; y aun más, no quedaban los fabricantes de naipes sin pecado” (Perez 140).

that by lying, García can involve those around him in real life without their knowledge. This shows the stark difference between lying and playing. Playing has no effect outside of the play room, lying on the other hand intersects with real life.

Despite Beltrán's fears, I argue that García can be interpreted as a *tahúr* based on his approach to life. I would also add that, in relation to his father's belief, he tries to gain provecho out of his behavior. After all, the concerns of gamblers was very similar to that of liars:

It should by now be clear that the concerns surrounding games such as cards and dice were often the same as those voiced by literary theorists and censors: the preoccupation with the human inclination to imitate, and consequent susceptibility to behavioral models; the realization that the spectators comprise a vital part of the total dynamic, not only being influenced by but also affecting the play; the observation that the stimulated imagination can become irrational and obsessive; the awareness that such dangers are greater if the activity takes place in a private space, and, conversely, may be mitigated in a group or public setting. (Scham 100)

In taking his player mentality to social life, García takes life as a gamble. We may first see García's self-fashioning as a *tahúr* based on his "arrojado" nature. Repeatedly throughout the play, García is reprimanded for his behavior to go about life without thought of consequences. For example, when García is challenged to a *desafío*, he lies to his father and says he will play "trucos" with "el Conde" in order to hide the *desafío*: "Aquí a los trucos me llevo/ de nuestro vecino el Conde" (1199-1200).²² In his reference to the game of *trucos*, a game similar to modern billiards, he is

²² One may be reminded here of Miguel de Cervantes' *Novelas ejemplares* where in the prologue the author frames his *novelas* as a *mesa de trucos* commenting on the exemplarity of the texts. The reference to "el Conde" is particularly interesting considering the history of games in Madrid.

denoting a specific place and materials for the game. His father, however, advises his son not to be *arrojado*: “No apruebo que os arrojéis, / siendo venido ayer, / a daros a conocer / a mil que no conocéis; / si no es que dos condiciones / guardéis con mucho cuidado, / y son: que juguéis contado, /y habléis contadas razones;” (1201-1210). His father’s advice about how to play may well extend outside the confines of the *mesa de trucos* and apply to real life in Madrid.

Tristán had already noticed the “arrojado” nature of García earlier in the play when García faked being an *indiano* to conquer Jacinta’s love: “Mucho te arrojas, señor” (527). His imagination may have driven García too far into faking an identity. According to Mary Malcolm Gaylord,

Here, as in many Golden Age texts, the *indiano* does not function simply as shorthand for fabulous wealth; he is also the figure of *wealth as fable*, and for the *fables as wealth*. Like Sinbad the sailor in the *Arabian Nights*, the *indiano* returned from his quests with a treasure of stories of strange people and places, and of marvelous events. And also like Sinbad, he often seesawed between extraordinary wealth and utter poverty. For the audience in his own native Spain, his stories of things never before seen or heard set into play the very tension between the verisimilar and the marvelous which was one of the 16th- and 17th-century literary theory’s basic tests for the power of poetry. Only the *indiano* had seen the alien land on which his tales were grounded; and because the stories he told could only be

Enrique García Santo-Tomás comments that the phenomenon of games “se había extendido tan rápidamente que, según cuentan las crónicas, en el reinado Felipe III (1598-1621) algunos nobles como el Conde de Villamediana o el Conde de Navas habían sido expulsados de Madrid por sus escandalosas ganancias en el tapete; la Calle de Echegaray, por dar un caso famoso, se había convertido en el lugar de reunión para tahúres y mirones, y era conocida por el juego de trucos, abundante en las trifulcas y truhanerías, al igual que las famosas ‘casas de conversación’” (169).

verified by other travelers, those who stayed at home quite naturally linked tellers of tall tales with poets—who, after all, are veteran liars. (230)

García's ingenuity entertains his listeners and he is able to use his imagination along with his "arrojado" to try to succeed in Madrid. Tristán again will bring about García's "arrojado" behavior when García approaches the woman he met: "Hasta que sepas / extensamente su estado, / no te entregues tan de veras; / que suele dar, quien se arroja / creyendo las apariencias, / en un pantano cubierto / de verde engañosa yerba" (798-804). Tristán's warning is related again to the fear of deceit. Tristán will confirm García's "arrojado" nature a third time when he will inquire about García's multiple lies: "aquel hablar arrojado, / mentir sin recato y modo, / aquel jactarse de todo, / y hacerse en todo extremado" (1245-1248). He inquires with the best intentions but García's fault is a determination to do as he pleases without thought of repercussions. He shows himself to be a risk-taker similar to a player. This is present in his characterization as an "arrojado".

According to Covarrubias, "arrojar" is "esechar de sí alguna cosa con ímpetu y con furia" while "arrojarse" is "hablar inconsideradamente . . ." (*Tesoro* 152). García is both, and both fashion him as a player. On the one hand he is daring in his actions, always driven by the possibility that his lies will end in success. In other words, he goes forward with his impulses. On the other, he is "arrojado" in the sense that he is tossed, like dice, on the streets of Madrid in hopes of a success. From the moment he was brought from Salamanca to Madrid, he was like a bet his father made to replace his older son.

We may inquire further about don García's lies, specifically if they have "provecho" or not. For David H. Darst the answer is not very clear. He writes that "Alarcón, perhaps deliberately, makes no attempt to define clearly the reasons for his protagonist's compulsion to lie; nor does he

present the necessary incontrovertible evidence to allow us to judge whether the play's ending is a reward or a punishment for García. It is this very ambiguity, of course, that makes *La verdad sospechosa* such a stimulating and perennially popular drama" (441). However, don García does explain himself sometimes, and I interpret his justifications as a form of self-fashioning as a *tahúr*. Here, the servant Tristán serves a prominent role. For example, when he fabricates being an *indiano perulero* to impress Jacinta, he justifies his lie to Tristán saying that: "Cosa es cierta, / Tristán, que los forasteros / tienen más dicha con ellas, / y más si son de las Indias, / información de riqueza" (813-817). Contrary to Beltrán's belief, we see that García had the intent of "provecho" behind his lie. When asked about his lie about his presence in Madrid for one month, he replies to Tristán that: "Ya sabes tú que es grandeza / esto de estar encubierto, / o retirado en su aldea, / o en su casa descansando" (832-835). Once again, he mentions the good that may come out of his lies. And finally, he justifies his lie about the banquet scene because "me pesa / que piense nadie que hay cosa / que mover mi pecho pueda / a invidia, o admiración, / pasiones que al hombre afrentan: / que admirarse es ignorancia, / como invidiar es bajeza" (838-844). As a response to García's justifications Tristán is able to see the advantages behind them. Interestingly he interprets García's behavior as a "flor" or a trick in a game of cards later in the play. It is important to note that each one of García's fabrications has to do with molding his identity. That is, he lies to self-fashion, something his father had seen and feared in Madrid. Upon hearing the explanations, Tristán responds to García fashioning him as a player. He says: "Caprichosa prevención, / si bien peligrosa treta; / la fábula de la Corte / serás, si la flor te entrevan" (853-856). Tristán astutely is able to read through García's two characteristics, he is a player and he seeks fame. He starts by describing his actions as "peligrosa treta" including an element of deceit and trickery similar to a

game. He then refers to García's actions as "flor" which is a common way of denoting a deceit in a game setting. According to Chamorro Fernández, "entrevar la flor" means "conocer la trampa, la fullería" (156). Tristán warns that if people see García's trickery, he will be the fable of Madrid, something García is comfortable with as he himself seeks fame: "Quien vive sin ser sentido, / quien sólo el número aumenta / y hace lo que todos hacen, / ¿en qué difiere de bestia? / Ser famosos es gran cosa, / el medio cual fuere sea; / nómbrénme a mí en todas partes / y murmúrenme siquiera: / pues uno, por ganar nombre, / abrasó el templo de Efesia. / Y al fin este es mi gusto, / que es la razón de más fuerza" (857-868). As in *Las paredes oyen*, the servant in *La verdad sospechosa* will show high skill in understanding the ludic language in the play. In this case, Tristán will show that he understands García's trickery and use of game when he refers to his behavior as "flor" in the Court. Furthermore, as in *Las paredes oyen*, in *La verdad sospechosa* Alarcón will show an affinity for originality and fame in Madrid.

Initially, I mentioned how *La verdad sospechosa* may be read as a court manual, where customs and behaviors are portrayed and challenged in order to seek success in Madrid. We have seen that García's paternal relationship as well as his relationship with Tristán are related to the anxieties of deceit in Madrid, as well as a ludic language or an opinion about games. This influences García from the moment he sets foot in Madrid and is part of his transformation while in the Court. Don García follows through with his courtly transformation as evidenced by his clothing at the beginning of the play. The first courtly manual activities involve appearance and outward views. He is portrayed changing clothes as one of the first things he does while in Madrid. As for outward views, Tristán notices don García's failure to interpret his metaphors between stars and women. Tristán evokes courtly life in metaphor, referring to the planets and celestial bodies:

“Pues en lugar entras hoy / donde amor no vive ocioso. / Resplandecen damas bellas / en el cortesano suelo, / de la suerte que en el cielo / brillan lucentes estrellas” (293-296). In this elaborate metaphor, Tristán is trying to decipher different women in the Court by comparing them to celestial bodies. Tristán shows talent in using celestial bodies to describe women. Don García attempts to interpret Tristán’s words but tends to confuse appearance and reality. He will feign being an *indiano* in order to show that he has money and lure Jacinta, whom he confuses for Lucrecia. But at the same time, he uses language borrowed from Tristán’s celestial imagery, calling the carriage in which the ladies ride a “coche del sol” (385). In so doing, he comes to confuse the stars and the women, since he comes to believe that his love is Lucrecia de Luna rather than Jacinta. In this he inverts the celestial hierarchy where the sun shines bright while the moon only reflects the luminary’s brilliance. Even though don García approaches life as a court manual, his own ludic nature leads him, perhaps inadvertently, to invert social and celestial structures. If he “wins” in the end, it is because of his luck in gambling. He may not marry the woman he prefers, but ends up with one that is loyal. He also makes his promise of marrying Lucrecia, even though he mistaked her for Jacinta. The fact that he kept his word corresponds with reality once he gives her his hand, matching the right name with the right person at the end of the play.

To conclude, don García embodies his father’s anxiety concerning the many deceits that are prevalent in Madrid, and how he may be drawn by them. Successfully García fashions himself multiple times, molding his identity to one that does not belong to him. This is so because of his “arrojado” nature, one that allows him to approach life as a gamble. Based on the reference to *mesa de trucos* as well as the “treta” and “flor” we can confirm don García as a player. Don García shows that sometimes there is no transformation between play and real life. One may interpret this

behavior, along his marvelous imagination to create stories, as that ascribed to the poet. As Étienvre would say: “La poesía es juego, porque la norma del verso se yuxtapone a la fantasía de las imágenes, corriendo parejas la métrica con la semántica. Y en ese juego, todos los envites proceden evidentemente del lenguaje, en el cual confía el poeta para dilucidar la verdad” (14). As such, don García may represent the perfect *tahúr* or player not only for his “arrojado” nature but also for his capacity to create stories out of his imagination.

Conclusion

As his contemporaries claim, Alarcón evinces an affinity for games in both of his voyages to Spain. He liked to have fun and he sometimes used his body in self-laughter. This ludic lifestyle, which was a new phenomenon in Madrid, gained so much strength in the playwright’s life that it influenced his theater and in turn influenced him. In *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa* the characters who approach life as a game end with relative success. One may wonder how often Alarcón himself used games to succeed in Madrid. This approach to life may be one of Alarcón’s teachings in composing these plays as ludic court manuals. His knowledge of games and his American background influenced the personas he created in his theater.

Three conclusions can be deduced from our analysis of these plays as court manuals. One is that the *gracioso* in Alarconian theater sometimes plays a major role in Alarcón’s self-fashioning. Contrary to the typical servants in Spanish Golden Age drama, in these two plays Beltrán and Tristán show high skill in games and an understanding of courtly metaphors. Their roles are fundamental for the self-fashioning of the protagonists. Furthermore, they possess a ludic vocabulary that serves to structure the plays.

The analysis of these plays as court manuals and their ludic language also shows that games can serve more purposes than just to entertain. As leisure activities, they are meant to instruct, but as we have seen, they may also be used in used as metaphors to explain aspects of the plot and characterization of Alarconian theater. In addition, they may also explain aspects of the playwright himself such as his affinity for games of chance, such as dice, over those of skill such as chess, which in turn may also comment on his American background.

Finally, we can conclude that Alarcón's self-fashioning can be ludic. That is, that as he arrived to Madrid he became aware early on of the importance of courtly behaviors and vices, and would then use them to his advantage. In *Las paredes oyen* the references to games fashion him as a novel poet in comparison to Lope de Vega. In *La verdad sospechosa*, don García shows how a transgression between game and real life can be advantageous in a city full of deceit. Alarcón self-fashioned as a way to gain entrance into the world of theater and give publicity to his name comparable to don García.

As we can observe from *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón used his work for self-promotion as well as to self-fashion while at court. Based on my analysis of these plays it can be concluded that Juan Ruiz de Alarcón was an astute trickster/player. He absorbed the theatricality of courtly life only to utilize it to his advantage. His plays would reflect a ludic self-fashioning that tricked an audience into opposing conclusions: the unqualified approval of the virtuous yet unsightly protagonist, and the delight in the attractive trickster who gambles all for fortune and fame. Together they come to fashion an image of a courtier/poet whose many facets are but a clever self-fashioning Ruiz de Alarcón.

Conclusion: Ruiz de Alarcón, A Success Story

Juan Ruiz de Alarcón represents one of many special cases in Spanish early modern theater not only for his appearance but also for his background. More important, however, was how he used theater as a tool to interact with his contemporaries and ascend the social ladder. After he attained a position as Court Reporter in the Council of the Indies in 1626 Alarcón slowly drew away from the *corral de comedias* and into a pleasant life in Madrid, specifically in his residence located at the street of Las Urosas, modern-day Luis Vélez de Guevara street. He published his theater in two volumes as one of his last activities regarding theater, the first in 1628 and the second in 1634. His friendships and feuds continued, but Alarcón had low risks in the literary scene as he was now an administrator. During his slow retirement, his contemporaries continued to insult Alarcón but others also recognized him as a good playwright. For example, Lope de Vega in his *Laurel de Apolo* (1630) remarks about Alarcón that “En Méjico la Fama, / que como el sol descubre cuanto mira, / a don Juan de Alarcón halló que aspira / con dulce ingenio a la divina rama, / la máxima cumplida / de lo que puede la virtud unida” (161-165). Juan Pérez de Montalbán also praises Alarcón’s theater stating that he writes his plays “con tal novedad, ingenio y extrañeza, que no ay comedia suya que no tenga mucho que admirar, y nada que reprehender, que después de averse escrito tanto, es gran muestra de su caudal fertilísimo” in his *Para todos* (1632). His relative success contrasts with the small amount of theater he composed.

It seems that his position in the Council of the Indies brought the stability that Alarcón had been seeking since he first set foot in Madrid. With his daughter, Ana, and his partner Ángela de Cervantes, Alarcón lived a stable life. The years of stability would only last a little more than a decade in Madrid as Alarcón took ill around 1638, prompting his retirement from his

administrative position early in 1639. He dictated his will in early July, and died shortly after in the 4th of July of 1639. As the last biographical document available, Alarcón's will can speak of his quality of life. After stating all his remaining payments, he lists lendees such as Bartolomé Gómez de Reynoso who owed Alarcón "quinientos reales en plata doble" and Francisco Fiesco who owed Alarcón "quinientos reales en moneda de vellón," among others (Reyes 252). He owned a car and could afford to pay his rent ahead of time (253). Nothing is mentioned of his past life in Mexico nor of his four brothers (Pedro, Hernando, Gaspar, and García). Also absent in the will is any reference to his library or his theater. This absence is compensated with the two volumes he published during his lifetime. I have argued that Alarcón owed his success to his special ability of using theater to his advantage, and the characters he fashioned in turn must have influenced his outward view of life. We have seen how Alarcón interacted with his contemporaries, particularly Lope de Vega, and self-fashioned literarily through his theater. His case may contribute to transatlantic and colonial studies as an example of the tactics employed by a *criollo* to succeed in the metropolitan center.

Alarcón framed his published theater with prologues in both volumes. In the first prologue he characterizes part of his readership in monstrous terms when he calls them "bestia fiera." In the second he claims authorship over his theater and claims they faced the monstrosities of sailing the theaters of Madrid. The prologues then serve as a mirror where Alarcón reflects the monstrosities projected on him due to his appearance. In *El desdichado en fingir* and *Todo es ventura* Alarcón will further include other monstrosities encountered in Madrid. In these plays he also self-fashions as a poet, and shows his familiarity with navigation due to his transatlantic identity. His specific use of his place of origin would show in *El semejante a sí mismo* and *La industria y la suerte*, where he

demystifies the notion of the Indies as a source of wealth and associates it with a sense of misfortune once characters from both plays fail to receive an inheritance from the Indies. Instead, he characterized the Indies with ingenuity. This is particularly relevant in his description of the Mexican drainage system, where Alarcón follows precepts used by his contemporary Lope de Vega that also serves as a literary self-fashioning. Regarding his own opinion about the use of art to fashion a persona in appearance and emotions, Alarcón seems to suggest that art indeed can supersede nature or mold a persona. This is evident in an alchemical reading of *La cueva de Salamanca* and a metatheatrical reading of *La prueba de las promesas*. In both occasions, art is used to influence appearances and shape the identities of the characters. Finally, Alarcón shows the value of games in his self-fashioning in *Las paredes oyen* and *La verdad sospechosa*, which can be read as court manuals. A preference for games of chance shows Alarcón's American background as well as his literary self-fashioning, representing him as an emerging playwright compared to Lope de Vega. In *La verdad sospechosa* don García shows conflict in distinguishing between game and real life, as he tries to gain "provecho" out of lies in his journey through Madrid. He attempts to gain fame at all costs. The characters' situations and actions can be understood as strategies employed by the playwright in order to succeed and give publicity to his name in Madrid. Alarcón inverts the monstrosity his contemporaries ascribed to him using theater.

One may wonder what place the Indies took towards the end of Alarcón's life. Did he ever think of returning to his place of origin? We know that in 1635 he was toying with a possible return as he applied for a seat on one of the courts of the Indies when Lope Díez de Aux de Armendáriz, also known as Marqués de Cadereyta, became Viceroy of New Spain. As King suggests, he likely was hoping that a *criollo* like himself whom he had praised in his play *El*

semejante a sí mismo would return the favor with a seat that would also grant him a return to New Spain (205). Unfortunately, no decision was made and Alarcón remained in Madrid until his death. Who knows what would have happened if Alarcón had returned to Mexico towards the end of his life. His desire to return must have been serious, for in Spain Fabio Franchi's words about not leaving the "ambrosia" for "chocolate" or the "parnasos" for "America" attempt to convince Alarcón to stay in Madrid and continue to compose theater.

In studying Alarcón's particular self-fashioning I hope to have contributed to Colonial theater studies by comparing Alarcón's use of the Indies in *El semejante a sí mismo* with a play by Lope de Vega, a playwright from the Iberian Peninsula. The interrelationships with other literary figures such as Francisco de Quevedo, Suárez de Figueroa, Luis de Góngora, Pérez de Montalbán, and Lope de Vega helps to diversify studies on Spanish early modern literature. His particular reception due to his deformity and the stigma that it carried is relevant to disability studies in an early modern context. Furthermore, the questioning and tactics used in his self-fashioning remain an important example for Neo-historicist studies regarding self-fashioning. Regarding the debate of his nationality, I hope to have shown that nationality is measured in more than one way, and a transatlantic approach may allow us to still recognize Alarcón's American background without entering into the debate of nationality.

I also hope my dissertation has opened new possibilities within Alarconian studies. For example, it would be of interest to see how *criollos'* presence in Madrid influenced the city. By this I mean how literary figures like Alarcón himself had an impact in everyday life regarding occupations, mannerisms, and practices. While my dissertation considers some negative connotations regarding his appearance and place of origin, it would be of interest to see how

positive attributes of Alarcón influenced his self-fashioning. Different from many of his contemporaries, Alarcón had a high degree of legal education that sometimes show in his theater. It remains to be analyzed how Alarcón's legal background influenced not only his theater but also placed him at an advantage. Other ways of continuing the study of Alarcón's self-fashioning would be to analyze other plays such as *Los favores del mundo* where the protagonist Garci Ruiz de Alarcón may be modelled after an ancestor of Alarcón, or the playwright himself. Or by focusing on the theme of friendship that was so present in his theater, and matching it with the friendships he had with Luis Belmonte Bermúdez, for example.

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