

**'Fiction, Deceit and Morality in the Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, 1580-1639'**

by

**Jules Whicker, Christ Church, Oxford.**

**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Trinity Term, 1995 [i.e. 1996]**

**Short Abstract:**

Alarcón was writing at a time when Spaniards increasingly came to perceive Spain as a nation in decline, and to seek the remedy for their country's malaise in a whole series of economic, political, social, and, in particular, moral reforms. One consequence of this was to intensify the debate concerning effect of the theatre on the moral values of the young, another was to stimulate a renewed interest in the art of war and the martial virtues which were held to have been the source of earlier glories, and yet another was to impel political philosophers and theologians alike to consider anew how the necessities of government in this uncertain political and economic climate might be reconciled with the ethical principles promoted by the Catholic Church.

This study contends that both the style and the content of his plays show Alarcón to have been both well-informed and keenly interested in such matters, and indicate that, whilst he concurs with many contemporary moralists in identifying the source of the national malaise as a self-indulgent obsession with sensual pleasure and social posturing, and in suggesting that the cure lies in an adoption of a moral code based upon stoic self-discipline and other such virtues, he makes it clear that the implementation of these virtues in the complex situations encountered in everyday life depends to a large extent upon the prudent use of deception.

Thus, in his work, Alarcón presents two principal forms of deception: the lies,

slanders, illusions, and acts of imposture of those who seek the illicit gratification of their worldly desires; and the cautious equivocation, concealments, disguises, and stratagems of those who know that appearances deceive and who seek to ensure the reputation, integrity and safety of their compatriots and co-religionists.

I also maintain that this is a distinction which applies to the *comedia* as much as to the world which it portrays, and that Alarcón is critical of the indecorous actions and the ornate language, music and spectacle of the *comedia* as popularised by Lope, and develops a dramatic technique which requires the spectator to submit his initial emotional and imaginative response to the drama to the scrutiny of reason if he is to understand the play. In this way, Alarcón's own creative technique proves to be yet another example of the prudent use of deception illustrated in his plays.

**'Fiction, Deceit and Morality in the Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, 1580-1639'**

by

**Jules Whicker, Christ Church, Oxford.**

**Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Trinity Term, 1995**

**Abstract:**

The largest and most important part of the existing body of critical work on Ruiz de Alarcón is concerned with determining the nature and extent of his moral vision. This question has been debated most intensely as regards his most famous *comedia*, *La verdad sospechosa*. In this play, Alarcón's protagonist, don García, possesses a talent - not to say a compulsion - for the creation of impromptu lies which, as a number of critics have recognised, reflect the elaborate literary conventions of the age as much as the social aspirations of the audience for which the play was written. Yet whilst this aspect of don García's character has an undoubted appeal as a source of theatrical entertainment, it also proves to be the cause of his downfall, since, in the *desenlace*, his mendacity is punished by his forced marriage to a woman whom he does not love. The manner of the play's conclusion thus creates an unmistakable tension between the flamboyant character don García seeks to cut in society and the elaborate and ornate fictions he creates for this purpose on one hand, and the austere morality of the *desenlace* on the other.

The present study seeks to resolve this conflict which is so central to Alarconian criticism by examining the issue of the relation of fiction and deceit to morality throughout Alarcón's works.

Since Alarcón appears never to have written a *poetics* of the sort represented by Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, the only sources of information as regards Alarcón's literary concerns remain the plays themselves, and the brief prefaces which accompany their appearance in his two *Partes* of 1628 and 1634 respectively. In the present study, therefore, an attempt is made to discern how Alarcón viewed such matters by close scrutiny of the texts of his plays. This approach is itself supported by frequent reference to the theoretical writings of contemporary, or near-contemporary, literary scholars (*preceptistas*) and other authors of imaginative literature (*poetas*) in the Spanish Golden Age, and these are in turn set against the background of the long-standing controversy regarding the moral legitimacy of imaginative literature in general (and the theatre in particular) which was at its most intense in the first quarter of the seventeenth century - the very years in which Alarcón was writing for the *corrales* of Madrid.

It is the contention of this study that in the course of his career Alarcón successfully developed a dramatic technique which satisfies the essentially Horatian proposition, frequently voiced by the *preceptistas* of the age, that plays should impart not only entertainment but also some deeper moral benefit. Moreover, I contend that to a large extent this technique consists in leading his audience to see through the poetry and spectacle of the *comedia*, with all their audible and visual *efectismo*, so as to grasp the essentially neostoic conception of individual and social morality that underlies them. Thus, whilst Alarcón's plays undoubtedly make use of the readily-accessible language of dramatic convention established by Lope, his dramatic technique effectively rejects Lope's emphasis on entertainment as its own justification and requires his audience to recognise that those elements of the drama which have the most immediate theatrical appeal may also be the least substantial and the least moral. The meaning of Alarcón's

plays is only fully accessible, therefore, when their conventional dramatic language is treated as a code to be deciphered, since the act of deciphering itself requires the audience to adopt a detached, reflective and analytical stance which is at odds with the imaginative and emotive appeal of the dramatic performance itself. Consequently, what we find is that the moral values promoted by these plays are not simply stated in the form of explicit *sententiae*, or exemplified in the broad lines of the plot, as is the case in *La verdad sospechosa* and elsewhere, but that they are suggested throughout Alarcón's work by more subtle methods - such as his use of imagery and structural contrasts - which require the same kind of discernment and circumspection from his audience as is observed in many of his dramatic characters.

In this way Alarcón's dramatic art answers the strident accusations of contemporary moralists that the theatre (and imaginative literature in general) posed a serious threat to the moral fabric of society through its vivid presentation of mendacious fictions capable of stimulating the imagination and feelings of their audiences (and readers) to such an extent as overcome the restraining force of natural reason. Instead it represents a form of drama which offers to satisfy both Plato's suggestion in the *Republic* and the *Laws* that poetry might be acceptable if it contributed to the moral well-being of society, and the subsequent claims of the *preceptistas* of the Spanish Golden Age that literature might provide an effective means of promoting virtue and reproofing vice. Viewed in this light, the author has a role in society which is akin to that of the governor or the judge - something which Alarcón is known to have pursued assiduously both in Mexico and throughout his thirteen years as a *pretendiente* in Madrid. In the present study, therefore, I contend that Alarcón shares not only the moralists' concern about literary fiction as a potential source of moral corruption, but

also the *preceptistas*' convictions as regards its potential as a means of moral instruction.

Moreover, I contend that Alarcón also subscribed to the Stoic and Ciceronian view, widely upheld throughout the sixteenth century, and further emphasised as part of the movement for moral reform of his own time, that honour, in the sense of one's standing in society, properly depended on the performance of one's duties in accordance with the moral principles of that society. As I judge it, therefore, and despite the fact that he was working in a moral climate in which imaginative literature was frequently presented as a threat to the moral well-being of society, Alarcón regarded the act of creating fictions which were carefully calculated to reprove vice and to promote virtue as an honourable and praiseworthy occupation.

This contention is supported by the fact that, whilst Alarcón's *comedias* repeatedly criticise outright mendacity and the malicious or irresponsible use of deception, they present the use of other forms of fiction, illusion and deception *for moral ends* in a more positive light, and in such a way as to imply that such methods may be not only a necessary but also a praiseworthy means of negotiating the complexities of actual existence whilst maintaining the integrity of one's fundamental principles. Alarcón's use of dramatic fiction is therefore analogous to a significant extent with the prudent use of dissimulation practised by many of his dramatic characters, and reflects the subtle distinctions of truth and falsehood which one finds in the work of contemporary casuists, and most particularly and significantly in the work of those contemporary political philosophers who sought to advise rulers as to the best means of preserving the well-being of their dominions in a far from certain world whilst at the same time giving due consideration to ethical principles. This issue has been overlooked by previous studies of Alarcón's drama, and yet I judge it to be of

direct and central importance to Alarcón's conception of good government and good art alike.

The thesis is divided up into six chapters. The first three are primarily concerned with assessing Alarcón's attitude to the medium in which he is working and examining his dramatic technique. Chapter 1 sets Alarcón's work against the background of the contemporary controversy over the legitimacy of the theatre and the writings of the *preceptistas*, and gives special consideration to the prefaces with which Alarcón introduces his two *Partes*, and to those passages in his plays which deal explicitly with the performance of *comedias* in the *corrales*. Chapter 2 considers the literary characteristics of don García's lies, and identifies a link between stylistic excess, imagination and irrationality. Chapter 3 examines another of Alarcón's best-known urban comedies, *Las paredes oyen*, against the background of contemporary attitudes to satire and argues that the play represents both a systematic criticism of the satirical mode and a prescription for moral satire which is in accordance with the *preceptistas'* assertions that the proper purpose of satire was to reprehend vice so as to promote virtue - a function also shared by the *comedia*.

Both these last two chapters, however, also reveal a contrast between the irrational, malicious and imprudent lies of don García and don Mendo, don García's counterpart in *Las paredes oyen*, and the well-intentioned and prudent strategies of deception practised by their antagonists in these plays - a contrast which is observed in the other plays discussed in detail in this study as well as elsewhere in Alarcón's work. The analysis of don García's character and the discussion of satire is also supported by frequent reference to the relevant sections of Aristotle's *Ethics* and the *Summa Theologiae* of St. Thomas Aquinas: the correspondence between these works and

Alarcón's plays itself serving as an indication of the considered nature of Alarcón's approach to social satire.

Chapter 4 deals with three of Alarcón's magic plays, *La cueva de Salamanca*, *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, and *La prueba de las promesas*. In each case, magical illusion is presented as a form of deception which either threatens or supports the moral fabric of society. In *Quien mal anda*, Alarcón presents a link between illusion, illicit passion and social breakdown, as, with the aid of the Devil, the Moorish *curandero* Román Ramírez assumes different guises in pursuit of his infatuation for a beautiful Castilian noblewoman, and sows confusion and discord among the *hidalgo* inhabitants of the provincial town of Deza in the process. Román's plans are foiled only by the timely intervention of the Officers of the Inquisition, and the play therefore appear to reflect not only the concerns of contemporary moralists as regards the pernicious effect of theatrical illusion, but also their advocacy of legal censorship as the only defence against it. By contrast, in both *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas* the magicians are men of exemplary moral and social credentials who to a large extent embody the stoic virtues of Wisdom and Prudence and who use their art for the purpose of moral instruction and as a means of exposing and reproving vice. This is particularly true of the latter play, in which the magical illusion created by don Illán de Toledo occupies the greater part of the dramatic action and functions as an example of 'metatheatre' or 'the play within the play'. This fact lends weight to the supposition advanced in this chapter that the use of magical illusion by the magicians in these plays may justly regarded as analogous to the use of dramatic illusion by the playwright, and serves as further evidence for the argument that, whilst Alarcón was as conscious of the theatre's potential as a source of moral corruption as its seventeenth-century opponents, he also shared the *preceptista*'s convictions as regards its potential as a means of moral

reform. The discussion of these plays also reveals the extent to which Alarcón was familiar with the work of contemporary writers on the occult, and, in particular with what Aquinas has to say about supernatural illusion in the *Summa Theologiae*.

The final two chapters of the thesis deal less with illusion and deception in literary contexts, and more with their use in military and political situations. In the first of these chapters I examine *La manganilla de Melilla*, a play which has previously been regarded as one of Alarcón's lesser magic plays, but which I consider to be of far greater importance as regards its presentation of deception as an aspect of military virtue. In this play, a Christian general, Pedro Vanegas de Córdoba, defends the Spanish enclave of Melilla by means of a deceptive stratagem which enables him to defeat an army of Moors, many of whom subsequently convert to Christianity. My study of this previously neglected and, I believe, misunderstood play shows Vanegas' use of deception to be fully justified not only in the terms of the play itself, but also in terms of contemporary concepts of the 'just war' and the nature of military virtue. Indeed, this reading of the play primarily in terms of its military elements is particularly significant because it describes a context within which deception was not merely tolerated but held to be a necessary element in the defence of the realm and of the Christian faith. Moreover, it was on such arguments that contemporary political philosophers such as Juan de Mariana, Pedro de Ribadeneyra and Diego Saavedra Fajardo were wont to defend the use of deception in political affairs, an area with which I deal in Chapter 6.

Towards the end of his career as a dramatist Alarcón wrote a number of plays which feature kings and their *privados*, and which show a concern with the difficulties encountered by rulers and their ministers alike of reconciling the personal imperatives of passion or moral integrity with those of duty to the state or to the monarch

respectively. Of these plays I have selected two, *La amistad castigada* and *Ganar amigos*, which show the misuse and the correct use of deception respectively. In the case of the latter play, I contend that figure of don Fadrique, who is widely considered by modern critics to be a model of the perfect *privado*, practises deception in a way which is inseparable from the other aspects of his conduct, which is itself marked by all the virtues of Christian neostoicism, and that the example of prudent deception and compromise which he sets serves to temper the justice of the monarch he serves, the notorious Pedro I of Castile, in such a way as to refute his fearsome reputation as 'Pedro el Cruel' and to justify the other epithet traditionally associated with him, that of 'El Justiciero'.

Taken as a whole, therefore, this study draws together and significantly refocuses existing critical opinions of Alarcón's work so as to present a coherent vision of his achievement as a dramatist which reveals a previously undervalued intellectual dimension to his work, and indicates that he had read widely and considered deeply not only the work of his contemporaries on literary theory, theology, political philosophy and the art of war, but also the moral philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Augustine and Aquinas. It is my contention that this rich web of ideas provided the lens through which he saw the society of his own time, and that it led him to sympathise with the views of those who sought to reform the moral life of early seventeenth-century Spain - and even those who sought to impose censorship on the theatre. Yet, rather than persuading him of the impossibility of writing moral fiction, I contend that it convinced him that the illusions of the stage might be as effective and as necessary an antidote to the pretensions and machinations of those whose conduct threatened to undermine the well-being of the state as the prudent dissimulation advocated by the military strategists and political philosophers of the age. When understood in this way, therefore, Alarcón's

work allows the student of the *comedia* in Spain's Golden Age to gain a fuller and more detailed understanding of this dramatic form itself and also of the social and intellectual contexts from which it arose.

**Fiction, Deceit and Morality**  
**in the Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, 1580-1639**

by

**Jules Whicker**

**Christ Church, Oxford**

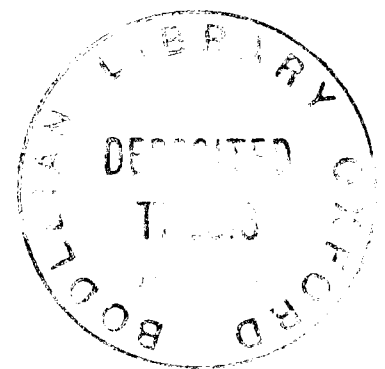
**Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages**

**University of Oxford**

**Trinity Term**

1995 [unclear]



I gladly and gratefully acknowledge the invaluable help, guidance and good will offered to me during the preparation of this thesis by: Dr. R.W. Truman, of Christ Church, Oxford; The staff of the Taylor Institution Library, Oxford; The Department of Hispanic Studies at the University of Birmingham; the trustees of the Instituto de Valencia de don Juan, Madrid; and all those who have lent me their generous support and friendship over the last five years.

# Contents

<i>List of abbreviations</i>	<i>page iv</i>
Introduction	1
1 Fiction, Theatre and Morality	19
2 Lies and Dissimulation: <i>La verdad sospechosa</i>	60
3 Alarcón's Criticism of Satire in <i>Las paredes oyen</i>	95
4 Illusion in Magic and Drama: <i>La cueva de Salamanca</i> , <i>Quien mal anda en mal acaba</i> , and <i>La prueba de las promesas</i>	134
5 Prudent Dissimulation and Military Virtue in <i>La manganilla de Melilla</i>	184
6 Deceit in Politics and Alarcón's <i>Privado</i> Plays: <i>La amistad castigada</i> and <i>Ganar amigos</i>	212
Conclusion	248
<i>Bibliography</i>	264
<i>Index</i>	279

## Abbreviations

<i>ACer</i>	<i>Anales cervantinos</i>
<i>AUMLA</i>	<i>Journal of the Australasian Universities Modern Languages Association</i>
<i>BAE</i>	Biblioteca de autores españoles
<i>BBMP</i>	<i>Boletín de la Biblioteca de Menéndez Pelayo</i>
<i>BCom</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Comediantes</i>
<i>BH</i>	<i>Bulletin Hispanique</i>
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Bulletin of Hispanic Studies</i>
<i>BRAE</i>	<i>Boletín de la Real Academia Española</i>
<i>CSIC</i>	Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas
<i>DHR</i>	<i>Duquesne Hispanic Review</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Hispanic Review</i>
<i>HispM</i>	<i>Hispania (Mexico)</i>
<i>MLN</i>	<i>Modern Language Notes</i>
<i>OC</i>	<i>Obras completas de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón</i> , edited by Agustín Millares Carlo
<i>PL</i>	<i>Patrologia Latina</i>
<i>PMLA</i>	<i>Publications of the Modern Languages Association of America</i>
<i>RABM</i>	<i>Revista de archivos, bibliotecas y museos</i>
<i>RCLL</i>	<i>Revista de crítica literatura latinoamericana</i>
<i>REH</i>	<i>Revista de estudios hispánicos</i>
<i>RFE</i>	<i>Revista de filología española</i>
<i>RH</i>	<i>Revue hispanique</i>
<i>RI</i>	<i>Revista ibérica</i>
<i>RJ</i>	<i>Romanistisches Jahrbuch</i>
<i>RN</i>	<i>Romance Notes</i>
<i>ST</i>	<i>Suma theologiae</i>
<i>UNAM</i>	Universidad Nacional de México

## Introduction

The present thesis is posited on the view that Alarcón was interestingly interested, in the general run of his plays, in the issue of deception, its necessity, and its conditional legitimacy. This is not a totally new view. Published criticism has not been altogether indifferent or blind to the rôle of mendacity and social pretence in Alarcón's drama. Nor is this surprising, since deception constitutes a fundamental structural device in the majority of social and situational comedies and not just in those of Alarcón. However, I contend that this is a thematic concern of Alarcón's which runs through the body of his work and plays an important if not a predominant part in it, and that Alarcón deals with it in an intellectually complex and morally serious way. At the same time Alarcón shows an alert and acute concern with the dramatist's priority of keeping his audience interested, in this case by way of amusement.

All this raises the question of what it was about Alarcón or the times in which he lived that caused him to be interested in this issue. It should be remembered that Alarcón began his career as a playwright in Madrid during a period of extensive social change. In the words of J.H.Elliott, 'Madrid [...] was a boom town. In 1561, when Philip II chose it as his capital, it was little more than an overgrown village. By 1621 it had a population approaching 150,000, almost as large as that of Seville'.<sup>1</sup> But if Seville was the greatest mercantile city in Spain in the early 1600s, Madrid was without doubt the social capital, and the massive increase in its population led to a multiplication of its social structures and modalities. This in turn lent considerable

---

<sup>1</sup> John H. Elliott, 'Art and Decline in Seventeenth-Century Spain', in his *Spain and its World, 1500-1700* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989), pp.263-86. (p.277).

emphasis to the importance of place, privilege and influence, and led to much self-questioning and criticism about social and, by extension, individual values.

As Elliott has observed, this was also an age in which Spaniards increasingly came to perceive Spain as a nation in decline, and to seek the remedy for their country's malaise in a whole series of economic, political, social, and, in particular, moral reforms.<sup>2</sup> In view of their concern about the future of Spain, it is not surprising that many of those who wrote in this vein - the *arbitristas* - turned their attention to the behaviour of young noblemen and women, and to the moral impact of the theatres which they attended so enthusiastically.<sup>3</sup> Here a concern with contemporary *mores* drew strength from a hostility towards theatrical performances that went back to the Church Fathers and to Plato, whose views on the subject were readily recalled.<sup>4</sup> Whether in response to the resulting controversy or to the general spirit of the times, the theatre's apologists repeatedly appealed in these years to the classic argument according to which the theatre in general and the *comedia* in particular were mirrors held up to life, whose basic function was to better men's behaviour. As Ruth Lee Kennedy remarks: 'The *comedia* was being made to serve as a medium for those who would convert art into a handmaiden for a better life'.<sup>5</sup>

There was also, at the level of abstract discourse, a manifest concern with the way in which general principles of morality and religion related to the complex and

---

<sup>2</sup> See Elliott, 'Self-Perception and Decline in Early Seventeenth-Century Spain', in *Spain and its World*, pp.241-61.

<sup>3</sup> For the controversy over the moral and social legitimacy of the *comedia*, see Emilio Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España* (Madrid: RABM, 1904).

<sup>4</sup> For a particularly interesting example, see St. Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, translated by Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin, 1984), Book 1, Chapters 30-33; Book 2, Chapters 8-14, 25-27, Book 4, Chapters 26-27 [= pp.41-44, 56-65, 81-85, and 167-70].

<sup>5</sup> Ruth Lee Kennedy, 'The Madrid of 1617-1625, Certain Aspects of Social, Moral and Educational Reform', in *Homenaje a Archer M. Huntington* (Wellesley, 1952), pp.275-309 (p.292).

often tangled circumstances of actual life. This was a concern that lent impetus to the development of casuistry, and found a focus in the perception that the application of the Ten Commandments, or the ethical core of the four Cardinal Virtues as bequeathed by Classical antiquity, was anything but straightforward. Evidence of this is to be found everywhere. It is true that certain now much referred-to works like Ribadeneira's *Tratado de la religión y virtudes [... del ...] príncipe christiano* (Madrid, 1595) attacked Machiavelli. Nevertheless, even in that work we find its author yielding many intellectual points, even if he finally jibs at accepting the essential point about the relation of power to principle.<sup>6</sup> One notes also in this context an increased interest in Tacitus, whose works present the view that power and position depend on an ability continually to outmanoeuvre, by sharp perception, calculation and ruthlessness, those who would threaten it.<sup>7</sup>

This was also the age of the great *privados*. Lerma, the first of these, was in power at the time Alarcón arrived in Madrid. The existence of such men itself had a particular social significance and impact. Madrid society already functioned on the basis of favour and patronage, but never before had the potential rewards to be derived from the system been so great. With so much to win (and as much to lose) what means might not now be employed?<sup>8</sup> In such a society, wealth and reputation were vital

---

<sup>6</sup> Pedro de Ribadeneira, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano para gobernar y conservar sus estados*, in *Obras del Padre Pedro de Rivadeneira*, BAE vol. 60 (Madrid, 1919). For a lucid examination of this complex issue, see R.W. Truman, 'The Idea of the Prince in the Latin and Vernacular Writings of Sixteenth-Century Spanish Theorists' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Oxford, 1963), pp.362-94.

<sup>7</sup> See Charles J. Davis, 'Tacitus in Golden-Age Spain: His Influence on Political Thought and Prose Literature' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 1987); and Francisco Sanmartí Boncompte, *Tácito en España* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1951).

<sup>8</sup> The operation and abuse of this system of patronage in the reign of Philip III is described by John Lynch: 'Clients [...] sought to attach themselves to a powerful patron who disposed of influence and wealth, and the most influential of all was the king's favourite, and after him the favourite's favourite. For their part patrons, anxious to build up a large following as a measure of their own power and status, were willing to oblige. This accounts for the manoeuvring for strategic positions around the king and for

commodities, to be flaunted if one had them, and simulated if one did not: what mattered was how one appeared and what others thought. The extravagance and unreality of the capital is vividly conveyed in fray Alonso Remón's *Guía y avisos de forasteros en la Corte* (Madrid, 1620):

En esta Babilonia de la confusion de la vida de la corte, de cuatro cosas que se ven no se han de creer las dos. ¡Qué de galas sin poder traerse! ¡Qué de gastos sin poder sustentarse! ¡Qué de ostentaciones de casa y criados, sin que se sepa dónde se cría ni a qué árbol se disfruta aquello que allí se consume! ¡Qué de opinión de hombres ricos, más por opinión que por renta! ¡Qué de rentas sin opinión y qué de opiniones sin probabilidad! Todas son apariencias fabulosas, maravillas soñadas, tesoros de duendes, figuras de representantes en comedia, y otros epítetos y títulos pudiera darles más lastimosos y ridículos.<sup>9</sup>

As a native of New Spain, Alarcón could (and probably did) look at the world of Madrid with the eyes of an outsider as well as with the knowledge derived from the years of his adult life which he had already spent in Spain.<sup>10</sup> Alarcón was experienced in the practice of the law and had an extensive university training. Moreover, his

---

the constant agitation at court. [...] The downfall of Lerma and Calderón attested to the ruthlessness of the patronage system and the vindictiveness of the 'outs' when they became the 'ins'. There was too much at stake to expect clemency' (*Spain Under the Habsburgs, Volume II: Spain and America 1598-1700*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981) pp.27-29).

<sup>9</sup> Fray Alonso Remón [pseud. = 'Antonio de Liñán y Verdugo'], *Guía y avisos de forasteros en la Corte*, edited by Edison Simons (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1980), p.97. Remón was far from being the only writer to view Madrid society in this way: 'It seems', wrote González de Cellorigo, as he surveyed the parasitic rentier society with its extravagant dreams and conspicuous consumption and neglect of economic realities, '[...] as if one had wished to reduce these kingdoms to a republic of enchanted beings, living outside the natural order of things.' (Martín González de Cellorigo, *Memorial de la política necesaria y útil restauración a la república de España* (Valladolid, 1600), f.25v., cited by Elliott, 'Art and Decline', p.227). Quevedo's social portraits in *La vida del buscón* and *Los sueños* inevitably come to mind here.

<sup>10</sup> This point is also made by Willard F. King who believes that 'justamente por no haberse criado en el seno de la sociedad peninsular, Alarcón era capaz de percibir su conformación y sus peculiaridades de manera más aguda que los nacidos en ella. Tal es, en parte la razón del éxito de sus comedias de costumbres contemporáneas. Aquí está en su elemento el Alarcón 'moralista' - moralista en el sentido de observador de la conducta, que es una de las connotaciones del término' (*Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, letrado y dramaturgo: su mundo mexicano y español* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1989), p.225).

training in the law was very likely to foster a particular kind of intellectual interest, even a particular kind of intellectual vision or response characterised by an interest in the broad principles of ethics, an acute awareness of the complexity of social reality as empirically perceived, and a strong sense of the problems involved in the relating of apparently conflicting principles and values.<sup>11</sup>

All that being the case, I contend that, as well as writing plays which have many obvious virtues as comedies (in the unproblematic sense of the word), Alarcón was at the same time exploring in a sustained and serious way issues which find their focus in the issue of deception, seen as a social and personal necessity. I also contend that, as a writer of dramatic fiction at a time when the issue of the moral or social legitimacy of the theatre was the subject of considerable controversy, Alarcón regarded this issue - the necessity of deception - as one which had an immediate personal relevance, and which offered a theoretical basis on which he might justify his occupation as a playwright in moral and social terms. So, whilst I am not saying that this is the thing which he is emphasising all the time, I maintain that, at different depths, in different plays, this is an area of serious interest and that the reader's recognition of this adds to the resonance, interest and significance of Alarcón's plays.

---

<sup>11</sup> In King's view, there is a direct connection between Alarcón's legal training and his manner of writing comedies: 'Viéndolo bien [su formación legal] fue en más de un sentido una preparación peculiarmente adecuada para el futuro autor teatral. Muchos siglos antes de los siglos de Alarcón, un breve tratado griego sobre la estructura de la comedia en contraste con la de la tragedia (el *Tractatus Coislinianus*) había definido el género comedia como una forma de proceso judicial en que se van presentando alegatos en pro y en contra de una tesis o de un personaje, hasta que el peso de las sucesivas pruebas jurídicas destruye la falsa opinión y establece la inocencia o la culpa, la verdad o la falsedad. 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' (*Letrado y dramaturgo*, p.79). A similar connection is identified by James A. Parr: 'His considerable training and experience served to foster a predominantly secular outlook [...and] helps one to understand the advocacy of reason, his characteristically concise and precise style, and the pains taken everywhere in his work to offer logical explanations for behaviour and to analyze actions and motivations' ('Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza and the Contexts of Criticism', in *After its Kind* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1991), pp.9-21, (p.12)).

This thesis adds to the critical corpus on Alarcón's work by drawing together a number of recurring critical issues and breaks new ground by exploring an issue - that of legitimate deception - which has never previously received extensive consideration. As we approach this critical corpus, one is bound to be conscious of the fact that there is a substantial amount of serious and important critical work on Alarcón, particularly from the pens of Ellen Lavroff-Claydon, Willard F. King, Cynthia L. Halpern, James A. Parr, and Walter Poesse.<sup>12</sup>

Most existing studies of Alarcón's work have sought to assess the extent to which his plays advocate a particular kind of moral vision, and to define the nature of that vision. The view that Alarcón is a morally serious dramatist is first found in the work of Ramón Mesonero Romanos and Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch and has been current ever since.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently a division has appeared between those scholars who view Alarcón's moral vision as predominantly religious, and those for whom it is predominantly secular.<sup>14</sup> Other critics, such as Alfonso Reyes and Edouard Barry, have

---

<sup>12</sup> Ellen Lavroff-Claydon, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Baroque Dramatist* (Madrid: Castalia, 1970) and her article 'Some Observations on Alarcón's Position in the Development of the Seventeenth-Century Theatre', *Hispanófila*, 42 (1971), 7-19; Walter Poesse, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (New York: Twayne, 1972); Cynthia Leone Halpern, *The Political Theatre of Early Seventeenth Century Spain, with special reference to Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (New York: Lang, 1993), together with the works already mentioned here: King, *Letrado y dramaturgo*; and Parr, *After its Kind*.

<sup>13</sup> See Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch, 'Caracteres distintivos de las obras dramáticas de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Comedias de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza*, BAE vol. 20 (Madrid, 1866), pp. xiii-xxvi (p. xv): '[...] el primero y más notable rasgo que distingue a Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza como poeta cómico, es la moralidad, la filosofía', and Ramón de Mesonero Romanos, *ibid.* p. xl: 'Todas sus comedias respiran una intención moral (cosa rara entre nuestros primeros dramáticos)'.

<sup>14</sup> For an exposition of the view that Alarcón's moral vision is essentially religious, see: Alice M. Paulin, 'The Religious Motive in the Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *HR*, 29 (1961), 33-44, and Claydon, *Baroque Dramatist*. There is much that is of value in Claydon's work, but I cannot agree with her assertion that 'all of Alarcón's morality, however social and rational it may seem, is presented in function with the salvation of the soul' (p. 171).

The following studies take a secular view: Julio Jiménez Rueda (ed.), *Los pechos privilegiados* (Mexico: UNAM, 1932), p. xiv; Antonio Castro Leal, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: su vida y su obra* (Mexico: Cuadernos Americanos, 1943), p. 204; Carmen Olga Brenes, *El sentimiento democrático en el teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Valencia: Castalia, 1960), p. 238; and Parr, 'Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza and the Contexts of Criticism', in his *After its Kind*, pp. 9-21.

remarked on the practical advantages gained by those characters in Alarcón's plays who act in accordance with his moral code, so as to present Alarcón as a dramatist whose morality has a significant pragmatic aspect.<sup>15</sup> More recently the focus of critical attention on the issue of Alarcón's morality has shifted from the individual to society.<sup>16</sup> Thus, Geoffrey Ribbans describes Alarcón's moral vision exclusively in terms of social convention: '*La verdad sospechosa* functions entirely within the framework of human beings reacting to each other in a context of conventional society life' - a context which he describes as a 'not very attractive world of relative though rational standards'.<sup>17</sup> However, Ribbans does not make it clear in this article whether he regards Alarcón as an advocate of such a society or simply as a dramatist who sought to reflect contemporary social values.<sup>18</sup>

Other aspects of Alarcón's work on which critical debate has focused are: his indebtedness to Plautus or Terence; his difference from his contemporaries, especially Lope de Vega, and the related question of his *mexicanidad*; his ability to create female

---

<sup>15</sup> Edouard Barry (ed.), *La verdad sospechosa* (Paris: Garnier, 1913), p.xxxi and Alfonso Reyes (ed.), *Ruiz de Alarcón: Teatro* (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1923), p.xxxviii.

<sup>16</sup> See Brett Levinson's innovative article, 'The Management of the Estate in *La verdad sospechosa*', *Revista de estudios hispánicos*, 28 (1994), 163-83. Levinson does not find any moral concern at the heart of the play, and claims that lying is not a vice to be censured but an essential element in the management of economic affairs in an aristocratic society based on credit.

<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Ribbans, 'Lying in the structure of *La verdad sospechosa*', in *Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age presented to Edward M. Wilson*, edited by R.O. Jones (London: Tamesis, 1973), 193-216, (pp.215-16).

<sup>18</sup> Ribbans' reference to 'rational standards' in the remark quoted previously, reflects a widely-held view that one of the most distinctive features of Alarcón's theatre is its emphasis on reason and common sense. This is a view which appears in Chandler and Schwartz, *A New History of Spanish Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961), p.90, and Ángel del Río, *Historia de la literatura española*, (New York: Holt, 1963), I, 372. It is also prominent in the following studies of Alarcón's theatre: Carlos Ortigoza-Vieyra *Reason, the Chief Motivating Force: Los móviles de la Comedia* (Mexico, 1954), p.131; Paulin 'The Religious Motive [...]', p.39; Margaret Wilson, *Spanish Drama of the Golden Age* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1969), p.130; Claydon, *Baroque Dramatist*, p.15; Charles E. Perry, 'Comedy and Common Sense in *El Semejante de sí mismo*' *RN*, 16 (1974-75), 734-41, (p.734); and Parr, *After its Kind*, p.12.

characters; the psychological depth of his characterisation; his portrayal of the *privado* in his 'political' plays; and his use of occult elements in his theatre.

Some of these issues have been settled more conclusively than others. The idea that Alarcón's Mexican origins give a distinctive character to his *comedias* has now been set aside as unprovable and largely irrelevant to literary criticism.<sup>19</sup> The (on the face of it, reasonable) suggestion that Alarcón may have modelled his dramatic art on that of Plautus and Terence, has also been dismissed in the absence of any significant evidence to substantiate it.<sup>20</sup> The allegation that Alarcón's female characters are less substantial or less sympathetically drawn than their male counterparts - which derives from the assumption on the part of certain critics that Alarcón's physical deformity adversely prejudiced his relationships with women - has also been effectively laid to rest in studies by David Pasto, Dolores Bravo and Dorothy Severin, so that it is now generally accepted that Alarcón's women characters are neither less sympathetically presented nor less substantial than his men.<sup>21</sup>

Other issues are less settled. The widely-held view that Alarcón's characters are more 'rounded' than those of Lope, for instance, derives from the fact that in Alarcón's

---

<sup>19</sup> See Claydon, *Baroque Dramatist*, p.11. On the issue of Alarcón's *mexicanidad* see: Pedro Henríquez Ureña, 'Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *Seis ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión* (Buenos Aires, 1952), pp.91-103; Joaquín Casualdero, 'Sobre la nacionalidad del escritor', *Estudios sobre el teatro español*, (Madrid, 1962), pp.145-59; and Antonio Alatorre, 'Para la historia de un problema: la mexicanidad de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *Anuario de Letras* (UNAM: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras), 4 (1964), 161-202.

<sup>20</sup> On Alarcón's supposed 'Classicism' see: Elisa Pérez, 'La influencia de Plautus y Terence en el teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón' *HispM*, 11 (1928), 131-49; John Brooks, 'La verdad sospechosa: The Source and Purpose', *HispM*, 15 (1932), 243-52; Miriam Virginia Melvin, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Classical and Spanish Influences* (Michigan: Edwards, 1942); Richard W. Tyler, 'A Possible Influence on *La verdad sospechosa*', *BCom*, 22 (1970), 6-7; and John London, 'La verdad sospechosa': *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Madrid: Ciclo, 1990), p.94. Melvin's arguments against regarding Alarcón as a 'classicist' are summarised in a review article by Joseph H. Silverman, *RI*, 17 (1952), 357-59.

<sup>21</sup> See David J. Pasto, 'The Independent Heroines in Ruiz de Alarcón's Major Comedies' *BC*, 40 (1988), 227-35; Dolores Bravo, 'La mujer en la obra de Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Memoria de las Segundas Jornadas Alarcónianas, 1989* edited by Héctor Azar (Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de Guerrero, 1990), pp.41-60; and Dorothy Sherman Severin, 'Ruiz de Alarcón's Romantic Heroines' in, *Golden Age Spanish Literature: Studies in Honour of John Varey* (London: Westfield College, 1991), 207-214.

theatre individuals frequently comment explicitly on the motivation behind their own and others' actions. Claydon rejects as anachronistic the notion that Alarcón was interested in psychological motivation 'per se' and concludes (with A.A.Parker) that 'characters are used primarily to dramatise the ideas'.<sup>22</sup> Whether or not this is so, it does not preclude the possibility, raised by E.C. Riley in his study of *La verdad sospechosa*, that Alarcón was interested in the origins of character as they were understood in his own day, and as they were notably presented in Juan Huarte de San Juan's remarkable *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (Baeza, 1575).<sup>23</sup> Indeed, there seems little reason why intellectual and professional analyses of this kind should not also be put to use by the dramatist in order to illustrate his theme and to add substance to the argument of the play.<sup>24</sup>

The recent publication of a new study of Alarcón's political drama has raised the larger question of the extent to which the dramatists of the Spanish Golden Age were seriously interested in the political issues of the age.<sup>25</sup> Here, in the course of studying the political dramas that make up a significant proportion of his work, Halpern asserts that Alarcón displays 'a concern for sound government and reform measures which is far more persistent, consistent and insistent than that of any of his

---

<sup>22</sup> Claydon, *Baroque Dramatist*, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> See E.C. Riley, 'Alarcón's *mentiroso* in the light of the contemporary theory of character', in *Hispanic Studies in Honour of I. González Llubera*, edited by Frank Pierce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp.287-97. It seems likely, in view of the presence in Alarcón's plays of a significant number of characters (including his most famous) whose behaviour is marked by obsessive or compulsive behaviour, that Alarcón did indeed have a genuine interest in questions of this sort.

<sup>24</sup> It should be remembered that the explanatory remarks made by Alarcón's characters from which this debate derives are made in the context of 'asides' and confidences and that these have a dramatic function in themselves, allowing the audience privileged information as a means both of increasing the spectators' sense of involvement in the action and of allowing the dramatist to create a number of ironic effects.

<sup>25</sup> See Halpern, *Political Theatre*, and John W. Gilmour, 'Political Themes in the Theatre of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University College, Cardiff, 1972).

contemporaries, such as Tirso or Lope', and that 'it is clear that he had read widely in the major political treatises of his day'.<sup>26</sup> Halpern supports Kennedy's view that many of the plays of the period 1617-1625 are 'so closely tied to [the] moralising spirit of the epoch [...] that they lose in large part their meaning if separated from the currents of thought that were tugging at men's minds and consciences', and also Kennedy's contention that 'it is impossible to interpret aright many of the plays which such dramatists as Ruiz de Alarcón, Guillén de Castro, Tirso de Molina, or Antonio de Mira de Amescua were writing in these years, unless they are set against the backdrop of this struggle for reform'.<sup>27</sup> However, despite this promising point of departure and her useful survey of the principal contemporary theories of kingship, Halpern's conclusions are disappointingly modest: she finds Alarcón's political plays more notable for 'the constancy with which he returned to his favourite themes and the artful dramatic technique which makes these political plays exciting theatre' than for anything in his political thought as such, in which she sees 'nothing revolutionary or radical'.<sup>28</sup>

As well as his social comedies and political dramas, Alarcón also wrote a number of plays incorporating occult elements. These 'magic plays' have also received a degree of critical attention, particularly from Alva Ebersole, Augusta Espantoso-Foley

---

<sup>26</sup> Halpern, *ibid.*, pp.137-38.

<sup>27</sup> See Kennedy, 'The Madrid of 1617-1625', pp.291-92. Halpern rejects both the position advanced by José María Díez Borque and José Antonio Maravall that the theatre functioned as a tool of political, social and economic propaganda, and Leicester Bradner's conclusion that Spanish dramatists rarely stressed 'issues of good and bad government as the English do'. See José María Díez Borque, *Sociología de la comedia española del siglo XVII* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1976); José Antonio Maravall, *Teatro y literatura en la sociedad barroca*, (Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones, 1972); and Leicester Bradner, 'The Theme of *privanza* in Spanish and English Drama 1590-1625', in *Homenaje a William Fichter*, edited by David Kossof & José Amor y Vázquez (Madrid: Castalia, 1971), pp.97-106 (p.106).

<sup>28</sup> Halpern, *ibid.*, p.138.

and Charles Perry.<sup>29</sup> These studies observe that Alarcón's treatment of the use of magic is essentially orthodox, as one might expect in view of the dangers attendant upon deviating from established religious doctrine in such a matter. They conclude, therefore, that Alarcón has little interest in magic 'per se' and that he makes use of magic elements in these plays for reasons that are primarily dramatic and practical. According to this view, magic serves as a dramatic device which offers two advantages to the playwright: firstly, it provides him with a convenient way of advancing the plot and solving any difficult situations created in the course of the action; and secondly, it allows for any number of spectacular effects designed to delight and amaze the audience. In my judgement, however, these scholars have failed to recognise that magic is handled in a more significant way by Alarcón, as I shall show later.

It will be evident from this summary that the discussion of deception does not feature as one of the main lines taken by existing critical work on Alarcón's theatre as a whole. Indeed, it is an issue which features prominently only in the extensive critical literature on *La verdad sospechosa* and in Claydon's *Baroque Dramatist*. In the context of *La verdad sospechosa*, it has been approached in both moral and aesthetic terms. Thus García's lies have been seen by critics not only as breaches of ethical or social codes (as I have mentioned previously) but also as examples of 'metatheatre' or 'the play within the play'.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> See Alva V. Ebersole Jr., 'Supersticiones españolas y la obra de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón' *Hispanófila*, 2 (1958), 35-48; Augusta Espantoso-Foley, *Occult Arts and Doctrine in the Theatre of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972); and Charles E. Perry, 'The Question of Means and Magic in Alarcón's *La Prueba de las Promesas*', *BCom*, 27 (1975) pp.14-19.

<sup>30</sup> Claydon takes an extreme 'ethical' position as regards the point where García lies to his father, referring to his 'almost diabolic defiance of Christian virtue and respect for the authority which represents it' (*Baroque Dramatist*, p.118). For the 'aesthetic' interpretation, see Alan Soons, 'La verdad sospechosa', in *Ficción y comedia en el Siglo de Oro* (Estudios de literatura española: Madrid, 1967), pp.124-130; Alan Paterson, 'Reversal & Multiple Role Playing in Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*', *BHS* 61 (1984), 361-68; and Mary Malcolm-Gaylord, 'The Telling Lies of *La verdad sospechosa*', *MLN* 103 (1988), 223-38 (p.232). For 'metatheatre' see London, *La verdad sospechosa*, p.90. Strangely, in view of the fact that he refers to other acts of deceit in Alarcón's plays as 'comedia[s] dentro de la comedia'.

Whilst Claydon regards deception as an important theme and one which runs throughout Alarcón's work, its significance for her derives from what she sees as the dramatist's 'baroque' vision. For Claydon the various deceptions practised by Alarcón's characters stand as evidence that he was seeking to make a point about the illusory nature of man's earthly existence: 'Deception is an important theme in the Baroque, because according to Christian doctrine, the only true life was life everlasting, while worldly life was a short-lived illusion, i.e., life was a dream'.<sup>31</sup> Whilst this view of the significance of deception may hold good for the Baroque in general - whatever that term may be taken to signify - and even for a number of well known plays by Calderón, its relevance to Alarcón's drama is less apparent, at least to me. More valuable, however, is Claydon's recognition that the structure of Alarcón's plots is extensively determined by his inclusion of elements of deception.

Nevertheless, the discussion of deception has not gone nearly as far as the facts justify and has not been given the central prominence in the discussion of the other points and issues to which it is entitled. As a result, Alarcón's magic plays have been seen principally as entertainments designed to please an audience with a taste for spectacle and limited only by the need to keep on the right side of the Inquisition, rather than as evidence of an interest on the part of the playwright in the nature of illusion, deception and self-deception, and its relationship to desire, reason, and knowledge. Likewise, Alarcón's political plays have been considered in relation to the rise of the *privado* under Philip III and Philip IV (Gilmour), and to contemporary theories of kingship such as those of Juan de Mariana and Jean Bodin (Halpern), as well as in

---

Ebersole does not use the latter phrase in his discussion of *La verdad sospechosa*, and refers to García only as the inventor of 'personajes', 'papeles' and 'máscaras'. The theatrical metaphor remains evident nonetheless. See Ebersole, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Obras completas*, 2 vols (Barcelona: Albatros Hispanófila, 1990), I, xxvii-xxx, xxxvii.

<sup>31</sup> Claydon, *Baroque Dramatist*, p.169.

terms of the issues of desire and duty with which they deal (Claydon), yet not at all in terms of the issue of deception and its necessity or utility as a tool of government, despite the fact that this is one of the major political concerns of the age.

Whether they believe Alarcón's moral vision to be essentially religious or predominantly secular, those critics who view Alarcón as a moral dramatist with a didactic purpose have considered his presentation of deception - to the extent that they have considered it at all - almost exclusively in its negative aspect: as lies, as slander, as imposture or as diabolic illusion. In this view, deception or *engaño* has no purpose other than to be overthrown. Yet in the work of those critics who regard the fictions of don García in *La verdad sospechosa* as a reflection of the corrupt moral values of his society, one has glimpses of another view of deception, in which it serves as a means of revealing certain truths. These critics have also directed the reader's attention towards the manner in which García lies, and noted the contrast between his extravagant lies and the more prudent deceptions practised by others. However, they have not recognised the full significance of this contrast. Preferring don García's entertaining 'performances' to the calculating manoeuvres of don Beltrán and Jacinta, what they have sought to do is to mitigate don García's responsibility for his lies by showing that he is not the only character in the play to practise deceit, rather than focus on the practical and rational character of the deceptive strategies employed by don Beltrán and Jacinta themselves.<sup>32</sup>

In my view, this contrast between what I shall term honest and dishonest deception constitutes an essential element not only in *La verdad sospechosa* but throughout Alarcón's works. His treatment of the theme of deception is a complex one,

---

<sup>32</sup> See Robert L. Fiore, 'The Interaction of Motives and Mores in *La verdad sospechosa*', *Hispania*, 61 (1977), 11-21 (p.12).

going beyond the truism that appearances deceive and revealing an interest in those situations in which acts of deception may be necessary or may be regarded as morally legitimate. Whilst this aspect of Alarcón's dramatic writing has particular significance with regard to the moral and political beliefs and preoccupations of the Golden Age, it is also of interest in the context of the controversy regarding the effects of dramatic fiction and the view that the latter may and should be employed as an instrument of moral reform.

In this study, therefore, I intend to show that, in the majority of his plays, and to a greater or lesser extent in each, Alarcón presents certain strategies of deception as the most effective means of exposing and defeating those who threaten social harmony. It will be seen that these strategies are presented by Alarcón as essential tools, not only for those who govern and defend Spain, but also for private individuals who seek to maintain or to restore their position in society.

I shall also argue that Alarcón implicitly uses this concept of honest deception to justify his activities as a creator of dramatic fictions at a time when theatrical illusion was held by many to be morally corrupting. It has long been assumed that Alarcón regarded dramatic illusion as an effective means of moral instruction, but no one has yet examined how he adapts the *comedia* to this end. It is my belief that there is a direct connection in Alarcón's drama between his moral objectives and his technical artifice, so that the concept of honest dissimulation is both illustrated in the actions of his dramatic characters and exemplified in his own dramatic technique.

It is not possible to deal with each of Alarcón's twenty-six plays here.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, I shall deal with a substantial range of them which together cover the span of his work and in which the theme of deception presents itself as a serious and important issue and aspect. The discussion relates to plays on different kinds of subjects, in different moods, and different keys. In most cases, I have felt it preferable to deal in detail with single plays, or to examine plays in pairs, when marked similarities or contrasts cast a clearer light on a particular stage of the argument. Where it has seemed relevant, I have also set Alarcón's work against the background of contemporary theories and beliefs, whether theological, political or literary.

In Chapter 1, I shall deal with the controversy surrounding the moral effects of theatrical illusion in the Golden Age, summarising the arguments regarding its potential either as a source of moral corruption or as an agent of moral reform, and examining the ideas expressed by Golden-Age moralists and literary theorists concerning the ways in which audiences might be affected by theatrical illusion. Against this background I shall then consider Alarcón's references to the theatre - to his own plays, to the *corrales*, and to the *comedia* in general - as they appear in the Prefaces to his two *Partes* and in his plays themselves, so as to draw some preliminary conclusions about how he himself saw the occupation in which he was engaged.

In Chapter 2, I shall consider the relationship between literary technique and morality outlined in Chapter 1 in the context of Alarcón's best known work, *La verdad sospechosa*, evaluating García's lies in terms both Golden Age literary theory and the modern concept of 'metatheatre' or 'the play within the play'. I shall also deal with the

---

<sup>33</sup> This figure includes five plays attributed to Alarcón (*Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, *No hay mal que por bien no venga*, *La culpa busca la pena y el agravio la venganza*, *Siempre ayuda la verdad* and the First Part of *El tejedor de Segovia*), as well as one in which he is known to have collaborated with other dramatists (*Algunas hazañas de las muchas de don García Hurtado de Mendoza, marqués de Cañete*).

psychological aspect of Alarcón's presentation of the liar, focusing on what motivates García to lie (and to lie in the way that he does) and why others should be persuaded to believe him.

Whilst my discussion of these issues draws on the substantial corpus of critical work concerning this play, in the final part of this chapter I shall offer a new approach which emphasises not don García's lies but the strategies employed by others to counter the effect of his lies, revealing a link between reputation and honest deception.

In Chapter 3, I shall again deal with the twin issues of moral fiction and honest deception, with reference to another of Alarcón's urban comedies, *Las paredes oyen*. In this chapter I shall argue that there is another dimension in this play, beyond the obvious elements of social criticism, in which Alarcón examines the satirical function of his own art. Beginning with this literary dimension, I shall consider Alarcón's pursuit of the satirical mode and his presentation of the satirical vision of his characters in the context of the views expressed by Golden Age literary theorists and other writers of the period concerning the character and purpose of satire. I shall argue that in this play Alarcón presents two contrasting versions of satire, one merely mendacious and destructive and the other essentially moral.

The second part of the chapter will be concerned with the issue of honest deception. As in my discussion of *La verdad sospechosa*, I shall again emphasise the way in which other characters respond to the actions of the protagonist. It will be seen that the threat of slanderous gossip obliges them to act with discretion, leading them to adopt strategies of honest deception which enable them to discover and expose the truth about others without risk to their own reputations, and that these strategies are analogous to the methods of the moral satirist.

In Chapter 4, I shall deal with three of Alarcón's 'magic plays', *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas*, which present magical illusion in different ways. The first of these plays presents the creation of illusions in a negative light, setting it within the context of a diabolic conspiracy which presents a serious and direct threat to social harmony. In the second of these plays, however, the presentation of magical illusions is more ambiguous, since in *La cueva de Salamanca* they are set against the background of a university renowned both for its learning and for the riotous behaviour of its students, and they accordingly prove to be both a source of comic intrigue and a means of moral instruction. In the third of these plays, meanwhile, magical illusion is presented in a positive light as a means of resolving social conflict and as a test of individual virtue. The discussion of *Quien mal anda* will focus on the relationship between illusion and desire, whilst that of *La cueva de Salamanca* will point to the fundamentally neo-Stoic character of play's two magicians, and of the argument of the play in general. This is also a feature of the last of these plays, *La prueba de las promesas*. In discussing this play, however, I will return to the concept of 'metatheatre' introduced in Chapter II, so as to draw a parallel between the magician and the dramatist.

In each of the chapters so far mentioned I shall seek to demonstrate that those aspects of the drama which have the most immediate theatrical appeal are also the aspects most closely associated with dishonest deception, and that this constitutes an implicit challenge to the audience to interpret these plays in a more reflective manner.

In Chapter 5, I shall discuss one of Alarcón's lesser-known works, *La manganilla de Melilla*. This play is usually regarded as a 'magic play', but it will be considered here in relation to Golden-Age concepts of military virtue. The relevance of this approach to the present study derives from the fact that military theorists have

long recognised the art of deception to be an essential element of the general's skill. The play is based on an historical incident in which a Spanish general defended the Christian enclave of Melilla against a Moorish assault by means of a stratagem (the 'manganilla' of the title). Alarcón presents the general both as a model soldier and as a paragon of Christian virtue, making his stratagem one of the clearest examples of honest deception in Alarcón's works.

In the final chapter, I shall deal with two of Alarcón's political plays, *La amistad castigada* and *Ganar amigos*, setting the presentation of deceit in these plays against the background of contemporary attitudes concerning the use of deception by princes and their ministers. The first of these two plays is set in ancient Sicily and presents the negative example of an immoral ruler (Dionisio) and a corrupt and devious *privado* (Filipo). The second is set in the Spain of King Pedro I, and shows how the king learns the value of prudent and morally tenable dissimulation from the example of his exemplary *privado* Fadrique.

The larger issues emerging from these particular studies will be brought together in the conclusion.

All quotations from Alarcón's *comedias* are taken from Agustín Millares Carlo's *Obras completas de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón*, 3 vols (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957, 1958, 1968). Although not the most recent edition of Alarcón's works, it is the only one to contain all the plays attributed to Alarcón as well as the twenty *comedias* included in his two *Partes* (of 1628 and 1634) and his non-dramatic verse. Orthography, accentuation and punctuation have all been standardised according to modern norms, and the plays are divided up into scenes for ease of reference.

## Chapter 1

### Fiction, Theatre and Morality

It is appropriate that this study of the relationship between fiction, deceit and morality in the plays of Ruiz de Alarcón should begin by considering the moral status of dramatic fiction itself. For, whatever may subsequently be said about the nature and moral legitimacy of the fictions, illusions and deceptions that are invented, created and practised by the characters within the plays themselves, we should not overlook the obvious fact that any *comedia* is itself a fiction, and that this mode of representation is no less open to moral scrutiny than the actions it portrays.

Whilst the question of the moral legitimacy of the theatre has been the subject of critical discussion in the past, I deal with the subject here in order to show how a number of salient features of the debate concerning the nature, use, and moral legitimacy of literary invention and theatrical representation (as it appeared in sixteenth and early seventeenth-century Spain) feature prominently in Alarcón's plays. By considering both such features as these and other passages in his work - accounts of visits to *corrales* in Madrid, a conversation about the merits and demerits of playwriting, and Alarcón's own prologues and prefaces (and the *aprobaciones* by Vicente Espinel and Antonio de Mira de Amescua which precede them) - I will present an interpretation of how Alarcón saw his own rôle as a writer of dramatic fictions which will provide a set of parameters for the examination of his treatment of other forms of fiction, illusion and deception within the plays dealt with in the chapters which follow.

\* \* \*

It is a well known fact, but one worth repeating here, that literary fiction in general and dramatic fiction in particular were the subject of considerable debate during the Golden Age. The widespread dissemination of fictional and semi-fictional stories both in print and in the public theatres provoked many writers, most of them clerics (and some of them men of considerable influence), to oppose what they saw as a profane and dangerous innovation. As a result, there were repeated attempts throughout the period to persuade the civil authorities to impose limitations on the publication and performance of such works.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the theatre, it was customary for the *corrales* to be closed during Lent and in periods of national mourning. These closures inevitably prompted the opponents of the theatres to petition with renewed vigour against their re-opening, and in 1598, the efforts of the theatres' detractors were rewarded with a continuation of the ban on performances imposed after the death the previous year of Philip II's daughter, Catalina, Duchess of Savoy. This closure was itself prolonged by a further year as a result of the death of Philip himself a few months later. Nevertheless, lobbying on this issue was far from one-sided, and, following the accession of Philip III, the combination of a less austere régime and pressure from those whose interests were not served by an embargo on the lucrative business of providing theatrical entertainment, not to mention the enthusiasm of the general public for the delights of the *corrales*,

---

<sup>1</sup> The nature of this debate is analyzed in detail by B.W. Ife in *Reading and Fiction in the Golden Age: A Platonist Critique and Some Picaresque Replies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) chs.1, and 2. Whilst Ife is principally concerned with a discussion of the Picaresque Novel, the controversy surrounding the *comedia* is covered extensively in Cotarelo y Mori's *Bibliografía de las controversias [...]*, which anthologises a large number of texts by the theatre's apologists as well as its detractors.

ensured that the public theatres were re-opened as soon as (and, in the opinion of some, sooner than) decency allowed.

The controversy continued throughout Alarcón's career as a dramatist, and indeed, throughout his lifetime. The first treatise in Spanish to deal exclusively with the moral objections to the *comedia*, the Jesuit Juan de Mariana's *Tratado contra los juegos públicos*, was published in 1609.<sup>2</sup> In 1625 the *Junta de Reformatión* recommended that no licences be granted for the printing of plays in Castile, and in 1644 the Council of Castile instigated an indefinite suspension of dramatic performances which lasted until 1651.<sup>3</sup>

As with most legislation passed in the period, it is difficult to assess the extent of compliance or the severity of enforcement with regard to the legal restrictions which were placed on the theatres. The fact that the legislation was drawn up, however, indicates the existence of a widespread conviction among the legislators that the stage presented a threat to the peace and well-being of society.

---

<sup>2</sup> Juan de Mariana, *Tratado contra los juegos públicos*, in *Obras del Padre Juan de Mariana*, 2 vols [= BAE 30 & 31] (Madrid: Ribadeneyra, 1864) II, 413-62. See also, Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*: 'El primer libro entero escrito contra el teatro lleva la fecha de 1609 [...] antes de aquella fecha, ya incidentalmente, en obras de índole diversa o ya en consultas, pareceres y otros documentos, se había discurrido en pro y en contra del espectáculo cómico; y la lucha que precedió a la constitución de nuestro genuino teatro, le acompañó inseparablemente en toda su historia con un ardor y constancia de que no hay ejemplo en ninguna literatura' (p.1).

<sup>3</sup> See Francisco Cascales, *Cartas filológicas* [Murcia, 1634], edited by Justo García Soriano, 2 vols. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1940), II, 47, n.19; Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*, p.1; P.E. Russell, 'El Concilio de Trento y la literatura profana', in *Temas de 'la Celestina', y otros estudios* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1978), pp.443-78 (pp.469-70); Ife, *Reading and Fiction*, pp.16-17; Jaime Moll, 'Diez años sin licencias para imprimir comedias y novelas en los reinos de Castilla; 1625-1634', *BRAE*, 54 (1974), 97-103; and J.H. Elliott, *The Count Duke of Olivares, The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986), pp.187-88, which offer relevant comments on the censorship of the theatre.

Spain was not the only country in Europe in which the theatre was under attack. For a view of the controversy in England, see David Leverenz, 'Why did Puritans Hate Stage Plays?', in *The Language of Puritan Feeling: an Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980); Jonathan Barish, *The Anti-theatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981); and Timothy Murray, *Theatrical Legitimation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987). For a study of the situation in France, see Henry Phillips, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth Century France*, Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

There can be little doubt that Alarcón was aware of the controversy surrounding the theatre. Indeed, he seems to have been peculiarly well equipped to comprehend the debate in all its aspects - legal, literary, philosophical, moral and political. A trained and experienced lawyer, he was for a time a member of a literary 'academy' in Madrid, and, on the evidence of his plays, had read widely, possessing a knowledge not only of Classical and Patristic texts but also of a range of more or less contemporary works on history, religion, politics and social reform.<sup>4</sup>

It seems likely also that the publication of Alarcón's works was directly affected by the anti-theatrical legislation enacted during this period. As Jaime Moll points out in his article on the suspension of licences in 1625, the first volume (*Parte primera*) of Alarcón's plays was able to be published in Madrid in 1628 only because the licence for it had been granted in 1622, well before the ban came into force effectively. Likewise, it is probable that Alarcón's second volume was published in Barcelona in 1634 rather than in Madrid simply because the suspension (which lasted until 1635) did not extend to the Crown of Aragón.<sup>5</sup>

The *licencia* and *aprobaciones* prefixed to Alarcón's *Parte primera* which certify the harmless or beneficial character of the work are themselves a testament to a widespread concern about the potential dangers of printed material that found expression in legal requirements.<sup>6</sup> The minimum expectations of a work are commonly summed

---

<sup>4</sup> In the course of his plays, Alarcón alludes to a range of Classical authors, including Aristotle, Heliodorus, Martial, Ovid, Plato, Plutarch, Propertius, Quintilian, Seneca, Terence and Virgil, as well as to St. Augustine, and to specific works, such as Juan Manuel's *El conde Lucanor* of 1330-35, Jerónimo Zurita's *Anales de la Corona de Aragón* of 1561, Nicolás Díaz's *Tratado del juicio final y universal* of 1588, Juan de Mariana's *Historia general de España* of 1592, and Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera's *Proverbios morales y consejos cristianos* of 1618.

<sup>5</sup> See Moll, 'Diez años', p.101.

<sup>6</sup> See Russell, 'El Concilio de Trento', pp.448, 468; see also Alberto Porqueras Mayo, *El prólogo como género literario: su estudio en el Siglo de Oro español* (Madrid: CSIC, 1957) and his *El prólogo en el manierismo y barroco españoles* (Madrid: CSIC, 1968).

up in such certificates by a formulaic phrase to the effect that it contains nothing 'contra la Fe y buenas costumbres'. In addition, the two *aprobaciones* to Alarcón's *Parte primera* (contributed by Vicente Espinel and Mira de Amescua) also contain particular commendations of a moral and political as well as an aesthetic nature: 'Tienen muy gentil estilo, conceptos honestos y agudos [...] hay en ellas [...] mucha doctrina moral y política, digna del ingenio y letras de su Autor'.<sup>7</sup> I believe that this reference to moral and political doctrine is not merely conventional but, rather, constitutes a significant assertion of the social utility of Alarcón's work in answer to the counter-claim advanced by the theatre's detractors that plays were detrimental to the moral health of the nation.<sup>8</sup>

The legislative controls on literary activity outlined above testify to the fact that many people took such claims seriously. Indeed, in the majority of cases where the *comedia* is discussed in print, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spaniards show much greater concern for the possible moral, social and political consequences of playgoing than for aesthetic considerations, which are dealt with only in so far as they may appear relevant to these more pressing matters.<sup>9</sup> As the following discussion will show, the potential of dramatic fiction to influence the behaviour of individuals was widely

---

<sup>7</sup> Hartzenbusch, p.xlviii-b.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Plato's statement in *The Republic* that poetry should not only give pleasure but also bring 'lasting benefit to human life and human society', (Plato, *The Republic*, translated by Desmond Lee, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974), p.438 [= 608e]). As will become apparent, *The Republic* is a text of fundamental importance to the way in which writers of the Golden Age understood and expressed the relationship between literature and society.

<sup>9</sup> At one point in his summary of the debate over the legitimacy of fiction, Ife follows a reference to a political analogy used by the Golden Age literary theorist López Pinciano to support a literary proposition, with the comment that: '[...] the attempt to draw a parallel between what is expedient in politics and what is justifiable in literature seems more than a little strained' (*Reading and Fiction*, p.32). Although in its context, Ife's comment is understandable, the parallel he remarks upon is one that is often encountered in the debate over the legitimacy of fiction, where the relationship between 'good literature' and good government is frequently emphasised by those on both sides.

acknowledged on both sides; the question was whether this influence was more likely to be beneficial or malign, a means of reform or a source of corruption.

This emphasis on politics and society in the debate over the legitimacy of the theatre is evident in the following passage from a treatise against the *comedia* written by the Catalan Jesuit Juan Ferrer (1558-1636) under the pseudonym of 'Fructuoso Bisbe y Vidal', who portrays the stage as highly dangerous to the security of the state and the Catholic faith, presenting historical evidence to prove his point:

Así como las aperturas del navío son vísperas de su perdición, así la disolución de las costumbres son víspera del naufragio de la Fe. Esto parece que Cristo Nuestro Señor dió a entender a España permitiendo que los herejes ingleses quemasen la primera vez los navíos de Cádiz, estando toda la ciudad en una de estas comedias y tan embebecida en ella que, habiéndose echado voz que avisaba haber entrado los ingleses en el puerto, pensaban los que asistían a la comedia que era aquello entremés, puesto que el efecto por sí se lo hizo sentir y creer sin remedio.<sup>10</sup>

Such arguments are not the exclusive preserve of the theatre's detractors, however, and very similar national and religious concerns are emphasised by apologists for the

---

<sup>10</sup> Fructuoso Bisbe y Vidal, *Tratado de las comedias en el cual se declara si son lícitas. Y si hablando en todo rigor será pecado mortal el representarlas, el verlas, y el consentirlas* (Barcelona: Gerónimo Margarit, 1618), cited by Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*, p.255. The Discalced Carmelite Fray José de Jesús María also presents the theatre as a direct threat to the conservation of an already beleaguered 'Empire':

A juicio de personas prudentes, si los príncipes de las naciones enemigas quisieran buscar una invención suave y eficaz para arruinarnos y destruirnos, no pudieran hallar otra más a propósito que la de estos faranduleros [...] Este ardid de guerra de vencer con la introducción de los vicios y regalos a los que no podían con la fuerza de las armas fue muy usado de capitanes prudentes. [...] Si el santo obispo Silvano afirma que una de las causas de la disminución del imperio romano fue la permisión de los teatros y comedias, no falta razón para que podamos temer otro tanto en nuestro imperio. (Fray José de Jesús María, *Primera parte de las excelencias de la virtud de la castidad* (Alcalá: Viuda de Juan Gracián, 1601), pp.837a, 852b-53a).

See also J.H. Elliott, 'Self-Perception and Decline'. Both Mariana and Vidal were Jesuits. The Society of Jesus was especially prominent in attacking the secular theatre on moral grounds, despite the fact that it fostered dramatic performances in its educational programmes and that Jesuit School Drama is now generally recognised as an important influence in the development of Spanish public theatre in the sixteenth century. See Nigel H. Griffin, *Virtue versus Letters: The Society of Jesus, 1550-1580*, EUI Working Paper 95 (Florence: European University Institute, 1984), fol.38v.; McKendrick, *Theatre in Spain*, pp.51-52; and Russell, 'El Concilio de Trento', p.470.

*comedia*. Thus, and as if in direct answer to Vidal, an anonymous contemporary treatise entitled *Discurso apologético en aprobación de la comedia*, published two years after Vidal's, concludes its argument with an account which shows exemplary drama working hand in glove with the national interest:

Para comprobación de todos, valga, finalmente, la autoridad de los mayores políticos de España, los Católicos Reyes, Don Fernando y Doña Isabel, tan dignos de eterna memoria, pues, estando en la conquista de Granada y teniendo a toda España en la aflicción de la duda del suceso y de los gastos que requerían tantos ejércitos bien socorridos, introdujo Juan de Encina la representación en ella, siendo la primera unas églogas que representó a los duques de Infantado y los Almirantes de Castilla, los cuales gustaron tanto de oírle que le condujeron a los reyes. Y habiéndole visto, arbitraron que era aquél el mejor modo de alegrar [a] sus afligidos vasallos, mandándole que representase por toda España, dándole para ella ayudas de costa, y asimismo persuadiendo que las representaciones que se hiciesen fuesen de acciones de hombres valorosos, para que se moviesen sus vasallos a seguirle en ocasión que importaba a la seguridad de la fe y el último logro de la quietud de España.<sup>11</sup>

Political arguments of this sort are frequently linked to religious ones, and sometimes even subordinated to them. In the passage from Vidal's treatise quoted above, the author is as careful to imply that the theatre represents a threat to religion as well as to the state ('el naufragio de *la Fe* [...] los *herejes* ingleses') as the author of the *Discurso apologético* is to deflect such charges ('los *Católicos* Reyes [...] en ocasión que *importaba a la seguridad de la fe*'). A similar combination of religious and political concepts is used by José de Jesús María when he accuses actors and the theatre's apologists alike of being agents in a vast demonic conspiracy whose aim is to undermine the Catholic Church from within: '[Son] ministros suyos [= 'del demonio']

---

<sup>11</sup> See Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*, p.240a. The term 'político', applied here to the Reyes Católicos, has a particular resonance in the context of Golden-Age political theory, particularly as regards the Spanish response to Machiavelli's advocacy of deception as a tool of government, an issue which is discussed in Chapter 6.

que se valen de ellas [= 'trazas cautelosas'] para escurecer la verdad con engañosas apariencias de una utilidad falsa'. For a contemporary reader, these phrases almost certainly would have evoked the idea of the Machiavellian *político*, whose false *razón de estado* (personal ambition masquerading as public service) and deceitful subtleties were so emphatically decried by the political philosophers of Spain's Golden Age.<sup>12</sup>

Whilst both sides frequently make use of political and religious arguments of this kind at a general level, they also recognise that the preservation of the state and well-being of its members is dependent first and last upon the individual's respect for the principles of social morality; and it is the extent to which the *comedia* might be proved to strengthen or corrupt this which forms the crux of the debate.<sup>13</sup> I will deal with the

---

<sup>12</sup> Jesús María, *Excelencias de la castidad*, p.854b. Whilst the extreme nature of the language employed by Ferrer and Jesús María suggests a degree of personal fanaticism which may tend to call their arguments into question, other sources make it clear that all the opponents of the stage derive their arguments from a common corpus of works by the Fathers of the Church. Thus, when Pedro de Ribadeneyra deals with the question of the legitimacy of the theatre, among numerous other authorities, he cites St. John Chrysostom:

San Juan Crisóstomo, en una parte llama a estas representaciones pestilencia de la república; en otra, fuente y manantial de todos los males; en otra cátedra de pestilencia, escuela de incontinencia, obrador de lujuria, horno de Babilonia; en otra, fiesta de los demonios; en otra, dice que fue invención del demonio para corromper y destruir el género humano [...].

See Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Tratado de la tribulación, en que se trata de las tribulaciones particulares y del remedio dellas* (Madrid, 1589), in *Obras*, p.379a. Of as great an influence was Augustine's condemnation of the Roman theatres in *De civitate Dei* I, xxxii-xxxiii, and II, vii-viii and xx.

<sup>13</sup> An example of the causal relationship that was perceived to exist between the rise of the *comedia*, a decline in standards of individual morality, and the downfall of the state is given by José de Jesús María, who is in no doubt about what must be done to prevent such a calamity:

Las comedias es [sic] fomento e incentivo de vicios, y los vicios de heregías, y las heregías de bandos, comunidades, alborotos y guerras civiles: y así para prevenir esta ruina de tan graves daños, es menester agotar y cegar la fuente de donde nacen, y por el consiguiente, quitar dél [= del estado] todas las comedias. (Jesús María, *Excelencias de la castidad*, p.833b).

The passage by Jesus María cited here is reminiscent of Plato's warnings in *The Republic* on the dangers of introducing new literary forms into the educational curriculum:

[Socrates:] You should hesitate to change the style of your literature, because you risk everything if you do; the music and literature of a country cannot be altered without major political and social changes [...] [Adiemanthus:] It is in education that disorder can most easily creep in unobserved [...] it only does harm [...] because it gradually makes itself at home and quietly undermines morals and manners; from them it issues with greater force and invades business dealings generally, and then [...] spreads into the laws and constitution with complete lack of restraint, until it has upset the whole of public and private life. [Socrates] Then doesn't it follow [...] that the amusements in which our children take part must be better regulated? (Plato, *The Republic*, 424c-e

theatre's influence on its audience later in this Chapter, but first I want to examine the reputation and social status of those who made their living from the stage - actors, and (more importantly in the context of this study) playwrights.

The actualities of theatrical life were of particular significance to the debate over the legitimacy of the theatre because Church doctrine prevented the theatre's detractors from asserting that theatrical performances were intrinsically illicit. The relevant text as regards this is Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*, which was held to permit the performance of plays on three conditions: firstly, that they are free of indecency and offensive language; secondly, that they do nothing to inflame the passions or offend against decorum; and thirdly, that the time given over to the performance of plays is limited.<sup>14</sup> The existence of such passages effectively obliged the theatre's detractors to target their attacks on the practices of the *corrales* and to claim that these conditions were rarely met.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps as a result, much of the moral criticism levelled against the stage was not targeted on what it represented, but on the conduct of those who had made it their profession. Indeed, the theatre's detractors invariably portrayed actors as

---

(pp.191-92).

<sup>14</sup> See Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-IIae, qu.168, art.2, ad 3. Though Aquinas does not speak specifically of the theatre but rather of 'ludi' [= games], diversions and pastimes) and 'ioci' [= jests and jokes] in general, the *tratadistas* of seventeenth-century Spain showed no hesitation in applying his doctrines on this matter to the *comedias* performed in the *corrales*, as is apparent in the following quotation from Ribadeneyra's *Tratado de la tribulación*: 'Dice Santo Tomás [...] que, de suyo, y mirada la naturaleza de la cosa en sí, no es pecado el representar ni ver representar comedias, ni el oficio de representar es ilícito y malo en sí', (op. cit., p.380b-81a). See also Alonso Remón, *Guía y avisos*, pp.165-73 (p.170); and Cascales, *Cartas filológicas*, pp.48-49.

<sup>15</sup> 'Como sea cierto que estas condiciones raras veces se guardan en las comedias que en estos reinos se representan [...] de ordinario son actos ilícitos los de las comedias, no por razón de la naturaleza de ellas, sino del mal uso de los que las representan' (José de Jesús María, *Las excelencias de la castidad*, pp.832b-24a (my italics)). The corruption of the *comedia* alluded to by writers such as Jesús María is noted even by its less severe critics. Fadrique, one of the speakers in López Pinciano's *Philosophía antigua poética*, complains that: 'muchas veces [oigo] representaciones que ofenden a la buena política y en lugar de enseñar, estragan al oyente y le emponzoñan' (*Philosophía antigua poética*, edited by Alfredo Carballo Picazo, 3 vols (Madrid: CSIC, 1973), III, 273 (my italics)). However, other writers assert that the *comedias* of contemporary Spain conform to the moral criteria laid down by St. Thomas, such as the Augustinian, fray Alfonso de Mendoza (*Quaestiones quodlibeticæ* (Salamanca, 1588), cited in Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*, pp.464b-65a, and Remón (op. cit., p.171).

both morally and socially base, accusing them of taking to the stage for all manner of vicious motives, foremost among which were lechery, idleness, ambition and avarice.<sup>16</sup>

The presentation of authors in most Golden Age texts is little less damning than that of actors. Commonly referred to as *poetas*, writers of all kinds of fiction (including plays) are commonly portrayed as mad, out of touch with reality, shabby, famished, immoral, and even dangerous. In his *Arte Poética*, Sánchez de Lima offers a (comparatively mild) view of the poet's nature, calculated to appeal to critics of the art: 'Hay [una] suerte de hombres tan locos que no parece sino que siempre andan metidos en unas vanas imaginaciones, fabricando en sus memorias unos castillos de viento cuyo fundamento está edificado sobre la región del aire'.<sup>17</sup> Despite the fact that this description is provided by a character who comes to admire the art of poetry in the course of Sánchez's work, the presentation of poets in Suárez de Figueroa's *Plaza universal de todas ciencias y artes* of 1615 suggests that their reputation had not improved in the thirty-five years since the publication of the *Arte poética*, and they fare no better in the anonymous *Diálogos de las comedias*, of the same year, where one of the speakers, a theologian, describes them as: 'ingenios depravados - contagión general

---

<sup>16</sup> 'Lo que había de ser para útil recreación del pueblo se ha convertido en ambición y ganancia de los comediantes', Jesús María, *Excelencias de la castidad*, p.828a. 'Como es más fácil sacar un disfraz en el tablado que fatigar una azada, hay trescientas compañías de comediantes, y apenas hay quien cultiva la tierra, la mayor mengua que nuestra España padece', Jerónimo de la Cruz, *Job evangélico stoico ilustrado* (Zaragoza, 1638), in Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*, p.204b. The criterion of social utility emphasized here by Jesús María and Jerónimo de la Cruz is as fundamental to the *comedia*'s apologists as it is to its detractors. For a detailed exposition of the moral reputation of actors in the Spanish Golden Age, see Joseph Oehrlein, *El actor en el teatro español del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Castalia, 1994), pp.207-41.

<sup>17</sup> Miguel Sánchez de Lima, *El arte poética en romance castellano* (Alcalá de Henares, 1580), Biblioteca de Antiguos Libros Hispánicos (Madrid: CSIC, 1944), pp.14-15.

de la república, parricidas de su Patria, traydores, enemigos secretos de la Christiandad'.<sup>18</sup>

The only one of Alarcón's characters to be identified explicitly as a poet is Persio of *El desdichado en fingir*, and, as Suárez de Figueroa's criticism of the way in which *poetas* represent their profession on the stage might lead us to expect, he is far from being an exemplary figure. In fact, not only is he a poet, but he is also a rake, an adventurer, and one of the most audacious frauds to appear anywhere in Alarcón's works. Moreover, his literary activity is in keeping with his general character - the only poem featured in the play is a satirical verse epistle in which he boasts of his sexual conquests - so that, as a poet, he is the embodiment of the shameless mendacity, lasciviousness and slander about which contemporary moralists were so concerned.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> See *Diálogos de las comedias*, edited by Luis Vázquez (Madrid: Revista 'Estudios', 1990) p.65. See also Suárez de Figueroa: 'Lo más ridículo viene a ser, que siendo éstos los que de nueve pliegos de coplillos sacan crecido interés, en todas las comedias introducen una figura con nombre de poeta en quien de propósito juntan todas las calamidades y defectos del mundo. Hácenle pobrísimo, sin aliño, mentecato, perseguido, y, en fin, todo sujeto provocador de menosprecio y risa, para que conozcan todos de la forma que saben honrar su misma profesión y los demás que la siguen' (*Plaza universal de todas ciencias y artes* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1615), fol.323r). Elsewhere, Suárez presents a detailed contrast between contemporary dramatic theory and the (quite different) principles adhered to by those who sought to make their fortune by writing for the public stage. See Suárez de Figueroa, *El pasajero: advertencias utilísimas a la vida humana* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1617) edited by María Isabel López Bascuñana, 2 vols (Barcelona: Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 1988), I, 214-29.

<sup>19</sup> Persio's interest in literature is not confined to composition; he is also a reader, as he demonstrates when he makes use of Ovid's *Ars amatoria* as a manual for seduction. See *Obras completas*, I,693-705 [= (II.6-7)]. In imitating a text as notorious as this for the purpose of furthering an illicit and deceitful affair, he would seem to confirm the worst fears of the moralists concerning the abuse of literary fiction.

It is interesting to note that, when Persio's servant, Tristán, expresses his anxiety about the insubstantial nature of his master's elaborate schemes, he uses the same metaphor as Sánchez de Lima had employed in his *Arte poética* to describe the mental activity of poets ('que siempre andan metidos en unas vanas imaginaciones, fabricando en sus memorias unos castillos de viento cuyo fundamento está edificado sobre la región del aire' (pp.14-15)): '[Tristán: ...] recelo/ cuando alzas torres al viento,/ como no es firme el cimiento,/ verlas todos en el suelo;/ que de tu parte en engaño/ se fundan, pues descubierto/ quien eres, mira si es cierto/ que fabricas por tu daño' (*Obras completas*, I,693 [= II.vi.1353-56]). A very similar metaphor is also employed by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo in his *Idea de un príncipe cristiano* (Monaco, 1640), as he illustrates the disastrous consequences of seeking to preserve a state by deceit: 'Sobre estos fundamentos falsos quise edificar su fortuna el duque Valentín; pero antes de verla levantada, cayó tan deshecha sobre él, que ni aun fragmentos o ruinas quedaron della. ¿Qué puede durar lo que se funda sobre el engaño y la mentira?' (*Idea de un príncipe cristiano representada en cien empresas*, edited by Vicente García de Diego, 4 vols. (Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1958-60), II, 164.

There was a further charge commonly levelled against poets - that they were liars. This accusation is commonly supported, as it is in the quotation from Mariana's *Tratado contra los juegos públicos* which follows, by reference to an incident included by Plutarch in his *Life* of Solon:

[...] es notorio lo que Plutarco refiere de Solón en la vida que dél escribe, que habiendo oído una tragedia llamada *Tespis*, dijo al autor: ¿no tienes vergüenza de haber dicho tantas mentiras? Y como respondiese no haber inconveniente en decir mentiras por burlas, habiendo Solon herido la tierra con el bordón en que se sustentaba, dijo: Si estas cosas fueran alabadas, enredaran a la república con verdaderos males, y de las burlas se vendría á las veras.<sup>20</sup>

This argument formed an important part of many of the attacks on narrative fiction in the Golden Age, and is based on the assumption that, since fictions are factually untrue, they must also be lies (and that poets must therefore be liars). Cascales' *Carras filológicas* offer a standard defence: from the Ciceronian definition of comedy as an 'imitatio vitae, speculum consuetudinis et imago veritatis', and on the basis of Aristotelian claims for the universality of poetry, Cascales argues that fiction enables the poet to portray life in a manner beneficial to the common good, because it provides a means of perfecting what is imperfect in nature or (in the case of purely fictional stories) of simulating nature to the same end:

Esta licencia que tiene el poeta para quitar y poner en la obra de naturaleza se llama ficción poética; y para quitarse de este trabajo de estar emendando obras ajenas, suelen muchas veces, principalmente en poemas cómicos, fingirlo todo, por que, según los preceptos del arte,

---

<sup>20</sup> Mariana, *Tratado contra los juegos públicos*, pp.413a, 442a. See Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, edited by G.P. Gould, translated by Bernadotte Perrin, The Loeb Classical Library, 11 vols (London: Heinemann, 1982), I, *Theseus and Romulus, Lycurgus and Numa, Solon and Publicola*, p.489.

fundados en razón, salga la obra perfecta conforme a lo que *el poeta pretende inducir y persuadir en favor de la buena institución nuestra*.<sup>21</sup>

In this passage Cascales is advancing the view that there is a kind of lie, which we distinguish as poetic fiction, which is not merely permissible, but even *preferable* to a literal or historical presentation of the truth, not just because it is somehow more true, as Aristotle argues in his *Poetics*, but also because it is more *useful*.<sup>22</sup> The principal difference between fiction and lies therefore becomes one of intention, as is apparent in Luis Andrés de Carvallo's detailed refutation of the charge that poets are liars in his *Cisne de Apolo* of 1602. According to Carvallo, lies are intended to deceive the listener, whereas fictions are created to teach important truths.<sup>23</sup>

Carvallo goes on to draw a parallel between fictions and written characters such as the letters of the alphabet, which he then uses as a means of introducing the concept of a figurative presentation of the truth, and the idea that this truth can be revealed by a number of different readings: moral, allegorical, and anagogical. This is objected to

---

<sup>21</sup> My italics. See Cascales, *Cartas filológicas*, II, 54-5, 59. The much-repeated definition of comedy cited above and usually attributed to Cicero may well have become current in Spanish letters through the writings of Antonio Minturno [Bishop of Ugento], the author of a widely read treatise on poetic theory (*De poeta*) published at Venice in 1559. The idea is also found in a *Memorial* of 1598, addressed to Philip II by the Villa de Madrid: 'La substancia de la comedia [...] es espejo, aviso, ejemplo, retrato, dechado, doctrina y escarmiento de la vida por donde el hombre dócil y prudente puede corregir sus pasiones, huyendo de vicios, y levantar sus pensamientos, aprendiendo virtudes'. See *Memorial impreso dirigido al rey D. Felipe II, para que levante la suspensión en las representaciones de comedias*, in Cotarelo, *Bibliografía*, p.422a.

<sup>22</sup> The emphasis he places on the utility of fiction in this passage suggests that, in formulating his theory of poetry, Cascales had in mind, not only Aristotle's *Poetics*, but also Horace's statement in the *Ars poetica* that 'Poets aim either to benefit or to amuse, or to utter words both pleasing and helpful to life' (Horace, *Art of Poetry*, ll.333-35).

<sup>23</sup> 'Mentira, según San Agustín, es significación de cosa falsa, o de cosa tenida por falsa, y con ánimo de engañar, según añade Graciano [= Gratian]. La ficción del poeta no es significación de cosa falsa por verdadera, ni con ánimo de engañar, antes significa cosa muy cierta [...] y su ánimo es de aprovecharnos y declararnos las verdades y los que nos importa. Luego no mentira [sic] el poeta en tal ficción [...] Si la mentira es acto contra virtud, ¿cómo puede ser mentira un acto conforme a la virtud, que es enseñar a los hombres verdaderas, buenas y santas costumbres?' Luis Alfonso de Carvallo, *Cisne de Apolo, de las excelencias y dignidad y todo lo que al arte poética y versificatoria pertenece* (Medina del Campo, 1602; repr. edited by Alberto Porqueras Mayo, 2 vols (Madrid: CSIC, 1958), I, 84-5, 91).

by Zoilo (the speaker in Carvallo's dialogues who speaks for the ignorant man's mistrust of fiction) who complains that, however true such concealed meanings may be, the reader still has to approach them by way of 'las ficciones y cosas inciertas que las voces inmediatamente significan', i.e. a literal sense that remains factually false whatever else may be true. Carvallo quashes Zoilo's complaint by asserting that even this literal sense is different from actual fact, and that it is itself divided into sound and sense:

Las semejantes figuras, imágenes y ficciones son de las obras que fray Luis de León dice que se dividen en sonido y sentencia. El sonido es lo que tú entiendes que significan las palabras, que sólo es imaginación. Y el sentido es el literal que de aquellas figuras con el entendimiento se concibe.<sup>24</sup>

It becomes apparent that Zoilo's error is to see only the appearance of the fiction as it is presented by the imagination, regarding it as something to be perceived by the senses rather than as a concept to be evaluated by the *entendimiento*, the rational mind.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Carvallo, *ibid.*, p.102. Fr. Juan de Pineda presents the same arguments more briefly: 'Los poetas nunca tuvieron ojo a fingir mentiras, sino a encubrir verdades, para con tales encubiertas inducir al vulgo al culto divino y al buen obrar, y que el mentir de los poetas para en el sonido de las palabras, mas no en el sentido que hacen, so pena que no merecerían el nombre de sapientísimos que todos les dan, sino de pierdetiempo y palabras, como los componedores de caballerías'. See his *Los treinta y cinco diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana* [Salamanca: 1589], 5 vol [= BAE 161-63 & 169-70], I, 73 [= *Diálogo I*, Chapter 31]. This concept may derive from St. Augustine. See Robert O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), pp.132-33: '[Augustine] freely admits the ambiguous power of charming expression; justification for it can be found only in its alliance with truth; it must be used rather than simply be enjoyed; the hungry soul is, as always, bidden to seek, not the delights of sounding words or figured speech, but the solid nourishment of their inner, higher meaning' (my emphasis). O'Connell is referring here to Augustine, *De Catechizandis Rudibus* 13; and *Ad Cresconium Grammaticum* I, 12.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jusepe Antonio González de Salas' statement that: 'Poco debe a la razón y al discurso el que se suspende la consideración en la exterior apariencias de las cosas fingidas' (González de Salas, *Nueva idea de la tragedia antigua o ilustración última al libro singular de poética de Aristóteles Stagirita* (Madrid: Francisco Martínez, 1633), p.5). This concept may also be Augustinian in conception. See O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence* p.132: 'the [...] process of appreciating beauties requires a judgement, now only rarely accorded to sense, but [...] a judgement of intelligence in its capacity to intuit the world of Forms beyond all sense embodiments. [...] whilst [in certain passages, Augustine] distinguish[es] between the (obviously 'sensible') judgements of the practised and unpractised eye, the

Zoilo's error (as Carvallo makes clear in the poetic gloss which summarises this section of the work), is essentially a failure to distinguish 'the signifier' from 'the signified': 'No distinguen la figura,/ de lo que es figurado'. According to Carvallo, it is the reader's failure to understand this difference which gives rise to the mistaken belief that poets are liars: 'los que dicen que mienten los poetas, es por no los entender'.<sup>26</sup> For Carvallo, as for Alarcón, the onus is on the audience to understand the poet, and not vice versa ('su ruin y ratero pensamiento no ha de poner tasa al sutil y levantado del poeta'), and this requires the audience to display that virtue so essential to Golden Age thought - Prudence.<sup>27</sup>

The widespread condemnation of the character of *poetas* belies the fact that the art of fiction (*la poesía*) - to which dramatic poetry belonged - was often held in high regard even by those who saw little to praise and much to blame in the work of its practitioners. In the *Diálogos de comedias*, for example, those normally severe critics, the theologian and the *regidor*, base their argument (that the corrupt state of the theatre is due to the fact that it attracts people of the worst kind, and that if it were possible to enlist only those of good character and intellect into the dramatic profession, some

---

norm for correctness remains the intellectual judgement'. See also St. Augustine *De Trinitate* VII, 4-5; IX, 9-11; XII, 2; *Tractatus in Ioannis Evangelium* 15, 21; *Contra Julianum* IV, 65-66; *De civitate Dei* VII, v-vii; XI, xvi and xxvii; and *Enarrationes in Psalmos* 98, 12.

<sup>26</sup> Carvallo, *Cisne de Apolo*, p.104.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.100. On prudence and *discreción* see A.A. Parker, 'The Meaning of "Discreción" in *No hay más fortuna que Dios*: The Medieval Background and Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Usage', in his edition of Calderón's *No hay más fortuna que Dios* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949), pp.77-92. Prudence is a complex virtue, involving, among other qualities, caution, circumspection and the ability to distinguish the good from the bad, appearance from substance. Allied to it is the concept of *discreción*, which is frequently identified with intelligence and good sense, and is the opposite of folly or stupidity.

good might ensue) on the stated belief that drama is essentially an art, and as such has a certain intrinsic nobility: 'es arte noble como lo son todos las artes liberales'.<sup>28</sup>

Carvallo, who is of course writing in favour of poetry, presents a fuller case for its nobility. This is based on two arguments: the first is that poets have a legal claim to nobility by virtue of their erudition - a view supported by a citation from the second of the *Siete Partidas* which decrees that nobility may be acquired by knowledge as well as by lineage or virtue, and by an allusion to the custom of regarding as noble those who graduate as doctors; the second is that this claim to nobility is further strengthened, and even superseded, by the fact that honours have often been conferred upon poets by princes.<sup>29</sup> In addition, the poetic gloss in which Carvallo summarises this section of the *Cisne de Apolo* explicitly locates the nobility he claims for poets within the tradition of honour-virtue:

Nobleza hay de los padres heredada,  
con propria virtud otra adquirida,  
con el saber la otra es alcanzada,  
desta cabe al poeta su partida,  
cuya sapiencia siempre ha sido honrada  
de príncipes, y en mucho fue tenida [...]<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> At this point, however, the *regidor* perceives a serious difficulty, since people with good reputations would be unwilling to put them in jeopardy by becoming involved with the theatre: '[Regidor:] Esos [...] no se han de hallar en ninguna parte, porque lo han de tener por deshonra, y ni ellos ni sus padres ó parientes han de querer consentirlo'. See *Diálogos de las comedias*, p.83.

<sup>29</sup> 'Vea la ley segunda, título 21 de la Partida segunda. y allí verá como por el saber se adquiere nobleza, como por linaje y bondad, y así ya por su saber pueden muy bien los poetas pintar armas [...] En nuestros tiempos y en nuestra nación [...] se tiene por noble el que se gradúa de Doctor, en cuya señal le dan el anillo, que como dice Plinio, es símbolo de nobleza [...]', pp.55, 59.

<sup>30</sup> Carvallo, *ibid.*, p.60. According to Riley, Cervantes also sees poetry as a dignified profession: 'Apolo ordains in the *Adjunta* [to Cervantes' *Viaje del Parnaso*] that any poet of whatever quality or condition be accepted as an *hidalgo* by virtue of his generous profession'. See E.C. Riley, *Cervantes' Theory of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962), p.97.

In his *Philosophía antigua poética*, López Pinciano denies that the state of the *corrales* has anything to do with the status of dramatic poetry, observing that, whilst dramatic poetry is noble in itself, there is no nobility attached to its performance, despite its utility: 'Fadrique dijo: < Verdaderamente, la poesía es como la medicina, que la teoría della y contemplación es una cosa nobilísima; mas la práctica pierde mucho de la nobleza [...] lo que digo es que la poética es arte noble y principal, más la acción

The authorities cited by Carvallo in support of his argument for the nobility of the art of poetry (Pliny and the *Siete partidas*) also appear in King's discussion of the status and aspirations of the *letrado* class in Golden Age Spain.<sup>31</sup> As a *letrado*, Alarcón would have been familiar with the argument that an individual might acquire an honourable reputation by the practice of the 'liberal arts', and may well have found it an appealing if not a persuasive view, particularly if (as seems probable) he was also aware of Carvallo's application of the same arguments to the art of poetry. In view of such arguments, Alarcón may well have concluded that, pending the success of his quest for a judicial appointment, he might do worse than to seek to enhance his reputation by demonstrating his moral and intellectual attributes in a profession which, in principle at least, fulfilled a similar function - the judgement and reform of society in the service of Crown and the Faith.<sup>32</sup>

Whether or not this was the motive behind Alarcón's involvement in the turbulent world of the theatre, it is in line with the remarks he makes in his dedication of the *Parte primera* to Ramiro Felipe de Guzmán, *Gran Canciller de las Indias*, composed after he had given up writing for the stage. Here, Alarcón describes his plays as 'si no lícitos divirtimientos del ocio, virtuosos efectos de la

---

della en teatro no tiene nobleza alguna' (III, 261, 263). López Pinciano's arguments concerning this and other aspects of the theatre also appear in the plagiaristic continuation of Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* written by Juan Martí [pseud. = 'Mateo Luján de Sayavedra'] and published at Barcelona in 1602. See Mateo Luján de Sayavedra, *Segunda parte de la vida del pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache*, in *Novelistas anteriores a Cervantes*, BAE vol.3, 3rd. edn. (Madrid: Ribadeneyra, 1858), pp.363-430 (pp.418b-419b) [= Book 3, Chapters 7-8].

<sup>31</sup> King, *Letrado y dramaturgo*, pp.107-09.

<sup>32</sup> Whilst such a hypothesis cannot be confirmed, it conforms to a long tradition, originating in ancient Greece and transmitted through Roman Law into the Renaissance, connecting the role of poets with that of lawgivers. See Plato, *The Republic* (607a-608b), and E.H. Kantorowicz, 'The Sovereignty of the Artist: A Note on Legal Maxims and Renaissance Theories of Art', in *Selected Studies* (Locust Valley, New York: J.J. Augustin, 1965), pp.353-65.

necesidad en que la dilación de mis pretensiones me puso'.<sup>33</sup> The emphasis Alarcón places on the legitimacy and virtue of his activities as a dramatist, and his comparison (in his address to the reader in the *Parte segunda*) of the reputation he had acquired as a good poet (*buen Poeta*) with the reputation he now seeks as a responsible holder of public office (*buen Ministro*), suggest that Alarcón was concerned to present the moral virtues embodied in his plays as commensurate with those appropriate to a servant of the Crown, and indicate that he saw himself first and foremost in these terms rather than as a professional man of the theatre.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, in mentioning the hardship he had endured prior to receiving his appointment to the Council of the Indies ('la necesidad en que la dilación de mis pretensiones me puso') Alarcón excuses himself on the strong legal ground of necessity from the possible accusation that he had willingly followed the course of those dramatists who made a lucrative career for themselves by pandering to the tastes of the public. It is with this public and their response to different types of play that I will now deal.

\* \* \*

For many authors, the public was divided into two groups, made up of *vulgares* and *discretos*. The defining characteristic of the *vulgo* was not social status but the inability to discriminate. According to Tasso, its habit was to fix its attention on the accidents, rather than on the substance of things, with the result that it could

---

<sup>33</sup> *OC*, I, 4.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, I,6. This view is supported by King, who states that Alarcón's primary professional interest during the twelve years he spent as a *pretendiente* in Madrid between 1613 and 1625 was in the attainment of 'un puesto honroso como el de magistrado en España o en las Indias'; King, *Letrado y dramaturgo*, p.159.

not appreciate true art.<sup>35</sup> In his *Cisne de Apolo* Carvallo distinguishes between *vulgares* and *discretos* on similar grounds, defining the former as being led by the imagination and the senses, and the latter as governed by *entendimiento* and reason.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, he employs this distinction in support of his claim for the moral utility of poetry by explaining why fiction is the most appropriate means of communicating important truths in each case: the veiled truths of fiction suit the *discretos* who prize most those things that are obtained with difficulty, whilst the *vulgo* will accept nothing that does not come in a pleasant disguise.<sup>37</sup>

However, the reasons given for the ‘misuse’ of the *comedia* are commonly linked to the fact that, as commercial theatres, the *corrales* can only survive by pleasing the majority of the audience, which, almost by definition, meant that they had to tailor their output to meet the tastes of the *vulgo*, and that writers had to some extent to choose between art and survival. Cervantes touches on this question in *Don*

---

<sup>35</sup> ‘Questa distinzione, mal conosciuta dal vulgo, che suol piú rimirare gli accidenti che la sostanza delle cose [...]’, Torquato Tasso, *Discorsi dell’arte poetica e del poema eroico* [Venice, 1587], edited by Luigi Poma (Bari: Latera, 1964), p.138 [= Book 3]. That such philistinism was only incidentally a matter of social class is evident in the *Quixote*, when the Knight says to don Diego: ‘[T]odo aquel que no sabe, aunque sea señor y príncipe, puede y debe entrar en número de vulgo’ (Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, edited by Luis Andrés Murillo, 3 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1978), II, 155). In his *Diálogo de la lengua*, Juan de Valdés expresses a very similar opinion: ‘[Pacheco:] [...] Os suplico me digáis a quien llamáis plebeyos y vulgares. [Valdés:] A todos los que son de poco ingenio y poco juicio. [Pacheco:] Aunque sean cuán altos y cuán ricos quisieren, en mi opinión serán plebeyos si no son altos de ingenio y ricos de juicio’ (Juan de Valdés, *Diálogo de la lengua*, edited by J.F. Montesinos, Clásicos Castellanos (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1964), pp.74-75).

<sup>36</sup> In the context of Carvallo’s separation of *sonido* and *sentido* previously mentioned, the former is associated with the *vulgo* and with the senses and the imagination, whilst the latter is associated with the *discretos* and with reason and *entendimiento*.

<sup>37</sup> Carvallo also observes that, although his evidence for this is drawn from experience, this argument is also in accordance with the Horatian principle of combining profit with pleasure: ‘[S]egún lo que dize Oracio, & prodesse volunt, & delectare Poetae. Quiero enxerir las cosas provechosas en las ficciones y figuras deleytosas’ (Carvallo, *Cisne de Apolo*, pp.116).

Carvallo also makes the point that, by directing moral criticism at fictional characters, the poet wisely avoids provoking the ill-feeling that would result from direct public attacks on real individuals. Although this remark may appear to apply to satire rather than to poetry in general, the overtly moral purpose of satire makes it an important genre for those who would defend poetry. Conversely, the misuse of satire and the accusations of slander which frequently accompany it provide fuel for those on the other side of the debate. This issue is considered in Chapter 3.

*Quijote* I.48, when the Canon of Toledo contrasts his own privileged financial and intellectual position with that of the playwrights who depend upon the applause of the *vulgo* for a living.<sup>38</sup> That this was also an issue which concerned Alarcón is evident from the prefaces to both *Partes* of his plays, in which he emphasises the conflict between his own aims as a playwright and the tastes of the majority of his audience. In a preface addressed to the *vulgo* in his *Parte primera*, Alarcón's expression of this conflict is couched in uncompromising terms:

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, sino como es gusto, que ellas te miran con desprecio, y sin temor, como las que passaron ya el peligro de tus silvos, y aora pueden solo passar 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.<sup>39</sup>

This passage shows that, as well as distinguishing two kinds of audiences (the *nobleza* and the *vulgo*), Alarcón also envisages the existence of two kinds of plays (the good and the bad), the latter enthusiastically received by an indiscriminating audience whose response to them is governed by its appetite for pleasure rather than by a judicious assessment of their aesthetic or didactic qualities.

---

<sup>38</sup> '[...] por ver que es más el número de los simples que de los prudentes, y que, puesto que es mejor ser loado de los pocos sabios que burlado de los muchos necios, no quiero sujetarme al confuso juicio del desvanecido vulgo. [...] Pero si las comedias] que llevan traza y siguen la fábula como el arte pide, ni sirven para cuatro discretos que las entienden, y todos los demás se quedan ayunos de entender su artificio [...] a los autores que les componen] les está mejor ganar de comer con los muchos, que no opinión con los pocos' (*Don Quijote*, op.cit. I, 568 [= I.48]).

<sup>39</sup> *OC* I, 4. The contrast between 'gusto' and 'lo justo' emphasised in this passage also appears in many of Alarcón's plays, and in Lope de Vega's *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, and may be regarded as an expression of the conflict between appetite and reason which was of such concern to the moralists of the Golden Age.

Alarcón's scorn of the *vulgo* (and his association of financial gain with bad plays) serve as an important and effective defence against the potential accusation that he himself wrote plays for mercenary motives, offsetting his own admission that the lucrative nature of such plays offers him some recompense for his (notional) failure to write better ones.

This much is suggested by the allusions to the theatrical world of Madrid in Alarcón's own plays. Where his characters relate their experiences in the *corrales*, they invariably do so in terms which give prominence to elements of folly, ignorance, scandal, lasciviousness and mercenary greed. The low moral tone of such accounts may be attributable to (or, conversely, may account for) the fact that they are commonly voiced by the *gracioso*. For example, in *La cueva de Salamanca*, Zamudio describes a *comedia* in a Madrid *corral* in which the action is characterised by a salacious commercialism (expressed as a gluttonous gastronomic conceit), whilst, in *Mudarse por mejorarse*, Redondo presents the irrational and indiscriminating behaviour of the audience in the *corrales* as evidence for his contention that fortunes in Madrid are won by *disparates* rather than by merit.<sup>40</sup>

Another passage, this time from a play long attributed to Alarcón, entitled *La culpa busca la pena y el agravio la venganza*, illustrates not only the brutishness

---

<sup>40</sup> '[Don Diego:] ¿Qué hay de Madrid? Que deseo/ saber lo que te ha pasado. [Zamudio:] Allá ví a tu doña Flor,/ vuelta en plato. [Don Diego:] ¿En plato? [Zamudio:] Sí;/ que en la comedia la ví/ puesta en un aparador;/ Pero no sola esta ingrata/ el aparador tenía,/ que muchos platos había/ y los más dellos de plata./ Miraba yo desde el banco/ en los platos relumbrantes/ de almendra y pasa los antes,/ los postres de manjar blanco./ Tal fiesta allí se celebra,/ que halla cualquier convidado/ platos de carne y de pescado,/ como en viernes de Ginebra./ Al salir se han de servir/ Los platos de la vianda,/ que al entrar son de demanda,/ y de vianda al salir./ Vieras, mirando a estos platos,/ mil mancebos hambrientos,/ cual suelen mirar atentos/ carne colgada los gatos./ Ellas no pueden sufrirlo,/ y por pagarse también/ de cuantos abajo ven,/ están haciendo platillo./ Su capítulo primero/ es si uno regala o no;/ segundo, si regaló;/ Si regalará, tercero;/ y con tal gusto y espacio/ siguen materia tan mala,/ que en regala o no regala/ gastan todo el cartapacio' (*OC*, I, 417-18 [= II.1.1003-40]); '[Redondo:] [...] comedia vi yo, llamada/ de los sabios extremada,/ y rendir la vida al quinto;/ y vi en otra, que a millares/ los disparates tenía,/ reñir al quinceno día/ con Jarava por lugares;/ y sus parciales, vencidos/ de la fuerza de razón./ decir: "Disparates son,/ pero son entretenidos."/ Representante afamado/ has visto, por sólo errar/ una sílaba, quedar/ a silbos mosqueteado;/ y luego acudir verías/ esta Cuaresma pasada/ contenta y alborotada/ al corral cuarenta días/ toda la corte, y estar/ muy quedos papando muecas,/ viendo bailar dos muñecas/ y oyendo un viejo graznar./ Y esto tuvo tal hechizo/ de ventura, que dio fin/ el cuitado volatín,/ que en vano milagros hizo' (*OC*, I, 489-90 [= I.11.506-31]). Redondo's remarks here are reminiscent of Maese Pedro's words in *Don Quijote II*: '¿No se representan por ahí, casi de ordinario, mil comedias llenas de mil impropiedades y disparates, y con todo eso, corren felicísimamente su carrera, y se escuchan no sólo con aplauso, sino con admiración y todo?' (*Don Quijote*, ed.cit. II, 244).

In El Pinciano's *Philosophía antigua poética*, Pinciano, Ugo and Fadrique debate the relative merit of theatrical and acrobatic performances ['el cuitado volatín']. Pinciano's conclusion is that good acrobatics are better than bad plays but less beneficial than good plays: 'Los volteadores sobrepujan y vencen a las ordinarias y comunes representaciones por la excelencia de su acción, mas [...] la obra de suyo útil y más honesta es la de la representación' (*Philosophía antigua poética*, III, 271-72).

of the audience but also its addiction to scandal. Here, Motín (also a *gracioso*) describes his first visit to the theatre in the company of an urbane friend. This friend acts as a guide and interpreter, explaining the sights and sounds of the playhouse to the *gracioso*, who compares the theatre to the ocean ('el golfo'), a metaphor which expresses the confusing and tumultuous nature of the environment in which he finds himself. Motín shows little interest in the play itself, and by far the greater part of his narrative is taken up with his friend's gossip about certain women in the audience, and with his own observations on the behaviour of the notoriously unruly *mosqueteros*.<sup>41</sup>

Although there is no didactic intent behind Motín's description of his visit to the theatre (he is simply seeking to entertain doña Ana, one of the principal *damas* of the piece), and whilst his account is scarcely edifying in itself, the passage nevertheless reveals a discrepancy between the sophisticated techniques employed by Motín's companion to describe members of the audience, and the rowdy or unreflective response of the audience to the play itself. Motín's companion both deciphers the visual signs generated by other spectators, and employs a cryptic language himself in order to boast of a recent sexual encounter, appropriating

---

<sup>41</sup> '[Motín:] [...] pasando un amigo/ por allí, me convidó/ con lugar en la comedia./ donde dos horas y media/ de pasatiempo me dió:/ que por ser ducho en la Corte./ y yo de los más bisoños./ fue en el golfo de los moños/ del aparador mi norte./ "¿Veis, dijo, aquélla que está/ con el manto de anascote./ y anda por Madrid al trote./ ruina del tiempo ya?/ Yo la conocí edificio./ y una moza a quien crió/ y en su niñez la sirvió./ hoy la tiene en su servicio./ La que ves con el guante / vuelto, y los dedos en forma / de luna bicornes, informa/ de los riesgos de su amante./ (no puedo tener la risa),/ una vez a verla entré/ muy de mañana, y hallé/ puesta la fénix camisa/ al fuego; y a imitación/ de nuestra madre primera./ le daba una manta higuera/ y paraíso un colchón."/ En esto salió a cantar./ la música de Vallejo,/ y luego, cada trebejo/ encajado en su lugar./ la comedia se empezó./ y al punto los mosqueteros/ dieron en decir "¡sombrosos!"/ y como se descubrió/ todo infante por igual./ quedó junto y sosegado:/ era un país empedrado/ de cabezas el corral./ La comedia felizmente/ aplaudida, al puerto llega:/ que era de Lope de Vega,/ y el baile de Benavente./ Y dado fin a la historia,/ salió la gente y salí;' (OC, III, 40-41 [= II.7.1228-74]). Motín would appear to be referring here to the *entremesista* Luis Quiñones de Benavente (1589?-1651) and either Diego de Vallejo or his more famous son Manuel Álvarez de Vallejo, both of whom are today better known as *autores de comedias*. See Hugo Albert Rennert, *The Spanish Stage in the Time of Lope de Vega* (New York: The Hispanic Society of America, 1909), pp. 615-17.

Classical and Biblical motifs to render his account simultaneously more obscure and more ornate. Yet the subtleties of communication and interpretation which mark the spectators' responses to each other do not seem to be applied to the play itself, which is greeted with catcalls (*silbos*) and then with silence. Motín describes the *corral* during the performance as 'un país empedrado/ de cabezas', and his conceit does more than describe a crowded theatre; it is a sly metaphor that points to the audience's lack of understanding: their heads are cobblestones.

In *Las paredes oyen*, Alarcón appears to allude to the constraints imposed upon him as a playwright by the tastes of such an audience when, having complained to his servant, Beltrán, about the low state of his finances, the play's protagonist, one don Juan de Mendoza (a hard-up, ill-favoured and unsuccessful *pretendiente* in Madrid who appears to be an *alter ego* for the author) is told that the most immediate remedy for his poverty is to write plays. This exchange and the brief discussion that ensues both recall Alarcón's description of his plays in the prologue to his *Parte primera* as 'virtuosos efectos de la necesidad' and allude to the constraints imposed on the would-be commercial playwright by the tastes of the audience, which, if Beltrán's is to be believed, were for action, easy satire and cheap humour.<sup>42</sup>

Although the fictional don Juan de Mendoza rejects Beltrán's proposal and protests that 'a un poeta le está mal/ no variar', it would be wrong to assume that

---

<sup>42</sup> '[Beltrán:] ¿Por qué, Señor, no has pintado/ caballos, toros y suertes?/ Que con esto, y con tratar/ mal a los calvos, hicieras/ comedias con que tu pudieras/ tu pobreza remediar./ A que te cuenten, me obligo,/ seiscientos por cada una./ [Don Juan:] 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./[Beltrán:] Para dar desconocidos/ estos platos duplicados/ dar aquí calvos asados/ y acullá calvos cocidos' (*OC*, I, 241 [= II.2.1180-97]). It seems worth noting here that the solution proposed by Beltrán depends upon deceiving the audience.

Alarcón himself excluded such elements from his own plays.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps, like his idealised 'alter ego' don Juan, Alarcón would have preferred not to embark upon a career that imposed such dismal constraints, but, as he himself allows, his plays are the products of necessity, and, whether Alarcón's involvement in the theatre was motivated by the exigencies of poverty or by the pursuit of fame, the success he undoubtedly sought was only to be attained by gratifying the tastes of a popular audience, however reluctant he may have been to do so.

\* \* \*

Before going on to examine the effect of plays upon the audiences who watched them, I think it appropriate to note that the conclusions I have drawn from Alarcón's prefaces with regards to the nature of his attitude to his audience (and to the theatre as a commercial concern) suggest that he differed significantly from Lope de Vega on an issue, which, as we have seen, is central to the debate over the moral legitimacy of drama. Indeed, the more one examines the differences between Alarcón and Lope, the more it is apparent that the majority of histories of the

---

<sup>43</sup> As to the elements mentioned here, there are horse races and *corridos* in *La industria y la suerte* (I.16.828-58 and II.9), *Todo es ventura* (III.9.2170-96; III.13.2493-2580), *El semejante a sí mismo* (II.1,1037-58) and *Las paredes oyen* (II.1.1050); jokes against *calvos* in *El anticristo* (III.14.2223-43), *El semejante a sí mismo* (I.1.21-24), *La prueba de las promesas* (III.3.2034-45) and *Las paredes oyen* (II.2.1196-97). See also B.B. Ashcom, 'Verbal and conceptual parallels in the plays of Alarcón', *HR*, 25(1957), 26-49. Ashcom argues that Alarcón was particularly given to re-working (and even simply repeating) phrases and ideas from one play to the next, and concludes from this that the Mexican's compositional resources were soon exhausted - my view is that don Juan's statement that 'a un poeta le está mal no variar' is ironic in tone, and that Alarcón characteristically values consistency above variety in his works, in variance with the novel (and commercial) theory of drama advanced by Lope in his *Arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, in which 'variety' is explicitly advocated: '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 deleyta mucho,/ buen ejemplo nos da naturaleza/ que por tal variedad tiene belleza' (*El arte nuevo de hacer comedias*, edited by Juana de José Prades (Madrid: CSIC, 1971), pp.291-92 [= II.174-80]).

Spanish drama of the Golden Age have erred in enlisting Alarcón into the so-called 'School of Lope'.

Further evidence for the view that Alarcón regarded his dramatic objectives as significantly different from those set out by Lope in his *Arte nuevo* is provided by a passage in Alarcón's *Los empeños de un engaño* which draws a pointed association between poetic licence, commercial success (and the pecuniary gain which accompanies it), and indecorous behaviour, and presents these as directly opposed to the observance of decorum and the ability to discriminate in both life and art:

[...] que publicar sus cuidados  
a la primer diligencia  
las señoras, es licencia  
de poetas mal mirados,  
que escriben, aunque les sobre  
la ventura, sin decoro;  
mas no de aquellos que el oro  
saben distinguir del cobre.<sup>44</sup>

Nor is this the only indication that Alarcón saw his aesthetic and moral criteris as markedly different from those of his most successful contemporary. In another play (*Las paredes oyen*), Alarcón briefly but distinctly sets the behaviour of one his own characers (doña Ana) apart from that of certain *Infantas de León* who

---

<sup>44</sup> *OC*, I, 749-50 [= 1.2.229-36]. This passage also shows the link which was frequently made between 'decorum' as an artistic or dramatic principle, and social propriety or moral restraint.

It is noteworthy that in the passage from *La culpa busca la pena* previously quoted Motín tells doña Ana very little about the play he had seen in Madrid other than that it was by Lope and that it was well received by the audience; if *La culpa busca la pena* is indeed by Alarcón, it seems probable (in view of Alarcón's other allusions to Lope's theatre) that this presentation of a play by Lope as pleasing an audience which is both undiscerning and given to slander is not intended as a compliment to his famous contemporary.

appear in a *comedia* attributed to Lope.<sup>45</sup> In the incident in question, doña Ana's maid (Celia) contrasts the scrupulous behaviour of her mistress with the actions of Lope's princesses:

Celia: Bien parece que no ves  
           lo que en las comedias hacen  
           las infantas de León.  
 Doña Ana: ¿Cómo?  
 Celia: Con tal condición  
           o con tal desdicha nacen,  
           que en viendo a un hombre, al momento  
           le ruegan y mudan traje,  
           y sirviéndole de paje,  
           van con las piernas al viento.<sup>46</sup>

Despite its presumably topical joke at the expense of Lope's play, when seen in context, this passage suggests a deeper concern with identity and decorum. Indeed, the two features of Lope's play alluded to in these lines (the sudden and unexpected shift in the action and the protean nature of his protagonists) are almost invariably associated in Alarcón's work with characters who are morally corrupt. It need not surprise us, therefore, to find that the argument of *Las paredes oyen* systematically rejects the motif of 'love at first sight' which is present in Celia's reference to 'las Infantas de León': indeed, the entire plot of Alarcón's play turns on doña Ana's error in falling for the handsome don Mendo and charts the gradual growth of her love for the ill-favoured don Juan. Thus it seems possible that, in *Las paredes oyen*, Alarcón is deliberately refuting

---

<sup>45</sup> Regrettably, I have not yet been able to identify this play, possibly it has been lost.

<sup>46</sup> *OC*, I, 275-76 [= III.6.2360-68].

the values of a kind of *comedia*, commonly (if not always justly) identified with Lope, which favours passion over reason and scandal over decorum.<sup>47</sup>

The question of whether Lope's drama is really of this kind lies outside the scope of the present study, nevertheless a contrast (or conflict) of this sort between Alarcón's dramaturgy and that of Lope was evidently recognised by at least one of their contemporaries, as is apparent from the following lines from a *comedia* by Antonio Hurtado de Mendoza entitled *Más merece quien más ama*:

Un poeta celebrado  
y en todo el mundo excelente,  
viéndose ordinariamente  
de otro ingenio murmurado  
de que, siguiendo a un galán,  
en traje de hombre vestía  
tanta infanta cada día,  
le dijo: "Señor don Juan,  
si vuesarced, satisfecho  
de mis comedias, murmura,  
cuando con gloria y ventura  
novecientas haya hecho,  
verá que es cosa de risa  
el arte; y, sordo a su nombre,  
le sacará en traje de hombre,  
y aun otro día en camisa.  
*Dar gusto al pueblo es lo justo:*

---

<sup>47</sup> José Frutos Gómez de las Cortinas comments that: '[Mientras] Lope lleva a la tabla unas damas *impulsivas*, siempre dispuestas a arrollar los obstáculos que se opongan a la consecución de sus *deseos*, [Alarcón] plasma en sus tipos femeninos *la circunspección y el recato* [...] Su neo-aristotelismo moderado le permitió tomar de Lope todas las innovaciones que creyó oportunas y las dotó de un rigor y de una ponderación de que aquél carecía. [...] El orden ha de regir todo arte fundado en razón' (José Frutos Gómez de las Cortinas, 'La génesis de *Las paredes oyen*', *RFE*, 35 (1951), 92-105 (p.101), my italics. Cf. Claydon, 'Some Observations', p.17: 'Alarcón makes this change [= the change in doña Ana's feelings for her suitors] the central dramatic action of the play, whereas Leonarda, doña Ana's counterpart in Lope's *El premio del bien hablar* [a play on a very similar theme], falls in love immediately'.

The passage from *Las paredes oyen* referred to above also raises the issue of whether actions performed in the context of a *comedia* might provide a model for behaviour, either for good or ill, as was widely asserted by those on both sides of the controversy. Alarcón handles the question of the audience's suggestibility with deft common sense: whilst Celia here refers to Lope's *comedia* as an example of one possible course of action, doña Ana is sufficiently discreet to be able to interpret the conduct of the fictional *infantas* as a negative example, and to laugh off such behaviour as a ludicrously indecorous alternative to her own, more sober, choice of conduct.

*que allí es necio el que imagina  
que nadie busca doctrina,  
sino desenfado y gusto".<sup>48</sup>*

\* \* \*

Contemporary explanations of the pleasure audiences derived from plays centred on the appeal of dramatic fictions to the senses and to the imagination. Most obviously, plays appealed to the eye and to the ear, their visual and auditory qualities uniting to great effect. Alluringly beautiful actresses, elaborate costumes and increasingly ingenious stage machinery combined to produce a spectacular quality which enhanced the already powerful rhetorical effect created by action and gesture. Moreover, dramatic characters delivered their lines in verse, which was both more concordant and more memorable than prose, and music was employed to create or enhance a mood appropriate to the action. In addition, plays appealed to the imagination by provoking the audience's *admiración* by a combination of remarkable plots and surprising endings.<sup>49</sup> The result, acknowledged by writers on both sides of the debate, was that the theatre was an extremely persuasive medium.

What this suggests is that the appeal of the theatre is predominantly sensory and imaginative rather than intellectual and rational. Indeed reason is frequently presented

---

<sup>48</sup> Cited by Gómez, 'La genesis de *Las paredes oyen*', pp.101-02 (my italics). Cf. Alarcón's address to the *vulgo* in the *Parte primera*: 'Allá van esas Comedias, trátalas como sueles, no como es justo, sino como es gusto'. Hurtado de Mendoza's sympathies are evidently with Lope here, rather than with Alarcón. His opinion that 'Dar gusto al pueblo es lo justo:/ que allí es necio el que imagina/ que nadie busca doctrina,/ sino desenfado y gusto', is echoed by Suárez de Figueroa (another of Alarcón's literary enemies) in *El pasagero*: 'Acaso ¿enciérranse [los circunstantes] aquellas tres horas en algún templo para oír sermón, sino para divertirse y solazarse con fruslerías? [...] Allí [= in the theatre] sólo es acertado alegrarse con los disparates que se dicen y entretenerse con los enredos que se hacen' (*El pasagero*, II, 583).

<sup>49</sup> See Mariana, *Contra los juegos públicos*, II, 413, 419-20. For the importance of action, see Cascales, *Cartas filológicas*, II, 62-66.

by those on both sides of the debate as being suspended for the duration of the play, thereby leaving the spectator unable to make empirical judgements. In this view, the play manoeuvres the spectator into a state of rapture in which his mind is at its most impressionable.<sup>50</sup> Though the ability of plays to 'enchant' their audiences in this way was widely recognised, the opponents and supporters of the theatre draw diametrically opposite conclusions when it comes to assessing the moral consequences of this experience. The former present its combination of sensory and imaginative stimuli as removing the due restraint of reason so as to set ablaze the passions of the audience and to mislead them into taking *burlas* for *veras*, with the result that they re-enact in their own lives the errors they have been introduced to on the stage. The latter argue that the sensory richness of dramatic performances is all part of the art of imitating life, and that the illusion of reality which the theatre seeks to create serves to lend conviction to the exemplary judgements of the *dénouement*. From this it may be seen that the concept of 'poetic justice' - the causal relationship between the moral conduct of any dramatic *persona* and the punishment or reward which that character is seen to receive at the end of the play - is of profound importance to the defence of the *comedia* on utilitarian

---

<sup>50</sup> As Ife points out (*Reading and Fiction*, pp.57-59), ideas of rapture and enchantment underlie a good deal of the critical vocabulary of the Golden Age: Pedro de la Vega speaks of the mind which is taken over - literally 'occupied' - by fiction as 'embelesado'; audiences are regularly described as 'suspensos' or open-mouthed, and words like 'encantar' and 'maravillar' constantly recur. See Fr. Pedro de la Vega, *Declaración de las siete psalms penitenciales* (Alcalá de Henares, 1599), fols 10v-11v. Ife's words on Plato's *Phaedrus* are also readily applicable to the Golden Age debate on the moral status of the theatre: 'The poet, like the orator, is a *psychagogos* (*Phaedrus*, 271c), a man who tries to influence the psyche and uses language as a bewitching tool of illusion and empty virtuosity, respecting not the truth but the appearance of truth, and impressing as if by magic the minds of the unwary with all manner of falsehoods' (ibid. p.61).

The supposedly anti-rational quality of dramatic illusion is expressed in the anonymous *Diálogos de las comedias*. '[Regidor:] Pues y a la imaginación o fantasía es tan peligroso el asalto, ¿qué alma podía estar tanto tiempo en centinela, para defender tantas entradas? Y así solemos salir de estos juegos tan olvidados de que son burlas, que no hablamos ni tratamos de otra cosa: repetimos el dicho, y rumiamos las razones, alabamos las agudezas y quedamos como los embriagados que todo se les va en loar el vino' (*Diálogos de las comedias*, p.63).

grounds because it acts as a guarantee of the exemplary nature of the action presented on the stage, even if that action portrays vice rather than virtue.<sup>51</sup>

\* \* \*

The contrasting views of those involved in the controversy over the moral legitimacy of drama and the theatre can therefore be set out as follows. The opponents of the stage see the theatre as a place of passion and unreason, characterised by sexual licence and the pursuit of material gain, dealing in irresponsible illusions and dangerous falsehoods, and presenting a direct threat to the moral, social, economic, religious and political health of the nation. At the same time, its apologists present dramatic fiction as an exemplary illusion which facilitates the recognition of important moral truths, manipulating the emotions in order to convince the mind.

Likewise, for the theatre's apologists it is just such distinctions that differentiate poets from poetasters, exemplary dramas from scurrilous spectacles, and discriminating spectators from the *vulgo*. But could these extremes be reconciled, and was there a way to write good plays for bad audiences, especially if the playwright was unwilling to go

---

<sup>51</sup> Like so many of the anti-theatrical arguments of the Golden Age, the much repeated accusation that the fictions of the stage lead to real vices derives from Plato (in this case, from *The Republic*, 424b-e (op.cit. I, 333-35). See, for example, Mariana, *Contra los juegos públicos*: 'Con representaciones vanas y enmascaradas muchos aprenden vicios verdaderos [...] La burla, como dice Platón en el libro IV de la *República*, poco a poco se muda en costumbre y pervierte los hombres con deshonestidad y torpeza' (*Tratado contra los juegos públicos*, pp.413a, 442a). This view is rebutted by the *comedia*'s apologists who emphasise the part played by 'poetic justice' in communicating moral truths. See, for example: Cascales, 'Aristóteles en su *Poética* [dice] que cuando el poeta saca al tablado [...] personas de mal ejemplo, que si esperamos hasta el *plaudite* y hasta la solución de la fábula veremos el mal fin en que estos paran. [...] de modo que no menos me enseña el malo con su fin desastrado, que el bueno con la gloria que alcanza de la virtud' (*Cartas filológicas*, II, 67); and González de Salas, '[El teatro:] N[o] apaciente en mis fábulas lo torpe de sus pensamientos la lasciva juventud, pues, cuando en su misma abominación se deleite, de él siempre preciso desastre, que allí verá [que él que] se sigue al culpable vivir debe esperar su ruina, si no advertido escarmentare [...]' (*Nueva idea de la tragedia*, p.6).

as far as Lope de Vega in making a virtue out of pandering to the appetites of the *vulgo*?<sup>52</sup>

\* \* \*

I believe that Alarcón solved this problem by appropriating many of the theatrical devices employed by the commercially successful dramatists of his day and then turning them to his own ends, undercutting their appeal to the imagination and the passions of the audience with structural or contextual features which call into question the legitimacy and authenticity of such devices and the forms of conduct they render so attractive to the audience.

As I have already remarked, those speeches in Alarcón's plays which describe the theatrical world of Madrid are commonly given to the *gracioso*. By allocating these passages to a conventionally base character, Alarcón preserves the principle of decorum which the speeches themselves seem to violate. His primary aim in these speeches does not seem to be to titillate his audience in the way that the spectators he describes are titillated, but rather to criticise such spectators for the meanness of their pleasures and to alert the audience to the fact that the words and actions of the actors are a reflection of their own lives. When he has Motín describe the audience rather than the play, Alarcón is pointedly fulfilling the much repeated maxim that the *comedia* should be a mirror of custom (*speculum consuetudinis*) by turning that mirror directly on the

---

<sup>52</sup> In his *Arte nuevo*, Lope paradoxically uses the language of reason and legality to excuse a style of composition designed to please the *vulgo* to whose perverse and unruly conduct he alludes elsewhere in the work: 'Escribo por el arte que inventaron/ los que el vulgar aplauso pretendieron,/ porque, como las paga el vulgo, es justo/ hablarle en necio para darle gusto [...] Es forzoso/ que el vulgo con sus leyes establezca/ la vil Chimera deste monstruo cómico/ diré el [parecer] que tengo, y perdonad, pues debo/ obedecer a quien mandarme puede;/ que dorando el error del vulgo, quiero/ deciros de qué modo las querría,/ ya que seguir el arte no hay remedio, en estos dos extremos, dando un medio' (*El arte nuevo*, p.285 [= ll.45-8], p.290 [= ll.148-56]).

audience of his own play. The image he presents, it need not be added, is hardly flattering.

A similar effect is created in *El desdichado en fingir*, most notably in a superbly comic incident which also shows how Alarcón turns even the most scurrilous poetry to good use through deft management of the situation in which it is presented. In the manner of farce, this situation is highly complex: the satirical verses in which Persio has boasted of his sexual adventures with a woman named Celia have inadvertently fallen into the hands of Arseno (who thinks that the manuscript in his possession is a letter from Ardenia, with whom he is in love) and who has taken it home to read at his leisure. However, Arseno, who is penniless, is currently living clandestinely with this same Celia, who is a woman of substance and eager for him to marry her (possibly to supply her with a respectable means of concealing the natural consequences of her previous liaison with the deceitful Persio). This mercenary and hypocritical relationship has begun to break down as a result of Arseno's infatuation with Ardenia, and the neglected and jealous Celia has become deeply suspicious of her intended spouse. Thus, when Arseno reads the letter aloud to his servant Tristán, Celia is listening at the door. At first she assumes, as Arseno does, that the letter is from his mistress, and she snatches the letter from him almost as soon as he has begun to read. However, her cry of triumph as she siezes on this piece of apparently incriminating evidence and the tone of righteous indignation with which she reads the letter back to him line by line are soon replaced by a mortified silence as it becomes evident that, whilst the letter is indeed incriminating, it is she and not Arseno who is shown to be at fault.<sup>53</sup>

The situation presented in this scene - in which the hypocritical reader or spectator discovers her/his own guilt - along with Alarcón's choice of a distant setting

---

<sup>53</sup> *OC*, I, 666-71 [= I.10].

(Bohemia) which is nevertheless effectively and significantly indistinguishable from Madrid, offer important clues about the nature of Alarcón's satirical tactics in this play, and serve notice to his audience that they should look carefully at themselves before they condemn others. If this is Alarcón's intention, it is in line with the defence of the theatre put forward by Jusepe Antonio González de Salas in a treatise on dramatic poetry of 1633. Salas' mouthpiece in the introduction to this work is the figure of 'El Teatro [e]scénico':

[Teatro:] [...] aunque es verdad que figurados los [vicios] halláis en mis dramáticas acciones, porque ellas son imagen verdadera de todas las pasiones humanas, debéis advertir que propios defectos vuestros son los que allí se representan para que mejor podáis en sujetos extraños percibir su fealdad y aborrecerla, pues que ninguno bien en sí mismo la conoce [...]<sup>54</sup>

In this way, the 'letter scene' in *El desdichado en fingir* shows how *bad literature* (that which has, or is held to have, an adverse effect on the conduct of individuals - in this case, Persio's poem) may be incorporated in *good literature* (its opposite - Alarcón's play) and turned to serve moral ends.

Alarcón's technique of turning the timeworn conventions of the popular theatre to his own use is also evident when one examines the contexts in which the items cited by Beltrán and don Juan in *Las paredes oyen* as belonging to the narrow repertoire of conventional jokes and situations available to the commercial playwright appear within his plays - where they prove to be fully integrated with Alarcón's larger thematic concerns. Thus, his descriptions of *juegos de cañas* and *corridos de toros* at once reflect contemporary anxiety about the decline of equestrianism in the upper levels of Spanish

---

<sup>54</sup> González de Salas, *Nueva idea de la tragedia*, p.5.

society, and (more importantly in the context of Alarcón's work as a whole) they also provide a metaphor for the ability of the individual to master the passions of lust and anger symbolised by the horse and the bull. Even the tired jokes about *calvos* are deployed to support themes of social hypocrisy (the purchase of a bogus nobility), or religious deviancy (as punning exchanges are made between *calvo* and *calvinista*).

Alarcón uses the linguistic and visual conventions of the theatre in a similar manner. Despite his emphasis on *entendimiento* and reason, many of the elements commonly associated with the sensory appeal of the *comedia* feature prominently in Alarcón's work. For example, he is well known for the many spectacular visual effects (*tramoyas*, fireworks and sleights-of-hand) incorporated within his magic plays. Yet, despite what critics such as Espantoso-Foley have maintained, these devices are not used by Alarcón simply to maintain the interest of the audience in the dramatic spectacle or to excite its imagination.<sup>55</sup> Instead of 'suspending' the audience, Alarcón uses devices of this sort either to call into question the reliability of such signs and the ways in which they are often interpreted, or as 'visual conceits', to illustrate particular moral points. I will deal with this topic more fully in Chapter 4, and so for the present I will cite only one example, of the former type. In *El anticristo*, Alarcón presents his audience with demonic tricks and divine miracles, both of which are realised by the same theatrical means in such a way as to demonstrate the unreliability of appearances as a basis for discriminating between good and evil. Alarcón is not expressing or encouraging moral scepticism here, but rather seeking to direct the audience towards an evaluation of the action in more reflective and intellectual terms.

He deals with linguistic flamboyance in a similar manner, drawing the attention of his audience to the potentially deceptive nature of poetic language. This is important,

---

<sup>55</sup> See Espantoso-Foley, *Occult Arts*, pp.33,90.

because contemporary theorists, following Plato, recognised that linguistic virtuosity was often more entertaining and, consequently, more persuasive, than linguistic reticence, and argued that this was particularly true in the theatre where the words were spoken aloud and emphasised by means of expressive gestures and other visual signs.<sup>56</sup> In the context of Alarcón's work one thinks at once of don García of *La verdad sospechosa*, in whose character theatrical attractiveness and linguistic virtuosity go hand in hand. Recent evidence of the allure of such attributes is provided by the tendency of modern critical readings of the play to regard don García's fate in the dénouement as unjust, and to pay little attention to the fact that his flamboyant and theatrical mendacity is identifiably the symptom of a deeper moral and social malaise. By contrast to don García, Alarcón frequently appears to be suspicious of the florid rhetoric and the profusion of ornamental tropes characteristic of the courtly and high poetical styles of the 1620s. That his stylistically disastrous *Elogio descriptivo* was written in imitation of a manner described by King as 'el más pomposo e hinchado lenguaje gongorino' appears to have been a condition of Alarcón's commission rather than any mark of poetic affinity between himself and Góngora - although it is perhaps no accident that, to commemorate the widely unpopular visit of Charles Stuart, Prince of Wales, Alarcón

---

<sup>56</sup> See Plato, *The Republic*, ed.cit., II, 463 [= 604c-605c]: '[...] this recalcitrant element in us gives plenty of material for dramatic representation; but the reasonable element and its unvarying calm are difficult to represent, and difficult to understand if represented, particularly by the motley audience gathered in a theatre, to whose experience it is quite foreign. [...] The dramatic poet will not therefore naturally turn to this element, nor will his skill be directed to please it, if he wants to win a popular reputation; but he will find it easy to represent character that is unstable and refractory. [...] We are therefore quite right to refuse to admit him [the poet] to a properly run state, because he wakens and encourages and strengthens the lower elements in the mind to the detriment of reason, which is like giving power and political control to the worst elements in a state and ruining the better elements'. See also *Phaedrus*, 271c. I would argue that Alarcón recognises the truth of Plato's assertions about the representation of 'unstable and refractory' characters, but that in his own work he seeks to refute Plato's conclusions by writing plays which have the opposite effect to that predicted by the philosopher.

should have penned a poem in a register which he reserves elsewhere for cads and confidence men.<sup>57</sup>

Further indications of Alarcón's interest in the deceptive potential of language are to be found in *El desdichado en fingir* and *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, in which unsigned or unpunctuated letters change their meaning according to the assumptions and prejudices of the reader. In these examples language deceives not because it is inherently unreliable, but because the reader or spectator is prone to make mistakes because his (or her) judgement is clouded by passion.<sup>58</sup>

Interestingly, Alarcón appears to have little regard for the music which was so much a part of the theatrical performances of his age. Throughout history, philosophers, moralists and poets alike have recognised that music has a powerful influence on the emotions. This influence was such that, to an even greater degree than in the case of poetry, music was held to 'suspend' the rational faculties of the audience, leaving it vulnerable to suggestion. It was therefore considered important by the moralists that the kind of music performed in public be carefully controlled.<sup>59</sup> Nowhere was music as widely condemned as in the theatre, where it was identified by the moralists as a powerful inducement to lechery.<sup>60</sup> Short of introducing sacred music into his plays,

---

<sup>57</sup> See King, *Letrado y dramaturgo*, pp.182-84. A taste of the poetic posturing characteristic of many of Alarcón's spurious heroes is provided by don Mendo's opening speech in *Las paredes oyen* (OC, I, 220-21 [= I.10.446-75]). See also Román Ramírez's speech which begins: '¡Ah cielos! Quién vio salir/ de purpúreos pabellones [...]' in *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* (OC, III, 175 [= I.3.95-120]). The self-dramatising language of Petrarchan love also proves unreliable, counter-productive, and vulnerable to parody in Alarcón's work. See *Las paredes oyen*, I.5-6 (OC, I, 213-16).

<sup>58</sup> See *El desdichado en fingir* I.10 (OC, I, 666-71) and *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* I.12 (OC, III, 187-89).

<sup>59</sup> Cf Plato's remarks in the *Republic*, 424c-e, cited earlier, n.13.

<sup>60</sup> See Mariana, *Contra los juegos públicos*, pp.431b, 432b: '[...] si en tanta manera la música reprime los afectos y los mueve, necesaria cosa es que pueda también mucho para hacer las costumbres o buenas o malas como fuere la música' porque ¿qué cosa son las virtudes, o en qué cosa más se ocupan que en enfrenar los movimientos del ánimo? ¿De dónde nascen los vicios, sino de los afectos desordenados, apetito desenfrenado, ira encendida, demasiado temor o tristeza, lo cual, como los antiguos filósofos tuviesen conocido para ordenar las ciudades y fundallas, juzgaron no ser de poco momento que

therefore, there was little that Alarcón could do to legitimise music as part of the theatrical performance. His response is to use music only in contexts which are identifiably characterised by passionate or irrational error. Thus, the only songs to appear in his works are a drunken medley sung by the *arrieros* in *Las paredes oyen*, and a blasphemous hymn to the Antichrist sung by a choir of bearded eunuchs in *El anticristo*. It goes without saying that neither of these instances presents music in a positive light.<sup>61</sup>

References to music in Alarcón's works are almost as rare as music itself, and are used in a similar context. I am aware of only five instances: Motín's reference to the music of Quiñones de Benavente in his account of his visit to the *corral* in *La culpa busca la pena*; Enrico's use of a musical metaphor to illustrate the operation of sympathetic magic in *La cueva de Salamanca*; don García's mendacious description of the musical accompaniment to a banquet on the banks of the Manzanares in *La verdad sospechosa*; and don Mendo's inclusion of the music of the 'dawn chorus' as part of an *alborada culta* in *Las paredes oyen* (a passage I have already cited as one in which Alarcón employs a pretentious poetic style to indicate the moral weakness of the speaker). The fifth occurs in *La industria y la suerte* (II.6) in a passage in which the hero's *criado*, Jimeno, mockingly describes the *culterano* style associated with Góngora as a 'cisma de alegorías/ y confusión de concetos,/ retruécano de palabras,/ tiqui-miqui y embeleco,/ patarata del oído,/ y engañifa del ingenio:/ es música de instrumentos/ que suena y no dice nada'. Jimeno's remark not only supplies a link between *góngorismo*

---

el legislador tuviese por uno de sus cuidados determinar y establecer de qué género de música se debía usar en la ciudad y pueblo. [...] la música del teatro y de los farsantes es una peste gravísima que va corrompiendo por las ciudades y por los lugares las costumbres de los particulares, y poco a poco dándoles a beber la maldad, y que los príncipes que se decuidan en esto, que debían tener por muy encomendado, darán cuenta a Dios, y serán vivos y muertos castigados gravísimamente por haber gobernado mal la república [...]

<sup>61</sup> See *Las paredes oyen* II.12 (OC, I, 261-63), and *El anticristo* III.2 (OC, II, 529-31).

and music, but also recalls Carvallo's separation of spoken language into sound and sense in a way which implies criticism of both modes of expression ('suenan y no dicen nada').

In each of the instances cited above, the context raises questions of a moral kind about the function of music: in the case of *La cueva de Salamanca*, for example, Enrico is on trial for necromancy, whilst in *La verdad sospechosa*, the music described by García forms part of a fantasy of opulence and clandestine seduction.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, if I am right in interpreting Motín's description of the *corral* as a passage whose purpose is satirical rather than simply *costumbrista*, then it must be inferred that Alarcón's criticism is directed at the commercial composer (Vallejo) and the choreographer (Benavente) as well as at the commercial dramatist (Lope).

Whilst the characters within Alarcón's plays find considerable difficulty in establishing the true state of affairs on the basis of what they see or hear, Alarcón himself very rarely conceals information from his audience, telling them immediately about every lie and every act of disguise and the motives behind it, so as to leave them

---

<sup>62</sup> See *La culpa busca la pena* II.7.1257-60 (*OC*, III, 41), *La verdad sospechosa* I.7.705-12 (*OC*, II, 400), *Las paredes oyen* I.10.458-63 (*OC*, I, 220), and *La cueva de Salamanca* III.15.2453-56 (*OC*, I, 462). The last example is somewhat different from the others insofar as Enrico's statements on the nature of music have a rational or scientific character, and suggest a philosophical view of music in which the mathematical relationships inherent in concordant sounds were seen as indicating the harmony of the cosmos, and its Divine origins. This attitude towards music is apparent in Fray Luis de León's famous ode to Francisco Salinas. see also O'Connell, *Art and the Christian Intelligence*, p.67: 'Augustine initiates his work [= *De Musica*] with a determined effort to show that music is a science (*scientia*), a knowledge of the numerical relations which govern the production of harmonious sounds; a knowledge which is, therefore, accessible only to the eye of reason. [...] the universe entire is at every level formed into beauty by the pervasive power of number. He establishes a hierarchy leading from the lowest numbers accessible to sense observation, upward through six higher levels [...] terminating at the very seat of intelligibility and beauty, the divine'. O'Connell is referring here to Augustine, *De Musica*, I, 1-12; VI, 2-22. In the case of Enrico, both magic and music have a dual character, possessing a positive value as sciences through the study of which the human intellect may acquire a knowledge of the created world which leads to a recognition of its divine origins, and a negative value as a manipulation of the senses which leads to error and sin.

in no doubt about the nature of his characters.<sup>63</sup> And yet, despite this openness, Alarcón's plays frequently end in a way which runs counter to the expectations of the audience. This is because the audience is prone to mistake virtuosity for virtue and to forget that the course and outcome of the play are governed not by the characters' ability to dissemble, nor by the actors' skill as performers, but by the author's adherence to an underlying moral logic which is made fully explicit only in the *desenlace*. By using the structural device of 'poetic justice' in this way, Alarcón not only makes sure that the *vulgo* cannot miss the moral message of the play; he also makes them aware of their mistake.

This structural technique is supported by Alarcón's use of imagery. In common with Carvallo, González de Salas and others, Alarcón recognises that whilst the surface of a (dramatic) fiction may be false and illusory, its true meaning and substance may be understood by those who are disposed to interpret it in a figurative sense, and that this constitutes a further defence against the tendency of the stage to bestow a spurious legitimacy on the energetic and egocentric behaviour of its protagonists, however immoral. Thus, in Alarcón's plays the activities of such characters at the literal level of plot are repeatedly criticised by means of the author's use of metaphor and his selection of emblematic details. In this way, Alarcón establishes a network of signs for the *discretos* who are able to distinguish between *sonido* and *sentido*, surface and substance, which is sufficient to validate his heroes and incriminate his villains despite the frequent (and perhaps inevitable) dramatic dullness of the former and the flamboyant theatricality of the latter.

---

<sup>63</sup> Thus, for example, we learn of don García's mendacity in Act I, scene 2 of *La verdad sospechosa*, of don Mendo's addiction to slander in Act I, scene 1 of *Las paredes oyen*, and witness the evil nature of the Antichrist in Act I, scene 2, of *El anticristo*.

\* \* \*

I believe that the comments made by Alarcón in the prefaces to his two volumes, and his use of structural and figurative devices in the plays themselves suggest that he was fully aware both of the nature of the criticism levelled against dramatic performances by the anti-theatrical lobby and of the nature of the audience in the *corrales*. Whilst recognising that playwriting was potentially both morally illicit and socially dishonourable, however, Alarcón evidently believed that it was an activity which might also serve as evidence of his merit, and it is in terms of such merit that he presents it in the prologues to his *Parte primera*. In order to realise these aspirations and to meet the requirements of the public theatre, Alarcón had to develop a particular dramatic technique. This is characterised by a combination of openness and concealment, as he repeatedly conceals the machinations of his intriguers from their intended victims but reveals them to the audience, whilst at the same time he remains discreet with regard to his own aims and methods. The result is that, whilst in his prefaces Alarcón seems only to envisage two kinds of play - bad plays (which are successful) and good plays (which are not) - his manipulation of the conventional elements of the former to serve the ends proposed by the latter actually produces a third kind of play - a good play *disguised* as a bad one, so that in both form and content his plays are lies (fictions/illusions) which point nevertheless to the truth and favour 'la fe y las buenas costumbres'. This, I believe, is Alarcón's solution to the problem of achieving success without compromising his moral principles.<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> From this point of view, the very irrationality of the audience represents a challenge to the dramatist and an opportunity to put his skills to the test in the service of his moral principles. Alarcón repeatedly expresses this idea in terms of a maritime metaphor. Thus, in the *Proemio* to the *Parte segunda* Alarcón contrasts the uncertainties of the 'golfo del teatro' with the comparatively secure 'puerto de la emprenta', and, in the prologue to the same volume, he compares the theatres of Madrid to the 'bancos de Flandes', those notorious shifting sandbanks off the the Belgian coast (*OC*, 1, 5). This

The spectator who overlooks Alarcón's manipulative presence and fails to identify the resulting similarity between himself and the victims of Alarcón's magicians and intriguers does so because, like them, prejudice, emotional involvement, or the mere pursuit of *gusto* impair his critical faculties. Such a spectator will find the moral lesson only in the ending, and be surprised if not shocked by it. On the other hand, the spectator who understands that his own experience as a spectator is being figured on the stage will also be able to see that Alarcón habitually compares and contrasts different forms of illusion, subtly defining and justifying his own art as a dramatist as he does so. As will be seen in the chapters which follow, Alarcón's plays are 'moral', but not only in their structure and imagery, since the technique which the spectator has to develop in order to interpret the play as it is meant to be interpreted involves the cultivation of an intellectually critical attitude in place of a merely imaginative or emotional response.

---

maritime metaphor emphasises not only the fickle, unpredictable (and even treacherous) character of the audience, but also the skill of the pilot who successfully navigates such waters, and it gains additional significance when one looks at the way in which Alarcón refers to maritime prowess elsewhere in his works. In *El semejante a sí mismo* for example, the successes of Don Lope de Diez Aux y Armendáriz as commander of Spain's Atlantic treasure fleets are offered as evidence of the admiral's virtue and as confirmation of his noble character (II.1.999-1010 [= *OC*, I, 325]). The metaphor occurs again in *Las paredes oyen* when the Duke of Urbino asks don Juan and don Mendo to guide him around Madrid steering him clear of its dangers, and likens his companions to 'pilotos expertos' and 'capitanes veteranos' (I.17.817, 822 [= *OC*, I, 231]). We have already seen how Motín represents the companion with whom he visits the theatre as his North Star in the 'golfo de los moños del aparador'. The repetition here of the maritime metaphor first encountered in the prologue alerts one to the parallel between the task set before don Juan de Mendoza by the Duke, and the moral role assumed by Juan Ruiz de Alarcón as a dramatist, as each presents the customs of the city to the spectator for the purpose of practical moral instruction.

Alarcón alludes to the challenge presented to the dramatist by the whistles and catcalls of the *mosqueteros* in four of his plays. See *La cueva de Salamanca* II.5.1421-24 [= *OC*, I, 430]; *La prueba de las promesas*, III.3.2030-33 [= *OC*, II, 803]; *Todo es ventura* I.14.790-98 [= *OC*, I, 586]; *Mudarse por mejorarse* I.11.520 [= *OC*, I, 489]; and the prologue to the *Parte primera* [= *OC*, I, 4].

## Chapter 2

### *La verdad sospechosa*: Lies and Dissimulation

*La verdad sospechosa* is undoubtedly Alarcón's most famous play, and has been accurately described up by Melveena McKendrick as 'a satirical comedy with a strong moral thrust about a compulsive liar'.<sup>1</sup> As a comedy, it is certainly effective, and derives its principal appeal from the reckless mendacity of its protagonist, don García, and (as is usual with the best of Alarcón's urban comedies) from its sharp social observation. The play is well constructed and moves along at a brisk pace, and whilst it has all the familiar characters one expects to find in a *comedia de capa y espada*, Alarcón's inclusion of a protagonist who is a compulsive liar provides an element of novelty. Apart from the opportunities for dramatic irony offered by such a character, don García's elaborate lies are themselves a significant source of theatrical pleasure, requiring the actor to display considerable virtuosity in solo performance.<sup>2</sup> Despite its obvious attractions as a theatrical entertainment, however, *La verdad sospechosa* is also a play with an explicit interest in evaluating deceit in moral terms, so that, at its close, don García is unambiguously presented to the audience as the author of his own downfall:

---

<sup>1</sup> McKendrick, *Theatre in Spain*, p.134.

<sup>2</sup> See Paterson, 'Reversal & Multiple Role Playing in [...] *La verdad sospechosa*': 'the role of García calls for virtuoso acting. His lies are acts of high theatricality, whose relationship with the spontaneous brilliance of improvisation is suggested by the adverbial "de repente" that is used on at least three occasions to convey admiration at García's skill; the *comedia de repente* was the term applied to *ad lib* performance' (pp.362-63).

Tristán            Tú tienes la culpa toda;  
                          que si al principio dijeras  
                          la verdad, esta es la hora  
                          que de Jacinta gozabas [...]  
                          Y aquí verás cuán dañosa  
                          es la mentira; y verá  
                          el senado que en la boca  
                          del que mentir acostumbra,  
                          es la verdad sospechosa.<sup>3</sup>

Although the nature and significance of don García's mendacity has understandably been the focus of the majority of the numerous critical studies made of this play, in this chapter I aim to show that the argument of *La verdad sospechosa* is not concerned solely with the criticism of don García's lies, but rather, that it presents an opposition between two forms of deception, one associated with imagination and desire and the other associated with understanding and reason; the former is represented by García's extravagant lies and the latter by the prudent stratagems of Jacinta. I will deal with each of these in turn.<sup>4</sup>

As I have previously noted, don García's lies come in for direct criticism of a moral kind. However, they are also referred to in literary terms, not only within the play itself but also in the subsequent dramatic adaptations by Pierre Corneille, Carlo Goldoni, Samuel Foote and Sir Richard Steele, and by a number of modern critics.<sup>5</sup> Since the present study aims to evaluate Alarcón's attitude to literary fiction

---

<sup>3</sup> III.14.3108-12 (*OC*, II, 470).

<sup>4</sup> Where previous studies of this play have identified acts of deception in characters other than García, such acts have been interpreted as broadly analogous to García's lies rather than as significantly different from them. By placing the emphasis on the similarity between García's lies and the deception practised by others rather than on the difference between the two, critics of the play have sought to exculpate García on the basis of the social milieu in which he has been brought up, and even to present him as a scapegoat for the collective guilt of a mendacious society. See, for example, John London, *Claves de 'La verdad sospechosa'* (Madrid: Ciclo, 1990), p.91.

<sup>5</sup> For example, in Corneille's play, *Le menteur*, Tristán's counterpart, Cliton, remarks to his master, Dorante: 'Vous seriez un grand maître à faire des romans' (l.356), whilst in Foote's play *The Lying Lover*, the servant describes his master's lying ways in the following terms: 'Papillon: [...] this talent of

as well as to other forms of deceit, I shall begin by examining the literary qualities of the protagonist's lies and then consider some of the moral implications of their style and content.

\* \* \*

Don García tells three major lies in *La verdad sospechosa*, one in each act. The first is an opulent description of a banquet held by the Manzanares (I.7.665-748 [= *OC*, II, 399-401]), the second is a lively account of the circumstances leading up to his supposed marriage in Salamanca (II.9.1522-1711 [= *OC*, II, 424-28]), and the last is a blow-by-blow record of a duel he claims to have fought with don Juan (III.8.2714-73 [= *OC*, II, 458-59]). The literary character of each of these lies is indicated by Mary Malcolm Gaylord as she describes them as a '*culterano* tableau', a 'sentimental novel' and a 'cloak-and-dagger adventure' respectively.<sup>6</sup> Despite such

---

yours is the very soul and spirit of poetry: and, why it should not be the same in prose. I cannot for the life of me determine' (l.356). For a detailed comparison of Alarcón's play and its imitations see Michael Jones, 'Five Liars: French, English and Italian Imitations of *La verdad sospechosa*', *AUMLA*, 62 (1984), 192-207 (p.201). On this matter, see also: Jaime Concha, 'El tema del segundón y *La verdad sospechosa*', *RCLL*, n.s.14 (1988), 253-79 (p.274); Mary Malcolm Gaylord, 'The Telling Lies of *La verdad sospechosa*', *MLN* 103 (1988), 223-38 (pp.227-32); Paterson, 'Reversal & Multiple Role Playing'; E.C. Riley, 'Alarcón's *Mentiroso* in the Light of Contemporary Theories of Character', p.288; C. Allan Soons, '*La verdad sospechosa*', pp.124-130; and Harold A Veaser, "'That Dangerous Supplement": *La verdad sospechosa*, and the Literary Speech Situation', in *Things Done with Words: Speech Acts in Hispanic Drama*, edited by Elias L. Rivers (Newark, Delaware: Juan de La Cuesta, 1986), pp.51-71.

<sup>6</sup> Gaylord, 'Telling Lies', p.232. Brett Levinson also considers García's lies to be acts of conscious artistry: 'he is profoundly familiar with the literary and rhetorical conventions of the epoch [...] Witness, for example, his parodic and conscious use of the Góngora trope, turned cliché by Alarcón's time, that associates straws with gold and teeth with pearls: 'que han de ser oro las pajas,/ cuando los dientes son perlas' ('The Management of the Estate in *La verdad sospechosa*', p.176. See also José Amezcuá, '*La verdad sospechosa* y la poética del desenlace' in *Memoria de las Segundas Jornadas Alarcónianas, 1989*, edited by Héctor Azar (Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de Guerrero, 1990), pp.23-40 (pp.34-36, 38): 'Don García, como se ve, está bien preparado en cuestiones literarias y retóricas, pero lo más importante es su indudable vocación por los relatos, lo que prefigura a un joven novelista o quizá a un nuevo dramaturgo. Tristán habrá de reconocer este talento literario de su amo a cada momento, asombrándose de las mentiras tan bien probadas del muchacho [...] don García, el fabulador [...] aparece como el autor de una escena de comedia [...] la mentira es un artificio dramático [...] esta invención de la trama en que se presenta casado don García en Salamanca, en el relato reúne los elementos principales de una comedia

varied generic associations, however, all three lies are characterised by a wealth of descriptive detail, and by the imaginative energy with which don García's composes and performs them.

At first sight, the incorporation of so much detail into don García's lies seems designed to create an effect of verisimilitude. It is soon apparent, however, that the proliferation of striking details (which give a richness to his descriptions and a sensational character to his narratives) has a more ambitious aim, and that its primary purpose is to provoke the admiration of his audience. The word *admiración* has a double sense in this context. On the one hand, it may denote surprise or wonder, and on the other it may carry the meaning of 'esteem' as it commonly does today. Alarcón's play appears to preserve this ambiguity, as don García explains that he tells lies both in order to astound others and to win fame for himself (1.8.838-68 [= *OC*,II, 403-04]).

That don García's primary concern as a creator of fictions is with *admiración* rather than with verisimilitude is evident in his first major lie - the description of the banquet by the Manzanares. Whilst don García appears to use a naturalistic technique, selecting details which appeal systematically to each of the senses in turn, the effect is not to create an illusion of reality (as one might expect) but to outdo the reality his description is supposed to represent through an extravagant excess of sensory detail. This is a fact recognised by his listeners, both of whom are impressed by his account (even though one believes it is true and the other knows that it is a lie):

---

de capa y espada [...], es decir, lo que está haciendo es una obra de teatro: [...] Los elementos de la macroestructura del drama de Alarcón se repiten en la microestructura del drama elaborado por don García autor'.

Don Juan      ¡Por Dios, que la habéis pintado  
de colores tan perfectas,  
que no trocara el oírla  
por haberme hallado en ella!

Tristán      (*Aparte:*) ¡Válgate el diablo por hombre!  
¡Qué tan de repente pueda  
pintar un convite tal  
que a la verdad misma venza!<sup>7</sup>

Additional evidence that the initial success of don García's lies has more to do with *admiración* than with verisimilitude is provided by the reaction of don Félix. Whilst don Juan believes don García's account of the banquet, don Félix remains sceptical, remarking that the details supplied by don García do not square with the reports of the banquet received by him earlier. Indeed, Félix is evidently suspicious enough to make further enquiries which will later enable him to prove to don Juan that García has lied to them (Act II, scene 13). In the course of this scene, he cites the opulence of García's description as evidence that it is not genuine: '[...] tanta variedad/ de tiendas, aparadores,/ vajillas de plata y oro,/ tanto plato, tanto coro/ de instrumentos y cantores./ ¿no eran mentira patente?'.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the opulence of García's accounts comes to stand as a mark of their untruthfulness.

Jaime Concha makes a similar point about the link between mendacity and excesses of literary style in his study of this play. Quoting the opening lines of García's description of the banquet, 'Entre las opacas sombras/ y opacidades espesas [...]', he remarks:

No es sólo una parodia incidental del gongorismo, sino también una insinuación de que las composiciones descriptivas y el lenguaje lírico-

---

<sup>7</sup> I.7.749-56 [= *OC*, II, 401].

<sup>8</sup> II.13.1899-1904 [= *OC*, II, 434].

teatral conllevan en sí mismos un peligro de falsificación [...] En otras dos mentiras - la del casamiento de Salamanca, y la del duelo con don Juan - el embustero hace un evidente pastiche de la narración de aventuras en las comedias, de su hinchazón y sus exageraciones, que nos lleva a pensar que Alarcón, sutil aunque claramente, asocia aspectos del lenguaje teatral con la raíz de la mentira.<sup>9</sup>

The essential point here is that don García is not interested in expressing the truth (he is lying, after all), but rather in creating a dazzling effect. This is also evident from the language he uses in Act I when he first sets eyes on Lucrecia and Jacinta - an exaggerated and literary mode of expression which Tristán seeks to deflate with bathos and words of caution:

García	[...] mira el marfil de aquella mano, el divino resplandor de aquellos ojos, que juntas despiden entre las puntas flechas de muerte y amor.
Tristán	¿Dices aquella señora que va en el coche? [...]
García	¿Dónde ha de haber resplandores que borren los destos ojos?
Tristán	Míraslos con anteojos, que hacen las cosas mayores. <sup>10</sup>

El Pinciano's remarks on the subject of *admiración* in his *Philosophía antigua poética* suggest that contemporary poetic theory also recognised a link between mendacity, inverisimilitude and the pursuit of literary pleasure by means of *admiración*:

---

<sup>9</sup> Jaime Concha, 'El tema del segundón y *La verdad sospechosa*', p.274. Here, Concha also likens this connection to that implicit in Alarcón's work between theatrical spectacle and magic, explaining the conceptual link in the following terms: 'Teatro, magia y mentira comparten una misma franja básica de ilusión de los sentidos'. This is a connection which I will explore further in Chapter 4.

<sup>10</sup> I.5.375-82, 401-04 [= *OC*, II, 390-91].

[...] la admiración es de mucha importancia para el poema, porque, en la verdad, es causa grande del deleyte; y de aquí nace que los hombres deste siglo sean tan mentirosos; los quales por poner admiración dirán que vieron bolar vn buey. [...] Todo este trueco y mentira hazen los hombres a fin de adular con la admiración.<sup>11</sup>

Echoing Horace, El Pinciano nevertheless emphasises the importance of verisimilitude, warning that, without it, the speaker will earn the mockery rather than the admiration of his listeners. Moreover, he reminds his readers that poetry is expected to instruct as well as to entertain and asserts that, whilst verisimilitude is essential to its function as entertainment, poetry must also have an allegorical quality if it is to teach.<sup>12</sup>

Once don García's mendacity is apparent, he is indeed mocked for his lies, both by Jacinta and by don Juan. Jacinta tells him: '[...] de mí/ podéis de aquí pensar,/ si otra vez os diere oído,/ que por divertirme ha sido;/ como quien para quitar/ el enfadoso fastidio/ de los negocios pesados,/ gasta los ratos sobrados/ en las fábulas de Ovidio' (II.16.2131-39 [OC, II, 440-41]), and don Juan also comes to the conclusion that García is no longer to be taken seriously, remarking to Félix that he intends in future to give no more credence to García's remarks than to old wives' tales ('[...] sus verdades serán/ ya consejas para mí' (II.13.1918-19 [= OC,

---

<sup>11</sup> El Pinciano, *Philosophía antigua poética*, II, 103-04.

<sup>12</sup> '[E]s menester que [...] tenga verosimilitud, porque cuando carece della, la admiración de la cosa se convierte en risa; de manera que no se admira la nueva, sino escarnécese, y es burlado del oyente el dueño que la trujo. *Verisimilitud es menester que tenga la fábula para lo que es deleitar, como para el enseñar basta que tenga alegoría, la cual tienen los poetas mitológicos o apoloéticos [...]*' (El Pinciano, *ibid.*). Cf Horace, *Ars Poetica*, ll.338-39: 'ficta voluptatis causa sint proxima veris [...]' ('Fictions meant to please should be close to the real, so that your play must not ask for belief in anything it chooses.'). See Horace, *De arte poetica*, edited by E.C. Wickham, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1891) I, 387-431 (p.421). The nearness of Alarcón's attitudes to those of Horace both as regards the importance of verisimilitude and the utility of drama is also striking, and raises the question of what Alarcón may have owed to Horace for his conception of the function of the drama and the consequences of that function as regards the relation of fiction to reality.

II, 434)].<sup>13</sup> García's lies therefore come to be regarded simply as a source of entertainment akin to that of literature, offering pleasure but none of the benefits associated with the didactic function of poetry.<sup>14</sup>

Elsewhere in *La verdad sospechosa*, however, the idea that fiction should *enseñar deleitando* is alluded to more explicitly. Harold A. Veesper observes that don García's father criticises his son's vice of lying in terms more usually associated with contemporary poetic theory: 'In asserting that *el mentir* brings neither *gusto* nor *provecho*, Beltrán denies in his son's fictions the qualities felt in the Renaissance to be indispensable to literature'.<sup>15</sup> Father and son differ absolutely where these qualities are concerned; whereas don Beltrán is prepared to accept unpleasant things if they are to his benefit, and even to take pleasure in them on that account, García seems incapable of understanding *provecho* except in terms of his own desires.<sup>16</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Millares Carlo gives 'consejos' but indicates in a subsequent note that 'Alarcón parece haber usado esta palabra con la significación de "conseja" [...]' (*OC* II, 1076-77).

<sup>14</sup> In his *Diálogos de la discreción* of 1579, Dámaso de Frías y Balboa cautions his readers about the potential dangers of an addiction to spicing up one's discourse with lies, however harmless and pleasurable such fictions may appear:

Suelen es verdad en las conversaciones permitirse para donaire y búscanse para algún gracioso entretenimiento algunas mentiras no perjudiciales, mas graciosas como de algunos acaecimientos y sucesos fingidos, las cuales no dejan de tener algún peligro cuando de ellas se hace costumbre. Y los que así dan en mentir [...] deberían vivir muy recatados y andar con mucho seso y buen tiento en esto de las gracias y donaires [...]. (Dámaso de Frías y Balboa, *Diálogo de la Discreción*, in *Diálogos de diferentes materias inéditas hasta ahora*, Colección de Escritores Castellanos, 161 (Madrid: G. Hernández y Galo Sáez, 1929), pp.3-210 (p.155)).

The fact that García's tendency to lie is also referred to as a *costumbre*, along with his patent lack of *recato*, suggest that he is very much the sort of character Frías has in mind here.

<sup>15</sup> Veesper, "'That dangerous supplement'", p.66.

<sup>16</sup> Compare don Beltrán's remarks in Act I: '[...] saberlo me será/ útil, cuando no gustoso./ Antes en nada a fé mia/ hacerme puede mayor/ placer [...]/ que en darme este desengaño/ cuando provechoso es [...]' (I.2.111-18 [= *OC*, II, 383]), with García's assertion in Act II: 'Ya del mentir, no dirá/ que es sin gusto y sin provecho./ pues es tan notorio gusto/ el ver que me haya creído./ y provecho haber huido/ de casarme a mi disgusto' (II.10.1734-39 [= *OC*, II, 429]). When don Juan realises that he has been mistaken in suspecting Jacinta of betraying him, his remarks make it clear that, despite being of García's generation, his attitude is in accordance with don Beltrán's: [Don Juan] '[...] tanto gusto me da/ el saber que me engañé./ que doy por bien empleado/ el disgusto que he pasado,' (II.13.1883-86 [= *OC*, II, 433]).

In a famous passage in Act I (I.8.838-68 [= *OC*,II, 403-04]), don García explains his reasons for lying to don Juan about the banquet. His explanation is as follows: firstly, despising both envy and admiration, he hates anyone to think that he may be impressed or made envious by their news; secondly, he derives a particular pleasure from forestalling the accounts of others by telling a more impressive tale of his own; and thirdly, he seeks to make a name for himself in any way he can. García further explains that he seeks renown because he regards it as the one quality which sets a man apart from the rest of brute creation.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, García's concluding remark demonstrates that his lies are the product of a principle of self-gratification which he fallaciously represents as a form of reason: '[...] al fin, es éste mi gusto,/ que es la razón de más fuerza' (I.8.867-68). The 'reason' or motive for his mendacity is not in fact reason but desire, and the desire for that most fleeting and intangible of possessions, fame.

Allan Soons finds a parallel between the moral recklessness of García's desire for fame and what one finds in contemporary poetry. According to him, the poetics of Alarcón's period expressed 'un culto de la bella forma lingüística como deleite del espíritu, apartando cualquier idea ética que se hubiera inculcado [...] por doquier se topan autores cuyo afán se desvía en busca del aplauso, de la simetría de la argumentación, la eficacia emocional - o su falsificación cuando la búsqueda no tuvo éxito'.<sup>18</sup> If Soons is right about this, as I think he is, then Alarcón's criticism of

---

<sup>17</sup> The example García chooses to illustrate his argument - that of Herostratus, who burned down the Temple of Ephesus in 356 B.C. to make his name immortal (according to Valerius Maximus) - is perhaps ironically undercut by the fact that García appears unable to remember his name: 'Nómbrenme a mí en todas partes/ y murmúrenme siquiera,/ pues *uno* por ganar nombre/ abrasó el templo de Efesia' (I.8.863-66 [= *OC*, II, 404]), my emphasis).

<sup>18</sup> Soons, *Ficción y comedia*, pp. 128-29. He cites Bernardino Partenio (c. 1500-1589) in support of this view, despite Partenio's apparent concern in the passage quoted that a preoccupation with aesthetic effect for its own sake is leading poetry and poets alike into disrepute: 'Ma noi non abbiamo in considerazione né tanto buoni costumi, né animi corrotti o sinceri, ma solamente la bellezza, la maraviglia, e la grandezza del poeta. E se il poeta non eccita di questi vizi, egli viziosissimo viene riputato' (Partenio

don García's lying is also a criticism of certain contemporary literary practices which are incorporated into the play first to entertain, and then to be condemned.<sup>19</sup>

A similarly literary view of don García has recently been proposed by John London, who regards don García as the author of lies which are effectively impromptu dramas, 'plays within the play', or, to use Lionel Abel's term, examples of 'metatheatre'.<sup>20</sup> London also turns his attention to the effect of the play in performance, and his assessment of the influence which don García's virtuosity has on the audience leads him to draw some striking conclusions:

Este metateatro - esta presencia del teatro dentro del teatro - tiene una consecuencia significativa: el mundo ficticio de don García compite con el mundo teatral de Alarcón y amenaza su supremacía.

El éxito de la obra depende de don García. Tiene que divertimos, pero esto constituye un problema: desde el punto de vista moral resulta casi imposible condenar sin hipocresía a un personaje si su estética nos ha vencido. En otras palabras: su actuación nos obliga a juzgarle con criterios estéticos.<sup>21</sup>

London's conclusion assumes that we cannot be entertained by don García and simultaneously both mistrust and disapprove of him. In fact, it is not necessary to

---

*Dell'imitazione poetica*, (Venice, 1560), in *Trattati de poetica e retorica del cinquecento*, edited by Bernard Weinberg, 4 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1970), II, 519-58 (p.553), cited by Soons, op.cit., p.128).

<sup>19</sup> The moral and literary values which shape García's lies are very similar to those associated with the 'bad poets' who appear in contemporary texts regarding the nature and effects of imaginative writing, and who were themselves frequently accused of mendacity in such works.

<sup>20</sup> For an exposition of the meaning of this term and its application to the *comedia*, see Lionel Abel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963); and Catherine Larson, 'El metateatro, la comedia y la crítica: hacia una nueva interpretación', in *Actas del X Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, Barcelona, 1989*, edited by Antonio Vilanova (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1992), II, 1013-20, and her 'Metatheater and the *Comedia*: Past, Present and Future', in *The Golden Age 'Comedia': Text, Theory and Performance* edited by Charles Ganelin and Howard Mancing (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994), pp.204-21. The latter contains a comprehensive bibliography on this theme.

<sup>21</sup> London, *La verdad sospechosa*, p.90. See also Eduardo Urbina, 'La razón de más fuerza: triple juego en *La verdad sospechosa*', *Hispania*, 70 (1987), 724-30.

be overcome ('vencido') by García's creative virtuosity to enjoy the play; but it is necessary to retain one's critical (i.e. analytical) faculties if one is to understand its meaning. Alarcón makes this evident within the play itself, with the result that García's lies come to be more notable for breeding suspicion than for occasioning belief, and the admiration they produce is shown to be short-lived compared to the disillusionment which follows. It is true that we must assess the action of the play 'con criterios estéticos', but with a sophisticated set of aesthetic criteria and not with those of the *vulgo* who mistake virtuosity for virtue and sensation for sense.<sup>22</sup>

Paterson finds a model for García's lies in a speech made by Tristán in Act I in which Tristán 'draws a supremely inventive analogy between sexually available women, classified according to their social place and their degrees of reliability, and the degrees of the cosmic hierarchy'.<sup>23</sup> In Paterson's view, this speech provides a demonstration of 'the art of supercharging reality' characteristic of the Court, which García will subsequently imitate. Whilst there are certainly a number of important similarities between Tristán's guide to the women of Madrid and García's subsequent

---

<sup>22</sup> Walter Poesse and Eduardo Urbina also describe García's lies in theatrical terms. But, whilst Poesse does no more than refer to García's lie about his forced marriage in Salamanca as 'a comedy in miniature' (*Juan Ruiz de Alarcón*, p.69), Urbina represents the whole play as a struggle between two comic plots, and between the moral and social values associated with them: '[...] dentro de *LVS* pueden distinguirse dos niveles fundamentales de engaño: 1) el mundo de comedia de las mentiras de don García, que llamo aquí *contra-comedia*, el cual está regido por el amor y el gusto [...] y 2) la comedia de don Beltrán [...] regida por el honor y el interés, llena de disimulos, apariencias y silencios, exigiendo conformidad con la norma y una integración al orden simbolizado por el casamiento. Se trata de una comedia social, de una estructura teatral del vivir social, un *juego serio* en que han de respetarse las reglas ante todo y sobre todo.' ('La razón de más fuerza', p.725a).

For most of this article, Urbina appears to side with García, to whose lies he repeatedly refers in positive terms: 'en la [contra-comedia...] se afirma y autocrea en el mundo de la imaginación [...] las mentiras de don García más que meras mentiras son un arte' (p.724b), and later, 'las mentiras [...] son inocentes, no intentan dañar a nadie y por lo tanto bien pueden tenerse por buenas [...] que de las mentiras [...] se deriva gusto no puede caber duda' (p.727a). It is surprising, therefore, when, having borne the colours of the 'contra-comedia', Urbina refers to the play's dénouement as 'la salvación de don García, el logro de su madurez social [...] y su integración en el mundo de la gran comedia de su padre', before reassuring the reader that García's forced marriage to Lucrecia 'es en verdad [...] premio al arte de don García' (p.727b).

<sup>23</sup> Paterson, 'Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*', p.363. For the speech referred to here, see *OC*, pp.322c-23a.

lies - and Paterson deals fully with these - the contrast between them is no less important.

Unlike García's lies, in which, as we shall see, satirical themes are presented implicitly and often at García's expense, Tristán's speech is consciously satirical - Paterson describes it as 'a mildly Juvenalian indictment of the venal commerce in sexual favours', and, like most good satire, it makes use of wit and humour to offer moral advice, in this case, advice about the pitfalls of the court - a function proper to Tristán in his rôle as *consejero* to don García.<sup>24</sup> In fact, as a literary object, Tristán's speech appears to have a number of exemplary qualities. Composed and performed for García's benefit (*provecho*), it also gives pleasure (*gusto*). Much of this pleasure derives from the surprise (*admiración*) produced by the inventiveness of its conceits. However, whilst an element of *admiración* is indispensable to the *conceptista* style in which the speech is set, the successful conceit requires another crucial ingredient, and that is a feeling that the surprising images generated in the conceit are underpinned by a basis of reason.<sup>25</sup>

The relationship between imagination and reason in such *conceptista* poetry goes beyond the balance of invention and verisimilitude which El Pinciano considered necessary to prevent the collapse of *admiración* into *risa*, and corresponds to his concept of allegory as the basis of didactic literature. Tristán's speech is exemplary because it pursues a didactic aim - instructing García - by

---

<sup>24</sup> Paterson, *ibid.* Tristán's rôle is assigned to him in the following manner: '[Beltrán:] Dueño tienes/ nuevo ya de quien cuidar./ Sirve desde hoy a García;/ que tú eres diestro en la corte y él bisoño./ [Tristán:] En lo que le importe/ yo le serviré de guía./ [Beltrán:] No es criado el que te doy,/ mas consejero y amigo./ [García:] Tendrá ese lugar conmigo' (I.1.11-19 [= *OC*, II, 381]).

<sup>25</sup> Douglas Gifford encapsulates the difference between *conceptismo* and *culteranismo* when he writes: 'it is, very broadly speaking, true to say that *conceptismo*'s appeal was strictly intellectual while *culterano* writing, as the seventeenth-century rhetoricians saw it, was a good deal concerned with external sensorial effects.' (See P.E. Russell (ed.), *Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies*, (London: Methuen, 1973), p.32).

means of an allegorical method - his astrological survey of the women of Madrid, a *tour de force* of *conceptismo*. In Tristán's speech, therefore, one encounters not a single level of descriptive imagery or narrative action, but a balanced arrangement of image and interpretation which serves to reveal the virtues, vices and degrees represented by its subjects.

Although there is nothing obscure about Tristán's satirical conceit, García's subsequent speeches and actions suggest that he has misunderstood its purpose. Thus, rather than moving with caution through the mercenary and uncertain world of sexual commerce which it describes, he immediately launches into it, claiming to be a *Perulero* and offering to give the first lady to catch his eye whatever she wants from the nearest jeweller's - thereby proving himself to be a careless 'reader' as well as an irresponsible 'author'.

\* \* \*

Some critics, such as Castro Leal and Urbina, have been so entertained by García's lies that they have suggested that Alarcón sought to make don García the hero as well as the protagonist of the play, yet there is a good deal of evidence to show that Alarcón intended his audience to disapprove of don García's mendacity, however much it has to offer by way of social comedy. In fact, when one turns from a consideration of the dramatic effect of García's lies to an examination of their content, many of the details imply that Alarcón's attitude towards his protagonist was one of moral criticism.

For example, it seems unlikely that a contemporary spectator would be unaware, as he listened in fascination to García's description of the costly delights

with which he claims to have entertained his lady on the banks of the Manzanares, that such opulence was in direct opposition to the dourly censorious attitude towards ostentation which featured prominently in the campaign for moral reform of the 1620s.<sup>26</sup> This contrast between the corrupt manners of Court society and the conduct advocated by those who would reform it underlies the the majority of García's lies because, in such a society, his desire to outdo others inevitably leads him to imitate, and to attempt to surpass, the ostentatious and brazen behaviour of his peers. The result, at least in part, is a comically and dramatically effective caricature of the postures struck by those who sought to imitate the behaviour of the upper echelons of Spanish society in order to re-invent themselves or to conceal their origins. The double irony in this is that such posturing is counter-productive, revealing what it would conceal, and that, as the eldest son of a wealthy aristocratic family García should have no need of it.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the lies which García tells in the course of the play repeatedly signal both his moral and his social ignorance: he tells

---

<sup>26</sup> See Paterson: '[In García's] lie, concerning the riverside party [...] it is tempting to identify conspicuous consumption as the target of satire [...] Alarcón's audience was already subject to the severe admonitions of the reformers of the 1620's with respect to ostentation, a contemporary issue not missed by the play when García himself advertises the virtue of wearing the simple collar [I.3.237-84 (= OC, II, 387-88)]. In that atmosphere, for García to glorify lavish junketing could well be a means of condemning it' ('Reversal & Multiple Role Playing', p.364).

<sup>27</sup> Cf Amezcuá, 'La poética del desenlace', pp.31-32. In his study of the play, Brett Levinson argues that social posturing of this sort played an essential part in protecting even *cristianos viejos* against the threat posed by malicious accusations of 'impure' blood. 'The difference between 'falsely honorable' New Christians and 'truly honorable' old Christians in seventeenth-century Spain was *not* the difference between appearance and reality [... Since] even those nobles who 'really were' Old Christians had to practise simulation and dissimulation, put on appearances and cover themselves'. See Levinson, 'The Management of the Estate', p.175. Whilst the picture drawn by Levinson of the social obligations incumbent upon the aristocracy of Golden-Age Spain is compelling in itself, it will not, I think, serve as a blueprint for Alarcón's play, which I take to be more idealistic in conception (even if those ideals become rather foggy in practice), and to promote a system of moral values that prizes authenticity, moderation and discretion over simulation, exaggeration and ostentation - an approach which has much in common with the aims of those who sought to overcome society's economically and morally damaging addiction to vainglorious self-projection. Thus, when Beltrán - adopting a traditional and ultimately Stoic position - tells García that true nobility is not a matter of social posturing (or indeed, of inherited titles), but of exemplary moral virtue, I take Beltrán to be sincere, and regard him as expressing the views of the author on this issue. I also note here that, in his conception of nobility, as in everything else, García shows an inability to distinguish between appearance and substance, sign and sense.

his father that he is going out to play cards (when he is in fact going out to fight a duel (II.4.1199-1200 [= *OC*, II, 414]); he tells don Juan that he has been courting a married woman, thereby implying that he has committed adultery (II.11.1796 [= *OC*, II, 431]); and he tells Tristán not only that he has killed his friend in a duel (III.7.2768-69 [= *OC*, II, 459]) but also that he knows a magical cure for wounds and even that he speaks Hebrew better than Castilian (III.8.2790, 2808 [= *OC*, II, 460]). All these details indicate how far his compulsion to outdo others has led him away from the moral orthodoxy of seventeenth-century Spain.<sup>28</sup>

\* \* \*

Whilst I agree with Paterson that ‘García’s act is a vessel for satirical comment’ on the *mores* of the society in which he lives, I also think that Alarcón’s interest in moral issues goes beyond topical satire, and that, in this and other plays, his treatment of such issues is shaped by an interest in a moral philosophy of a more formal sort.<sup>29</sup>

I am not perhaps the first to take this view; it is implicit in studies of *La*

---

<sup>28</sup> Gambling was much criticised by moral writers of the time, as María Isabel López Bascañana notes: ‘El juego era causa no sólo de disturbios familiares, sino de pendencias y violencias sin fin. Los avisos de Pellicer y Barrionuevo nos traen continuas anécdotas de esta faceta del mundo de la hampa’ (Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, *El pasajero*, II, 505, n.127). See also José Deleito y Piñuela, *La mala vida en la España de Felipe IV* (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1948), pp.216-44, and Alonso Remón, *Guía y avisos*, p.172.

As regards magical cures, Deleito y Piñuela notes in another work that: ‘Se practicaba frecuentemente entre soldados el curarse llagas y heridas sin más que poner sobre ellas un poco de lienzo, pronunciando a la vez algunas palabras especiales. Los teólogos censuraban también este uso como diabólico, y Martín del Río lo presenta, además, como materialmente pernicioso, en estos términos: “Las curas que hacen los soldados tan repentinamente, tengo por cosas averiguada, y sin género de duda, que es por tercera operación del demonio, y es pecado muy enorme y grave [...]”’ (*La vida religiosa española bajo el cuarto Felipe* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1952), pp.218-19).

<sup>29</sup> See Paterson: ‘Consciously or unconsciously García sets and conducts a scene that demonstrates a certain impurity in urban *mores* [... His] act is a vessel for satirical comment on the value-system dominant in gentrified Madrid’ (‘Reversal & Multiple Role Playing’, p.364).

*verdad sospechosa* by James F. Burke and E.C. Riley.<sup>30</sup> In the former, Burke argues that García's 'banquet lie' (I.8) is a version of Renaissance *topos* of 'the Banquet of Sense', and concludes that, in the figure of don García, Alarcón is presenting 'a subtle interplay' between two philosophical views: the 'medieval' view (expressed by Augustine, Aquinas, and Raymond Sebond) that the faculties of the 'rational soul' are distinct from those of the 'sensitive soul' (one of which is imagination), and the Renaissance or 'modern' view that 'reason is no more than a refinement of sense'.<sup>31</sup> In the latter, Riley draws attention to the similarities between Alarcón's portrayal of don García and the theories of character expressed in a number of Renaissance texts, and concludes that *La verdad sospechosa* is modelled on contemporary ideas about natural and moral philosophy.<sup>32</sup>

Although both Burke and Riley focus on the behaviour of a single character (don García), I will argue that the interest in moral philosophy they implicitly attribute to Alarcón is not only expressed in his portrayal of don García, but that it

---

<sup>30</sup> See James F. Burke, 'The "Banquet of Sense" in *La verdad sospechosa*', in *Hispanic Studies in Honour of Alan D. Deyermond: A North American Tribute*, edited by John S. Miletich (Madison, Wisconsin: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval studies, 1986), pp.51-56, and Riley, 'Alarcón's *Mentiroso* in the Light of Contemporary Theories of Character'.

<sup>31</sup> Riley, *ibid.*, p.55. See also Frank Kermode, 'The Banquet of Sense', in his *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp.84-115. In his discussion of this *topos*, Kermode refers to a number of English Renaissance texts, including Jonson's drama, *Poetaster*, in which the Banquet of Sense is associated with the figure of the poet Ovid, 'a poet of talent but dangerously immoral, and strongly contrasted with Horace whom, a little earlier, we have heard commending the frugal feasts of Scipio Africanus' (p.89). If Alarcón is indeed working within the same tradition as Jonson (and the other authors and artists cited by Kermode), this would lend a particular significance to Jacinta's comparison of García's tales to 'las fábulas de Ovidio' (II.16.2139 [= *OC*, II, 441]). Indeed, throughout Alarcón's work, allusions to Ovid's poetry are commonly associated with passionate error or characterised by linguistic excess, whilst echoes of Horace are associated with the satirical correction of such vices and with the theme of honour-virtue. See Serge Denis, *La langue de J.R. de Alarcón* (Paris: Droz, 1943), pp.178-80, 298-99, 304.

<sup>32</sup> '[In *La verdad sospechosa*] Alarcón depicts a 17th-century 'psychological case [...] the ideological context of the play is the same as that of the *Guzmán* and many a theological *comedia* of the time' (Riley, 'Alarcón's *mentiroso*', p.297). The list of texts referred to by Riley includes: Juan Luis Vives, *De instrumento probabilitatis* (1555); Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de ingenios para las ciencias* (1575); Lucas Gracián Dantisco, *Galateo español* (1580); and Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* (1605).

also plays a significant part in determining the larger shape of the *comedia*. Moreover, whilst, as Burke and Riley have noted, there are several near-contemporary accounts and explanations of the behaviour of liars which offer to shed light on the character and motivation of Alarcón's *mentiroso*, I believe that it is not to these that one must turn to understand the underlying conceptual framework of the play, but to Aristotle's *Ethics*, Augustine's two treatises on lying, *De mendacio* and *Contra mendacium*, and to the *Summa Theologiae* of Aquinas. It need not be supposed that Alarcón had a direct familiarity with any or all of these texts, since what they have to say, about lying for example, is present in a number of popular doctrinal works published (in Spanish) during the Golden Age.<sup>33</sup> Such works serve to illustrate how the discussion stemming from Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas had achieved wide currency and was readily available to those interested. Nor does it seem unlikely that Alarcón, with the educational background that he had, was familiar with this line of discussion or (in principle) that he had it in mind when working out the lineaments of his play. Let us therefore briefly consider what these authorities have to say about lying.

Aristotle's practice in the *Ethics* is to identify virtue or 'praiseworthiness' as belonging to a mean between 'excess' and 'defect'. When this approach is applied to lying, the mean is found in 'the man who [...] calls a thing by its own name, being truthful both in life and in word, owing to what he has, neither more nor less', whereas 'excess' is characterised by 'boastfulness', and 'defect' by 'understatement'. Though Aristotle states explicitly that falsehood is inherently base and culpable, and truth inherently noble and praiseworthy, he is nevertheless

---

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Pineda, *Diálogos familiares*, ed.cit. III, 212b-13b; and Ribadeneyra, who refers to Augustine's *Contra mendacium*, in his *Tratado del príncipe cristiano*, ed.cit. p.525a [= Book 2, Chapter 4].

prepared to draw a moral distinction between understatement and boastfulness which favours the former above the latter. In fact, Aristotle's criticism of 'understatement' is mild to the point of associating understatement with virtue. Thus, it is Aristotle's opinion that, if the truthful man should ever depart from the strict truth, he will incline towards understatement rather than boastfulness, because, to the virtuous, moderation is always more attractive than excess.<sup>34</sup> Having in this way effectively defined the boastful man as the opposite of the truthful man, Aristotle also assesses boasting on the basis of intention and judges some kinds of boasting to be more culpable than others; thus, lying for its own sake is less culpable than lying to gain reputation, which in turn is less culpable than lying for pecuniary gain.<sup>35</sup>

By contrast to the simplicity of Aristotle's scheme, Augustine gives eight kinds of lies, whilst Aquinas divides lies in three ways, firstly with respect to their nature as lies (this corresponds to Aristotle's division of lies into 'boasting' and 'understatement'), secondly with respect to their intent (whether they aim at injury or benefit to others - this category incorporates Augustine's eight kinds of lie), and thirdly, with respect to their actual effect.<sup>36</sup> Ultimately, however, Aquinas' summary supports the division of lies into three kinds: 'useful lies', that are told for the well-being of someone; 'humorous lies', that are told in fun; and 'malicious

---

<sup>34</sup> See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book IV, Chapter 7, in *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), II, 1778-80.

<sup>35</sup> 'He who claims more than he has with no ulterior object is a contemptible sort of fellow (otherwise he would not delight in falsehood), but seems futile rather than bad; but if he does it for an object, he who does it for the sake of reputation or honour is (for a boaster) not very much to be blamed, but he who does it for money, or the things that lead to money, is an uglier character (it is not the capacity that makes the boaster but the purpose) [...]; as one man is a liar because he enjoys the lie itself, and another because he desires reputation or gain', *ibid*, II, 1779 [= 1127b, 10-16].

<sup>36</sup> See Augustine, *De mendacio*, Ch.14. *PL* XL, 505; and Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, 61 vols. (London: Blackfriars/Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1972), IIaIIae, qu.110, art. 2-4 (XLI, 150-67).

lies', that are told out of malice.<sup>37</sup>

Aquinas also deals specifically with the matter of boasting (which he also regards as being opposed to truth), and considers its causes, which he identifies as arrogance and vanity.<sup>38</sup> He concludes that, like lying, boasting may be 'malicious', 'humorous' or 'useful' according to its cause, intention and effect. Thus, it is a 'malicious lie' if any of these are contrary to the love of God or one's neighbour, a 'humorous lie' if a man boasts simply for the pleasure of boasting, and an 'useful lie' if he does so for the sake of glory or gain, and without injury to others.<sup>39</sup>

It scarcely needs to be said that there are evident similarities between what Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas have to say about lying and Alarcón's portrayal of don García. Like Aristotle's boastful man, don García is given to exaggeration rather than understatement and 'claim[s] the things that [as he thinks] bring repute, when he has not got them, or [claims] more of them than he has'.<sup>40</sup> As regards Augustine's categorisation of lying, García's lies initially appear to belong to the fourth category, those that are told 'ex sola mentiendi libidine (out of sheer delight in lying)'.<sup>41</sup> According to Aquinas, lies of this sort proceed from a habit ('[...]

---

<sup>37</sup> These three categories, as well as Augustine's eight, are also enumerated by Pineda (*Agricultura cristiana*, vol.163, p.213a).

<sup>38</sup> 'Ex hoc enim quod aliquis interius per arrogantiam supra seipsum elevatur sequitur plerumque quod exterius majora quaedam de se jactet, licet quandoque non ex arrogantia sed ex quadam vanitate aliquis ad jactantiam procedat, et in hoc delectetur, quia talis est secundum habitum' (*ST*, IIaIIae, qu.112, art.1, ad 2).

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.* qu.112, art.2.

<sup>40</sup> García is indifferent as to whether his lies win him fame or notoriety ('Nómbrenme en todas partes/ y murmúrenme siquiera,' (I.8.863-64 [= *OC*,II, 404]) and in fact seeks to impress others with claims which, as I have already observed, run counter to the public morality of Golden age Spain.

<sup>41</sup> See Augustine, *De Mendacio*, Ch.14, *PL* XL, 505; and Aquinas, *ST*, IIaIIae., qu.110, art. 2. When don Juan refers to García's lies as 'consejas' and Jacinta compares them to 'las fábulas de Ovidio' they are effectively attributing them to the fifth category of lies identified by Augustine - the 'humorous' lie, which is told, not with the intention of being believed, but merely for the sake of giving pleasure ('Non enim ad hoc dicuntur hujusmodi mendacia ut credatur, sed propter delectationem solam', *ibid.*, qu.110, art.3. Later in the play, Jacinta cautions García that she will not tolerate lies of any other

quod procedit ex habitu [...]’) and are caused by vanity ([...] ex quadam vanitate aliquis ad jactantiam procedat’); both of these characteristics are present in García’s behaviour.<sup>42</sup> This fourth sort of lie is regarded by Aquinas as a sin which has its own measure of gravity without addition or diminution, and by Aristotle as contemptible, but futile rather than bad.<sup>43</sup>

If we consider García’s lies according the distinction drawn by Aquinas between cause, intent, and effect, we find: firstly, that they are motivated by arrogance and vanity; secondly, that they are intended to deceive; and thirdly, that they cause injury (albeit in the relatively mild form of shame) not only to others (don Beltrán, don Juan, Tristán) but also to himself.<sup>44</sup> In this view, García’s lies would more properly belong to the second category identified by Augustine - those that profit no one, and injure someone, a conclusion that both refutes García’s claim that his lying brings him both pleasure (*gusto*) and profit (*provecho*) (II.10.1734-9 [= *OC*, II, 429]), and confirms don Beltrán’s assertion that there is neither pleasure nor profit to be had from lying, but only infamy and scorn (II.9.1460-64 [= *OC*, II, 422]).

As for what Alarcón’s contemporaries had to say about lying, it is interesting that, whilst their ideas are evidently based on the Aristotelian and Thomistic

---

‘Pasar por donaire puede,/ cuando no daña, el mentir;/ mas no se puede sufrir/ cuando ese límite excede’ (III.6.2545-48 [= *OC*, II, 453]).

<sup>42</sup> In the play, don Felix remarks that don García: ‘Tendrá el mentir por costumbre/ y por herencia el valor (II.13.1911-12 [= *OC*, II, 434]). Other references of this sort are listed by Riley (pp.291-92), who also notes that García ‘habitually chooses a role that flatters his vanity’ (p.288).

<sup>43</sup> See Aquinas, *ST*, IIaIIae, qu.110, art. 2: ‘[...] ponitur quantum, quod habet propriam quantitatem sine additione vel diminutione’; and Aristotle, *Ethics*, Book IV, Chapter 7 [= 1127b, II.10-12].

<sup>44</sup> On two occasions García’s lies also threaten to result in injury of a more serious kind: In Act II, his lie about the banquet leads directly to a duel between himself and don Juan (II.11-12.1756-1843 [= *OC*, II, 430-32]), and in Act III, his exasperated father threatens to kill him if he refuses to marry Lucrecia (III.14.3091-93 [= *OC*, II, 469]).

traditions, they tend to emphasise the pleasurable and social aspects of lying, rather than its potential as a source of gain or injury. Thus, they portray the compulsive liar as a character who lies either simply because it pleases him to do so, as is the case in Gracián Dantisco's *Galateo español*, or out of a desire to impress others - whether by convincing them that his fraudulent claims to wealth or social status are genuine (as in Suárez de Figueroa's *El pasajero*), or by simply by his powers of invention (as in El Pinciano's *Filosofía antigua poética*).<sup>45</sup> Clearly, such an emphasis is also present in Alarcón's portrayal of García in *La verdad sospechosa*.

Whether they are considering mendacity from a moral or (as in the case of El Pinciano) an aesthetic point of view, all these authors also follow Aristotle in regarding it as indicative of some deviation from the mean, and as a form of excess. This is particularly true of Huarte de San Juan's *Examen de ingenios* (a work which is diagnostic rather than critical in intent), where the author regards an inclination to mendacity as a symptom of an overdeveloped imagination - one of the three principal faculties (the others are *entendimiento*, and *memoria*) to which Huarte attributes the character of any given individual.<sup>46</sup> In *La verdad sospechosa*, García

---

<sup>45</sup> See Gracián Dantisco: '[Son] tan amigos de dezir mentiras que las dizen sin tirar a algún fin de provecho, ni de daño, sino sólo porque la mentira de suyo les aplaze, como el bevedor de vino que lo beve muchas vezes, no por sed ni necesidad que tenga, sino sólo por la gula de beber. Y embriáganse tanto en el dezillas que, afirmando cosas imposibles quieren ser creídos' (*Galateo español*, edited by Margarita Morreale (Madrid: CSIC, 1968), p.125); Suárez de Figueroa: '[d]esean autorizarse [...] con afirmar de sí muchas cosas, tan nuevas como las del Hipocentauro o Fénix, jamás vistos. Juzgan por punto de grande estimación se crea dellos lo que suele ser propio de los más ilustres por sangre, sea o no acción virtuosa la que se aplican. Já[c]tanse de haber jugado y perdido mucho, sin haber tomado jamás naípe en la mano. Que dieron a damas grandes almuerzos, meriendas o cenas, siendo todas fantásticas [...] Que sacaron galas costosas de la Puerta de Guadalajara, siendo no más que antojos' (*El pasajero*, II, 570); and El Pinciano: '[...] la admiración es de mucha importancia para el poema, porque, en la verdad, es causa grande del deleyte; y de aquí nace que los hombres deste siglo sean tan mentirosos; los quales por poner admiración dirán que vieron bolar vn buey. [...] Todo este trueco y mentira hazen los hombres a fin de adular con la admiración' (*Philosophía antigua poética*, II, 103-04).

<sup>46</sup> Huarte's understanding of the operation of the imagination upon the passions is interestingly discussed in relation to the modern concept of 'metatheatre' in a study of Calderón's drama by Bruce W. Wardropper ('La imaginación en el metateatro calderoniano', in *Actas del tercer Congreso Internacional de Hispanistas, Mexico, 1968* (Mexico: UNAM, 1970), pp.923-30). In the same study, Wardropper claims that, in the case of don Gutierre in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*, 'La imaginación [...]

lacks not only *entendimiento*, as Riley suggests (op.cit., p.5), but also *memoria*, as is evident when he forgets the name of his fictional father-in-law (III.2 [= *OC*, II, 444]). In the following scene Tristán makes the apposite remark that: ‘El que miente ha menester/ gran ingenio y gran memoria’ (III.3.2277-78 [= *OC*, II, 445]) - this combination of qualities is one which, according to Huarte, liars rarely possess.<sup>47</sup>

One interesting consequence of this approach, as regards our identification of don García with the ‘bad’ poets, is that it leads Huarte to place liars and poets in the same category (‘cierta diferencia de imaginativa, que convida al hombre a ficciones y mentiras’).<sup>48</sup> He can do so because he associates poetry with the imagination, which he regards as both distinct from (and possibly opposed to) the rational faculty of *entendimiento*.<sup>49</sup> It comes as no surprise therefore that, when Huarte seeks to demonstrate the importance of *la imaginativa* in the temperaments of readers and authors, he selects examples which feature both *comedias* and

---

exacerba la facultad irascible a la vez que le pervierte la prudencia natural para convertirla en una astucia maligna. No hay ni entendimiento ni devoción para enfrenar la imaginación traidora’ (p.929). Later, Wardropper adds that: ‘En muchas obras de Calderón la imaginación, operando en el enamoramiento (acto de la facultad concupiscible) o en la venganza (acto de la facultad irascible), es origen de la ficción concebida por sus personajes’ (ibid.). The relationship between imagination and passion described here by Wardropper, and its association with fiction as a corrupt form of prudence, seem as relevant to *La verdad sospechosa* and to Alarcón’s work in general as they do to Calderón’s drama.

<sup>47</sup> As we have seen with regard to Burke’s study of the play, in the Aristotelean and Thomistic traditions imagination was a faculty belonging to the sensitive soul, and understanding a faculty belonging to the rational soul; it is not uncommon therefore to find lying represented as a subordination of reason to appetite.

<sup>48</sup> Riley, ‘Alarcón’s *mentiroso*’, p.288.

<sup>49</sup> ‘En el catálogo de las ciencias que pertenecen a la imaginativa pusimos al principio la poesía, y no acaso ni con falta de consideración, sino para dar a entender cuán lejos están del entendimiento los que tienen mucha vena para metrificar. [...] Donde hay mucho entendimiento, forzosamente ha de haber falta de imaginativa, a quien pertenece el arte de componer’ (Juan Huarte de San Juan, *Examen de los ingenios para las ciencias* [Baeza, 1575], edited by Guillermo Serés (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989), pp.403-05. In this remarkable study of the components of character, Huarte makes it clear that he does not consider *imaginación* to be an inherently bad or dangerous quality. Indeed, he is inclined to present it in a positive aspect. Nevertheless, his description of the ideal man in a state of maturity shows the imaginative, rational and recollective capacities (*imaginativa*, *entendimiento*, and *memoria*) to be in balance, as they clearly are not in the case of don García (See *Examen*, p.574).

chivalric romances, the popular literary forms associated, as we have seen in the previous chapter, with irrationality, *admiración*, and the tastes of the *vulgo*, and in consequence widely regarded by moralists as examples of ‘bad fiction’.<sup>50</sup>

Whilst the arguments set out above add to what Riley and Burke have to say about the intellectual background to Alarcón’s portrayal of don García, nothing has yet been said about the influence of this background on the larger structures of the play. It will be remembered that Aristotle placed the mean of truthfulness between boasting and understatement, and I have argued that Alarcón’s portrayal of don García seems to reflect the former extreme, that of excess. I will now suggest that *La verdad sospechosa* also presents a version of the latter extreme (which, as I have already observed, Aristotle did not regard as fundamentally opposed to truthfulness), and that the form in which this is presented reflects the opinion of Augustine and Aquinas, who regard it as lawful to hide the truth prudently, by keeping it back.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, I will argue that the contrast between the two kinds of untruth presented by Alarcón in this play suggests an interest on the part of the author in the nature of Prudence.

Aquinas identifies eight components of Prudence: memory (*memoria*), understanding (*intellectus*), reasoned judgement (*ratio*), foresight (*providentia*),

---

<sup>50</sup> ‘[...] [s]i a un muchacho destes le damos [...] un pliego de papel escrito en metro para representar alguna comedia, a dos vueltas que le dé se le fija en la cabeza. Estos se pierden por leer en libros de caballerías [...] y otros así; porque todos éstos son obras de imaginativa’ (ibid., p.406). ‘[Había] un caballero español cuyo entretenimiento era escribir libros de caballerías porque tenía cierta diferencia de imaginativa, que convida al hombre a ficciones y mentiras’ (ibid., p.420).

<sup>51</sup> Augustine, *Contra Mendacium*, Ch.10, *PL* XL, 553; Aquinas, *ST*, IIaIIae., qu.110, art.3 ad 4: ‘Licet tamen veritatem occultare prudenter sub aliqua dissimulatione, ut Augustinus dicit’. See also IIaIIae., qu.109, art.4, in which Aquinas follows Aristotle in regarding understatement as less harmful to truth than exaggeration, and states: ‘[H]aec virtus declinat in minus. Hoc enim ut Philosophus dicit ibidem, videtur esse prudentius, propter onerosas superabundantias’; and IIaIIae., qu.111, art.1: ‘[S]icut aliquis verbo mentitur, quando significat quod non est, non autem quando tacet quod est, quod aliquando licet, ita etiam simulatio est, quando aliquis per exteriora signa factorum vel rerum significat aliquid quod non est, non autem si aliquis praetermittat significare quod est’.

circumspection (*circumspectio*), caution (*cautio*), ingenuity (*solertia*), and a readiness to accept sound advice (*docilitas*). All of these qualities are absent from García's conduct. We have already seen that he lacks both *memoria* and *entendimiento*, and that he habitually subordinates reason (*razón*) to appetite (*gusto*). But this is not all; he also lacks foresight, circumspection and caution, lying without thought to the consequences of his lies, and laying himself open to discovery at every turn.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, his confidence in his ability to deceive others is such that he is unable to entertain the notion that he is also capable of being mistaken, with the result that, whilst he is only too willing to give advice to others, he is deaf to most of the good advice given him by Tristán and to all of that offered by his father.<sup>53</sup>

By contrast with don García (and with what we know about the social *mores* of the privileged classes in the 1620s), the society represented by the other characters in *La verdad sospechosa* sets little store by ostentatious behaviour, and sets a high value on reason and restraint. Among these characters, however, two stand out as particular examples of Prudence: one is don Juan, who learns the value of taking good advice (and later offers it to others); the other is Jacinta, who illustrates the virtue of Prudence in all its aspects, but most particularly in her caution (*recato*) - a quality that is essential in the world of the play, where appearances frequently deceive, and where the danger of error is increased when the

---

<sup>52</sup> When Tristán reports on García's conduct to don Beltrán in Act II, his words make clear García's imprudence, and his inclination towards excess: '[Tristán:] Tiene un ingenio excelente/ con pensamientos sutiles;/ mas caprichos juveniles/ con arrogancia imprudente/ De Salamanca reboza/ la leche, y tiene en los labios/ los contagiosos resabios/ de aquella caterva moza:/ aquel hablar arrojado,/ mentir sin recato y modo,/ aquel jactarse de todo,/ y hacerse en todo extremado. /[...] / Pues lo peor falta agora:/ que son tales [sus mentiras], que podrá/ cogerte en ellas cualquiera' (II.5.1238-54 [= OC, II, 415], my italics).

<sup>53</sup> Not even García's undeniable ingenuity or wit (*ingenio*) can be counted as a part of Prudence, because Prudence is properly a practical rather than an intellectual virtue, and García's wit is not of a kind which leads to right action.

passions are involved.<sup>54</sup>

Both don García and don Juan are accompanied by *consejeros* (Tristán, don Félix), whose role is to offer them advice when it is required. If a willingness to take good counsel is a part of Prudence, as Aquinas asserts, then the extent to which don Juan and García are prepared to listen to their companions may be taken to provide a measure of their virtue in this aspect. We have already mentioned that Don García frequently ignores Tristán's advice (particularly if it goes against his own inclination), preferring to judge matters on the basis of his own desires, but what of don Juan?<sup>55</sup>

Don Juan's behaviour is at first very similar to García's, as we see when he rejects don Félix's warning that García's account of the banquet does not tally with the facts as they have them ('[Juan:] ¡Rabio de Celos! [Félix:] No os dieron/ del convite tales señas. [Juan:] ¿Qué importa, si en la sustancia,/ el tiempo y lugar concuerdan?' (1.6.757-60 [= OC, II, 400])). Juan's jealous fears about Jacinta's fidelity cause him not only to give undue credence to García's tale, but also to draw the erroneous conclusion that Jacinta has played him false with García, thereby

---

<sup>54</sup> In Act I, Tristán warns his master of the deceptive nature of appearances: '[...] que suele dar quien se arroja/ creyendo las apariencias./ en un pantano cubierto/ de verde, engañosa yerba' (1.8.801-04 [= OC, II,403]); and García himself admits that judgement is impaired by emotion both in Act II, when, having deceived his father, he exclaims '¡Qué fácil de persuadir/ quien tiene amor suele ser!' (II.10.1744-45 [= OC, II,429]), and in Act III, when he pretends to have made a mistake about Lucrecia's identity: 'Los antojos/ de un ardiente amor, señora,/ me tienen tan deslumbrado,/ que por otra os he tenido./ Perdonad; que yerro ha sido/ desa cortina causado;/ que como a la fantasía/ fácil engaña el deseo,/ cualquier dama que veo/ se me figura la mía' (III.6.2575-82 [= OC, II,454], my italics).

<sup>55</sup> Also relevant in this context is the sin of precipitation (frequently signalled in this play by the verb *arrojarse*) which, according to Aquinas, is (1) opposed to the gift of counsel, (2) against reason and (3) the result of arrogance or passion. See *ST*, II-IIae., qu.53, art.3 (on 'praecipitatio') and art.4 (on 'inconsideratio'). Both failings lie at the heart of García's crucial mistake about Jacinta's name, an incident which, as Leonard M. DiLillo has observed, is not an accident, but a direct consequence of García's flawed moral character. García rashly assumes that the matter in question (the identity of the ladies in the coach) can be determined on the basis of a subjective opinion (which of the women is the more beautiful), and stubbornly disregards Tristán's repeated attempts to call his master's attention to the possibility of error and his sensible suggestion that he verify the ladies' identities. See Leonard M. DiLillo, 'Moral purpose in Ruiz de Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*', *Hispania*, 56 (1973), 254-59 (p.254).

leading him to accuse her of infidelity and to challenge him to a duel. His actions at this point are not based on a considered appraisal of his situation but stem directly from his jealous impulses; they are therefore precipitate, ill-advised, and consequently imprudent. His imprudence is accurately diagnosed by Jacinta, who accuses him of being either mad or '*mal informado*' (that is, in a state of extreme subjectivity, or acting on false information), and even García criticises don Juan for his lack of circumspection, when he rebukes him for issuing a challenge without first ensuring that he had a genuine grievance to settle.<sup>56</sup>

Unlike García, however, don Juan is prepared to learn from his experiences (another part of Prudence) and accepts the sententious but in this case sound advice he is offered. That he has done so is apparent in the following scene, where he receives a full report from don Félix concerning both the real *fiesta* by the Manzanares and don Juan's movements since his arrival in Madrid the previous day, which proves that Jacinta is blameless and that don García is a liar. This is a turning point for don Juan, who immediately recognises his former error and resolves not only to apologise to Jacinta without delay but also to treat anything don García says in future with suspicion, demonstrating at once both humility and caution, the opposite of García's '*arrogancia imprudente*'.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the fact that the figure of don Juan is the most obvious counterpoint to don García, he is in fact less influential in determining the course of the plot and

---

<sup>56</sup> '[Don García:] Pésame que sin estar/ del caso *bien informado*,/ os hayáis determinado/ a sacarme a este lugar/[...]/ [...] mirad de aquí adelante,/ en caso tan importante,/ don Juan, cómo os *arrojáis*./ Todo lo que habéis de intentar/ primero que el desafío;/ que empezar es desvarío/ por donde se ha de acabar' (II.11.1788-91, 12.1837-43 [= *OC*, II,431-32], my italics). Here, as elsewhere, García offers to others advice which he would do well to heed himself.

<sup>57</sup> It is appropriate, therefore, that the next time don Juan appears on stage (III.xii, p.339b), it is to provide don Beltrán with the information which exposes García's account of his wedding in Salamanca as a lie, and finally disabuses don Beltrán about his son's character.

less fully representative of the virtue of Prudence than Jacinta. Described by her uncle, don Sancho, as ‘de prudencia [...] un espejo’ (I.9.941-42 [= *OC*, II, 406]), she is cautious and circumspect in everything she does.<sup>58</sup> Jacinta’s prudent conduct may be attributed to the fact that from the first (and unlike García, don Juan, and even don Beltrán), her actions are determined primarily by her reason rather than by her emotions.<sup>59</sup> That this is so is apparent in Act III when she comments on the relationship between love and belief; whilst for García belief is subject to love or desire (‘¡Qué fácil de persuadir/ quien tiene amor suele ser!’ (II.10.1744-45 [= *OC*, II, 429])), for Jacinta, the reverse is true, and love is based upon intellectual conviction (‘[...] es corta la jornada/ que hay de creer a querer’ (III.4.2389-90 [= *OC*, II, 448])). Because such conviction can only be based upon careful scrutiny of the available evidence, Jacinta treats every new development with a mixture of curiosity and caution, and advises her friend, Lucrecia, to do likewise, especially where don García is concerned: ‘[Jacinta:] [...] vé con prevención,/ que no te queda disculpa/ si te arrojas en amar,/ y al fin quedas engañada/ de quien estás ya avisada/ que sólo sabe engañar’ (III.4.2378-83 [= *OC*, II, 448])).

---

<sup>58</sup> Prudence is the defining aspect of Jacinta’s character, a fact that is reflected in a number of emblematic details in the staging of the play. Cf. Gaylord: ‘Jacinta’s social strategy finds its symbolic representation in the *celosía* behind which she positions herself in order to watch Beltrán’s son ride by in the street outside. With that advantage (‘para no arriesgar nada,’ as she explains), she can see out, but he cannot see in. ‘Like the *celosía*, the mask of prudence is transparent from the inside for its wearer, but does not permit any outsider access to intimate thoughts and desires’ (Malcolm-Gaylord, ‘Telling Lies’, p.234).

<sup>59</sup> Thus, whilst she is evidently not without feelings for don Juan (she calls him the ‘dueño de [sus] pensamientos’ and states that her love for him ‘vive en el alma asido’ (I.10.968, 973 [= *OC*, II, 407])), her reason tells her that the *hábito* on which their marriage depends may not be conferred, and that it makes no sense for her to abandon all prospect of marriage simply for the sake of a principle of constancy: ‘en un imposible intento/ no apruebo el morir de firme’ (I.10.989-90 [= *OC*, II, 408])).

The *hábito* is of fundamental importance because it constituted a guarantee of the holder’s *limpieza de sangre* (and of his financial credit) and serves in the play as a metaphor for don Juan’s nobility (but in terms of honour-virtue rather than of lineage). Thus, whereas in actuality the outcome of don Juan’s application would either confirm or disprove his suitability as a husband on racial and financial grounds, in the play, the *hábito* is conferred only after don Juan has proved his virtue by learning to restrain his wilful and passionate impulses.

But Jacinta also dissimulates by concealing her identity and her presence from don García on a number of occasions, so that not only does she arrange to watch him discreetly from behind a *celosía* as he rides with his father past her window, she also repeatedly uses her friend Lucrecia as a screen for her own activities, travelling in a coach which bears her arms, sending García a letter which Lucrecia has penned on her behalf, and speaking to him from Lucrecia's balcony; moreover, whenever she leaves her house she is always partially or fully veiled (*tapada* or *con manto*).<sup>60</sup>

The idea that Prudence requires one to veil the truth about oneself is a commonplace often justified by analogy with the need to clothe one's physical nakedness in the interests of decency - an idea perhaps hinted at by Alarcón in Act III, scene 12, when don Sancho explains that he will not ask Jacinta to come out and congratulate don Juan because she is not yet dressed: '[...] perdonad; que por estar desnuda,/ no la mando salir' (III.12.3006-07 [= *OC*, II, 466]).

In spite of the fact that Alarcón's presentation of Prudence in this play is clearly influenced by the Scholastic tradition, its emphasis is not religious but worldly - though its practical aspect does not prevent a degree of idealism. Nor is this sort of secularised prudence uncommon, as A.A. Parker confirms when he observes (having previously noted that writers in the Middle Ages did not commonly distinguish between Prudence and Discretion) that, from the Renaissance on, both terms had ceased to be directly connected with the spiritual life and had come instead to signify 'a worldly prudence or courtly refinement' - summed up by Castiglione as the ability to 'operare opportunamente' (*Il cortegiano*, Book 2,

---

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Gracián's remark in *El Discreto* that 'La verdad [es] una doncella tan vergonzosa cuanto hermosa, y por esto anda siempre tapada' (Baltasar Gracián, *El Discreto*, in *Obras escogidas de filósofos*, BAE, vol.65 (Madrid: Ribadeneyra, 1873), pp.541-71 (p.549a) [= VIII, 'A buen entendedor']).

Chapter 13).<sup>61</sup> This is clearly in keeping with Alarcón's presentation of Prudence in *La verdad sospechosa*, where its religious significance is as nothing besides its utility as a means of preserving individual reputations and social harmony. Further similarities between Alarcón usage of *prudencia* and Parker's description of *discreción* are apparent when Parker provides a list of the comprehensive range of meanings carried by *discreción* in the work of Cervantes: 'It can mean intelligence, reasonableness; moderation, restraint; accommodation (not only fitting one's actions and speech to particular circumstances, but also 'changing colour when it is expedient'); astuteness; caution; foresight; courtesy; ready wit; correctness, elegance, and conciseness in speech'.<sup>62</sup> Even closer to Alarcón's presentation of Prudence in *La verdad sospechosa*, however, is that offered by Baltasar Gracián in his *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia*, where Prudence is frequently associated with acts of concealment and dissimulation whose purpose is to preserve the reputation (and the freedom of action) of the individual concerned.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, the kind of prudence exemplified by Jacinta - and practised to a greater or lesser extent by all the characters in the play except García - presents moral and practical problems of its own. Whilst it is undoubtedly reasonable to be cautious in a world in which appearances deceive, and to be suspicious of the claims made by a man who is a proven liar, Jacinta's attempts to discover the truth about

---

<sup>61</sup> Parker summarises the medieval definition of Prudence as follows: 'It is right reason applied to conduct, an intellectual habit enabling a man to see at any given time what is good and evil and how to follow the one and avoid the other. It directs the intention towards a worthy end, and enables the reason to discriminate and judge rightly between possible means of attaining it' (Parker, *No hay más fortuna que Dios*, pp.82,87).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.87-88.

<sup>63</sup> See especially the maxims numbered: 13 ('Obrar de intención, ya segunda, y ya primera'), 98 ('Cifrar la voluntad'), 181 ('Sin mentir, no decir todas las verdades'), and 220 ('Cuando no puede uno vestirse de piel de león, vístase la de la vulpeja'), Baltasar Gracián, *The Oracle: A Manual of the Art of Discretion: 'Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia'*, translated and edited by L.B. Walton (London: Dent, 1953), pp.58, 120, 186, 216.

don García often involve an element of deception which only serves to deepen the already dense atmosphere of suspicion and confusion.<sup>64</sup>

Despite this, however - and in absolute contrast to the treatment of don García by the playwright - there is *no explicit criticism* of such stratagems within the play, and even don García admires Jacinta's *agudeza* and *astucia* - although he characteristically assumes that it is intended to deceive someone other than himself (III.7.2634-37 [= *OC*, II, 456]). Indeed, the fact that Alarcón refers to Jacinta as *prudente* rather than as *discreta* may itself imply a degree of commendation, since (where they make a distinction) writers in the Golden Age distinguish between *discreción* and *prudencia* on the grounds that the former is open to misuse (because it is essentially an intellectual quality and so available to the malicious as well as the well-intentioned), whereas the latter is always directed towards virtuous ends: 'Nunca la prudencia, como la que es tan alta y principal virtud, trata sino de aquellos medios que para buen y virtuoso fin sean; donde la discreción trata de los medios y maneras para bien, sino igualmente los que son para mal'.<sup>65</sup>

\* \* \*

The closing scenes of the play are laden with clues which suggest that

---

<sup>64</sup> Thus, whilst Jacinta's repeated attempts to scrutinise García without revealing either her presence or her identity appear to foreshadow Gracián's advice that 'El más plático saber consiste en disimular' and that 'Lleva riesgo de perder el que juega a juego descubierto' (*ibid.*, p.120), her prudent dissimulation is only partially effective, allowing her to scrutinise García without risk to her honour, but causing her to believe that García is lying at times when he believes that he is telling the truth, and preventing García from realising that he has made a mistake about her identity until it is too late.

<sup>65</sup> Dámaso de Frías, *Diálogo de la Discreción*, in *Diálogos de diferentes materias inéditas hasta ahora*, *Colección de escritores castellanos*, 161, (Madrid, 1929), p.42. See also Aristotle *Ethics*, Book VI, Ch.12, 1144a, ll.24-28 (ed.cit., vol.II, p.1807). If intentions are important, therefore, and García claims that they are (I.4.461-72 [= *OC*, II,393]), then he again suffers by comparison with Jacinta, since, whilst he ostentatiously creates fictions for his own pleasure, Jacinta never tells an outright lie, but discreetly conceals the truth about herself in order to discover the truth about García.

moderation and truth are once more in the ascendant. The action takes place in a garden at the house of Lucrecia's father, don Juan de Luna, where dinner is soon to be served. Time, place and dialogue are all significant: the first, because the promise of a convivial dinner (which will soon become a wedding feast) suggests friendship and concord, and because the evening cool contrasts with the heat ('el calor/ del ardiente y seco estío' (I.1.3-4 [= *OC*, II,380]) which marks don García's arrival in Madrid; the second, because the garden traditionally represents the harmonious management of nature by art (and passion by reason); and the third, because the dialogue between don Juan and don Sancho is marked by an emphasis on moderation and good sense, as they decide to dine in the garden rather than by the Manzanares.<sup>66</sup> This scene is followed by the arrival of don Juan de Sosa with the news that the *hábito* for which he has waited for so long has at last been conferred, which further adds to our sense that the play's *desenlace* is imminent. Moreover, both of these brief and apparently trivial scenes are marked by a concern for good manners which indicates the restoration of normal relations within the social circle whose customarily decorous demeanour don García has done so much to disturb since his arrival in Madrid. Within this tableau of good-manners, Alarcón is careful to phrase the congratulations offered to don Juan so that they serve as a general statement about the resilience of the truth which has a wider resonance within the play:

---

<sup>66</sup> '[Don Juan de Luna:] Mejor será que en ese jardín mío/ se nos ponga la mesa, y que gocemos/ la cena con sazón, templado el frío./ [Don Sancho:] Discreto parecer. Noche tendremos/ que dar a Manzanares más templada;/ que ofenden la salud estos extremos' (III.10.2979-84 [= *OC*, II, 465]). This apparently trivial scene is also significant because it contrasts directly with García's lie about the banquet by the Manzanares in Act I.

Don Juan de Luna	Por cierta cosa tuve siempre el vencer; que el cielo ayuda la verdad más oculta: en ser premiada dilación puede haber, pero no duda. [...]
Don García	Pudo, señor don Juan, ser oprimida de algún pecho de invidia emponzoñado, verdad tan clara, pero no vencida [...] Del hábito gocéis encomendado como vos merecéis y yo deseo'. <sup>67</sup>

In such a context, García has only three options: to reform, to conform, or to be punished. In the event, he conforms ('La mano doy, pues es fuerza' (III.14.3107 [= *OC*, II, 470])), but in accepting (albeit ruefully) an authority beyond his own *gusto*, he takes his first step away from his earlier 'arrogancia imprudente'.

\* \* \*

*La verdad sospechosa* is an undeniably elegant and complex comedy, rendered problematic and even paradoxical by multiple ironies and subtle chains of causality. The audience in the theatre is doubtless enchanted by García's ingenious and brazen lies, and simultaneously bewildered and delighted by the mushrooming complexity of their unforeseen consequences. Yet Alarcón is evidently not content merely to entertain his audience, since he repeatedly undermines the dramatic appeal of García's fictions by showing them to be unnecessary and self-defeating, and by allowing those closest to García to criticise the young man for his arrogance, imprudence and immaturity. Moreover, he works into the fabric of the lies themselves a series of inlaid details which serve to confirm such explicit criticisms

---

<sup>67</sup> III.12.3008-11, III.13.3030-36 [= *OC*, II, 466-67]. These last words of García's have a significance which he does not intend, and yet, as García will soon find out, the dénouements of Alarcón's *comedias* reward their characters as they deserve rather than in accordance with their desires.

of García's character. The effect of this is that, as the play progresses, García's mendacity emerges as only the most striking symptom of an essentially imprudent personality in which reason is habitually subordinated to desire and imagination. Moreover, the play also contrasts García unfavourably with don Juan - who learns Prudence as he develops a capacity not only to overcome his passionate impulses but also to take and to give good counsel - and with Jacinta - whose cautious conduct illustrates a less open, more subtle (and arguably more unsettling) side of Prudence.<sup>68</sup> The contrast between García's lies and Jacinta's stratagems is of primary importance as far as the present study is concerned, because, through it, and despite the overt criticism of lying in the play, Alarcón seems to lend his approval to a form of deception, albeit one which is characterised by the discreet concealment of the truth and a circumspect approach to the claims made by others.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, in his treatment of García's lies, Alarcón's moral criticism is not directed against the the liar *per se* but against the literary and social practices of the age, condemning them as symptomatic of a society that has forsaken prudence and moderation for the reckless pursuit of empty and vainglorious goals.

*La verdad sospechosa*, therefore, is more than an entertainment provided by a liar, and more than a straightforward moral criticism of lying; its complexity demands that it be examined with all the prudent caution advocated by Tristán or Jacinta since the audience cannot afford to follow García in ignoring the relevance of the remarks made during the play concerning the deceptive nature of appearances

---

<sup>68</sup> García is also contrasted with Tristán, who is referred to in the course of the play as a *consejero* (I.1.18 [= OC, II, 381]), and as *prudente* (III.7.2716 [= OC, II, 458]), and upon whom he comes to depend as a witness as his own credibility declines (III.i.2151-62 [= OC II, 441], III.9.2952-56 [= OC, II, 464]).

<sup>69</sup> Whilst both García and Jacinta practise deception in the play, García is criticised for his mendacity and the faults of character which give rise to it, whilst Jacinta receives only praise for her ingenuity, discretion, and prudence.

and the need for circumspection.

In implicitly rejecting a style of writing which pursues *admiración* alone (whether this is achieved by excessive ornament or frantic action) *La verdad sospechosa* affirms the long-standing view of literary theorists that a good piece of writing was one in which the reader was obliged to look beneath the surface to find a hidden meaning which it was his task to interpret.<sup>70</sup> In this regard, Alarcón's dramatic technique has much in common with his wider moral outlook.

Whilst it is important to our understanding of *La verdad sospechosa* to determine the nature of don García's error and the degree of his guilt, it is ultimately an issue of subordinate importance. The central question posed by Alarcón in *La verdad sospechosa* is rather: 'what kind of fictions (if any) are acceptable within the moral code of an aristocratic society?', and it is an issue which he pursues throughout a number - perhaps the majority - of his works. In the chapter which follows, therefore, I shall examine another of Alarcón's best-known comedies *Las paredes oyen*, and I shall argue that it poses the same question, albeit in a modified form, so that it seeks to determine what kind of satire is acceptable in such a society. In *Las paredes oyen* as in *La verdad sospechosa*, it will be seen that the solution involves the prudent use of dissimulation as well as the less unusual but equally important virtues of patience and constancy, and that active deceit is again

---

<sup>70</sup> See Pineda, *Agricultura crisitiana*, I, 68 [= Diálogo I, ch. 30]; '[L]os poetas fingieron [...] aquellas sus narraciones para encubrir muchas verdades assí naturales como morales (y es estilo de sacra Escritura), por las dar a estimar al vulgo, que las tuviera en poco si en lenguaje llano y claro las hallara'. It is also interesting to note that both Augustine and Aquinas distinguish lying from fiction on the grounds that 'anything done figuratively is no lie', provided that there is a clear match between the sign (*signum*) and the thing signified (*signatum*): 'Sicut Augustinus dicit, *quidquid figurate fit aut dicitur, non est mendacium. Omnis enim enuntiatio ad id quod enuntiat referenda est; omne autem figurate aut factum aut dictum hoc enuntiat quod significat eis quibus intelligendum prolatum est.* ([...] Every statement is to be related to what it is declaring, and everything done or spoken figuratively does declare what it means to those to whom it is tendered for their understanding' (*ST*, IIaIIae, qu.110, art.3, ad 6. The reference to Augustine here is to *Contra Mendacium* Ch.10, *PL* XL, 553).

criticised, whereas clear approval is given for the use of dissimulation as a defensive strategy to prevent vice or error.

## Chapter 3

### Alarcón's Criticism of Satire in *Las paredes oyen*

In the previous two chapters, I have argued that Alarcón's plays show him to have taken a serious interest in the moral and social status of fiction, and that they raise the possibility that there are certain kinds of fiction, and even certain kinds of deceit, which are not merely acceptable within the moral code of the aristocratic society envisaged by Alarcón, but are even possessed of a particular kind of utility in that context.

As regards *La verdad sospechosa*, I have sought to show that in his most famous play Alarcón both distinguishes between two different approaches to literary fiction, assessing both their style and content in moral terms, and introduces a concept of prudent dissimulation which also serves as a correlative to his own dramatic technique.

In the present chapter, I will argue that very similar concerns underlie the composition of another of his best-known works, *Las paredes oyen*, and that, like *La verdad sospechosa*, this play deals with literature (and the satirical mode in particular) in its moral and social aspects, and in a manner which implicitly advocates the use of certain kinds of deception for virtuous ends. I aim to show that the argument of *Las paredes oyen* presents a systematic appraisal of a range of approaches to moral criticism (which includes both slander and satire), by means of which Alarcón defends his own role as a writer of moral satires for the stage and simultaneously refutes the personal criticisms levelled against him by his enemies and literary rivals.

*Las paredes oyen* is a successful comedy of situation, presenting two parallel plots concerned with rivalry in love. The primary plot centres on doña Ana and her two suitors, don Mendo and don Juan, whilst the secondary plot features another *dama*, Lucrecia, don Mendo and a *conde*. Besides those features which were expected and enjoyed by the audience in the *corrales*, such as love intrigues, (attempted) rape, swordplay, and disguise, the play also contains an obvious moral ('[...] cuánto vale el hablar bien' (III.17.2922 [= OC, I, 292])) which is demonstrated when don Mendo's predilection for making slanderous remarks ultimately costs him not only the love of both Ana and Lucrecia but also the friendship and patronage of the Duke of Urbino. However, whilst the *desenlace* undoubtedly serves to confirm the play's criticism of slander on moral grounds, the inclusion of a character such as don Mendo also allows the dramatist to introduce into the play a significant element of satire and gossip which held an obvious appeal for an audience and which has been used by dramatists for this purpose since the time of Greek Old Comedy. Thus, in this play, as in *La verdad sospechosa*, we find that an element that holds a particular appeal for the audience (scandalous slander/ extravagant lies) is also criticised and ultimately condemned by the dramatist. This is a conflict which is explained in the course of the play, as Alarcón distinguishes between different kinds of satire according to their motives, means and consequences.

In discussing *Las paredes oyen*, I shall initially concentrate on three aspects of Alarcón's dramatic technique which help to reveal the underlying argument of the play: the first of these is his careful arrangement of the action so as to bring out a number of significant contrasts and similarities between the characters; the second is his insertion into the play text of monologues and discussions which say more than is required simply to advance the action; and the the third is his inclusion of details and

episodes of an emblematic or allegorical kind which develop the argument of the play in a manner which is both implicit and graphic. A brief outline of each of these aspects of Alarcón's dramatic technique will serve as an introduction to the play as regards both its dramatic content and its conceptual framework and will indicate why I believe it necessary to view this play in the context of contemporary statements about the nature and function of literary satire and its relation to slander.

The two principal themes of *Las paredes oyen* are slander and mendacity, and they are focussed in the primary plot and the secondary plot respectively. Thus, the primary plot, which concerns the rivalry of don Juan and don Mendo for the hand of doña Ana, presents a clear contrast between don Mendo's scathing and scandalous remarks and the generosity and discretion of don Juan, whereas the secondary plot sets Mendo's attempts to conceal his intention to marry doña Ana from Lucrecia against the *conde's* efforts to undeceive Lucrecia by providing her with evidence of Mendo's deceit. Despite these thematic differences, however, both plots culminate in the undeceiving of the *damas* and show how a nexus of *engaño* and passionate desire (whose object is don Mendo) is resolved through experience (constituted by the dramatic action), which fosters a more rational outlook and a more genuine form of love, consecrated in the marriages of the *desenlace* as both *damas* choose their husbands on primarily rational grounds. Nevertheless, the process by which the truth is revealed (i.e. the process of undeceiving) differs as between the primary and secondary plots, so that in the secondary plot it is revealed directly, whereas in the primary plot it is arrived at by the characters in the play only through the prudent use of dissimulation. This division closely matches the contrast in *La verdad sospechosa* between the two kinds of Prudence practised by don Juan de Sosa and Jacinta respectively.

As regards the second aspect of Alarcón's technique which I have mentioned above, the play contains number of discussions concerning the dangers of slander, as well as two monologues of a satirical nature. Most of these speeches are placed in the mouth of the *gracioso* Beltrán, and in performance were no doubt delivered to considerable comic effect. Indeed, the popular appeal of satire has already been noted; yet they also make an important contribution to the overall argument of the play, since, in addition to providing examples of a particular kind of satire, they show how easily the utterance of moral nostrums can shade almost imperceptibly into satire, and degenerate thence into calumny.<sup>1</sup> This last point lies at the heart of Alarcón's criticism of satire in this play, since the very purpose of satire - which, according to the poetics of the time, was moral correction - is threatened if satire cannot reliably be distinguished from slander. Nevertheless, this link, and careful distinction, between satire and slander appears to have gone unnoticed in previous studies of *Las paredes oyen* - an oversight which I hope to rectify in the course of this chapter. First, however, I will deal with the third of the aspects of Alarcón's technique enumerated above - the emblematic episode.

The idea that imaginative literature might, and even that it should, convey truths by figurative as well as a literal means, was a central commonplace of literary discourse in the Golden Age. As we have seen, such figurative expressions are regarded as a form of dissimulation whose purpose is to entertain and to instruct the sophisticated reader (*discreto lector*) as he deciphers their meaning. There is no reason, however, why we should think of this principle as confined to non-dramatic poetry, or, in the *comedia*, to dialogue alone, since dramatic action may convey a figurative meaning to

---

<sup>1</sup> Beltrán is an insistent critic of slander within the play, but he is also a satirist and accused on at least one occasion of making slanderous comments himself. The issue of distinguishing between satire and slander is also rendered problematic by the fact that some of don Mendo's speeches appear to be more satirical than slanderous.

paintings of Velázquez and Rubens, and the devices which fill the emblem books of the age, all bear witness to the sophisticated allegorical language of visual art. The fascination of the Golden Age with the art of allegory and its correspondence to the deceptive nature of the sensible world is nowhere more apparent than in Gracián's *Criticón*, in which Gracián's protagonists declare both the universally allegorical nature of the sensible world, and the difficulty of arriving at the truth in such a world:

La dificultad la hallo yo en leer y entender lo que está de las tejas abajo, porque como todo ande en cifra y los humanos corazones estén tan sellados, inescrutables, asegúroos que el mejor lector se pierde. Y otra cosa, que si no lleváis bien estudiada y bien sabida la contracifra de todo, os habréis de hallar perdidos, sin acertar a leer palabra ni conocer letra, ni un rasgo ni un tilde. - ¿Cómo es eso? - replicó Andrenio -, que el mundo todo está cifrado?<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Alarcón's plays therefore, it is wise to be alert for 'lo que está de las tejas abajo', whether it is expressed in verbal or visual terms. As I judge it, it is Alarcón's practice to include in his works scenes which have a particular figurative significance. The interpretation of such scenes presents even greater difficulties for the modern critic than it did for Alarcón's contemporaries but it should not for that reason go unattempted, particularly when, as in the case of the episode I am about to discuss, the interpretation corresponds to the argument of the play as a whole. Indeed, if my interpretation of this episode is correct, it illustrates a means of moral criticism in positive contrast to the verbal satire featured in the play, and so helps to shed light on the nature of Alarcón's attitude to satire in general.

The episode in question concerns don Mendo's attempted rape of doña Ana on

---

<sup>2</sup> Baltasar Gracián, *El criticón*, edited by Santos Alonso (Madrid: Cátedra, 1984), pp.611-12 [= Crisi 4 'El mundo descifrado'].

the road between Madrid and Alacalá de Henares. To facilitate this, don Mendo tries to bribe doña Ana's coachmen (who are actually the Duke and don Juan in disguise) to halt the coach at a given point along the way. Instead of provoking an unseemly quarrel by revealing their true identities there and then, or appearing either slanderous or indiscreet themselves by warning doña Ana of the threat to her honour, don Juan and the Duke feign acceptance, accompany doña Ana on the road, and intervene to defend her virtue, driving away her assailants.

As regards its relevance to Alarcón's discussion of satire in this play - and in particular to his identification of a solution to the problem of how to write dramatic satire that is both morally exemplary and dramatically effective - the essential details of the episode are as follows: Juan and the Duke are noble, yet they assume an ignoble and disreputable disguise in which they accept money from one who seeks to satisfy his illicit desires, before chastising him in such a way that he is ashamed to publish his own disgrace, thereby punishing vice and defending virtue *without damage to the reputations of those concerned*.

Though in performance this episode would no doubt come across as exciting, fast-moving, and even somewhat risqué - that is, as typical *capa y espada* fare - in metaphorical terms, the objective pursued and the disguise adopted by Juan and the Duke correspond to the ends and means of the noble satirist, in whose work vice is castigated without scandal through the use of a mode which conventionally adopted a low style.

I will say more about this episode later in this chapter, but will turn now to a consideration of how satire was perceived by Alarcón's contemporaries so as to provide a more precise context for my subsequent statements.

\* \* \*

Almost all the *preceptistas* of the Spanish Golden Age include a section on satire in their 'Poetics'. Moreover, since they all derive their ideas from the same Classical and Renaissance sources, there is considerable conformity in their views. Thus, as Alvin Kernan points out in his study of Elizabethan satire, the 'collective opinions [of the theorists] about the origin and nature of satiric writing constitute a theory of satire and, implicitly, a prescription for writing it'.<sup>3</sup>

However, the *preceptistas* had a problem on their hands. In its simplest form it concerned the etymology of the term *sátira* itself, which derived either from the Greek *satyros* (or satyr play) or from the Roman *satira* (a satirical miscellany, usually written in hexasyllables). Thus, it was either Greek or Roman, dramatic or non-dramatic. This might have remained simply a question of literary history or semantics, were it not for the well-known fact that the ancient Greeks had imposed a ban on the performance of satyr plays to prevent further public scandal.<sup>4</sup> This was clearly grist to the mills of those who sought to use the power of the law to bring about the permanent closure of the *corrales* - and who might well argue that the modern *comedia* was all too prone to reverting to the illicit and satirical type from which it derived.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, there are

---

<sup>3</sup> These sources included works by Aelius Donatus, a fourth-century Grammarian, and such Italian neo-Aristotelians as Castelvetro, Minturno and Scaliger. See Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), pp.54-55. See also Lia Schwartz Lerner, 'Golden Age Satire: Transformations of Genre', *MLN*, 105 (1990), 260-82 (pp.265, 280-81).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Lope de Vega: 'Ya todos saben que silencio tuvo,/ por sospechosa, un tiempo la comedia,/ y que de allí nació también la sátira,/ que, siendo más cruel, cesó más presto/ y dió licencia a la comedia nueva' (*El arte nuevo*, p.288, ll.97-101); and López Pinciano: '[Ugo:] la sátira dió principio a la cómica, y que, por huyr los poetas de aquélla, quando era activa y personada, dieron en ésta; o, si queréys más, echados por las leyes, dexaro[n] la sátira y tomaro[n] la cómica' (*Philosophía antigua poética*, I, 236).

<sup>5</sup> '[Maestro:] Díchome han que estos días los representantes o los que componen las farsas han dado en hacer en ellas algunas sátiras atrevidas [...] haciendo con libertad y descortesía y aun desenfrenamiento burla y mofa de todo. [Regidor:] Grande mal y atrevimiento me parece esse, mas perdonadme que os

frequent references in the anti-theatrical literature of the time to the increasingly satirical nature of the plays performed in the public theatres.<sup>6</sup>

It was therefore in the interests of those whose aim it was to legitimise the wider art of poetry not only to dissociate contemporary dramatic satire from ancient satyr plays (and the Old Comedy which gave rise to them), but also to play down the thorny issue of dramatic satire altogether, and to concentrate instead on the imitation of Horace, Juvenal, Persius and Lucilius - or at least of their less contentious qualities.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, in the 'poetics' of the Spanish Golden Age, non-dramatic satire is dealt with more extensively than its dramatic counterpart. This fact notwithstanding, there is no reason why the greater part of what the *preceptistas* have to say about non-dramatic satire should not also apply to satire in the *comedia*.

What most concerns us as regards *Las paredes oyen* is, on one hand, the connection between literary satire and the social vice of slander, and on the other, the difference between them.

The position taken by the theatre's detractors is straightforward; they regard the

---

atajo: podría ser que, como no hay mal que no venga por bien, se picassen de tal manera con esto los interesados, que diesen todos en que se vedassen las comedias' (*Diálogos de las comedias*, p.77 [= Diálogo 4]). There is evidence to suggest that at least some of the *preceptistas* were prepared to accept such arguments, albeit in a carefully modified form, and to support legislation that would prohibit *certain forms* of satire:

[Zoilo:] Pues causando tanto provecho com[o] decís las Sátiras, porque están vedadas y prohibidas? [...]

[Lectura:] Lo que está vedado justamente lo está, porque como las demás cosas vinieron los hombres a usar mal deste ejercicio, previrtiendo su fin que era aprovech[ar] en ofender e injuriar: porque ya con amor, ya con odio o codicia infamauan a personas inocentes, y descubrían secretas faltas y ocultos vicios cosa dignísima de ser vedada y castigada [...] y allende de la honra que ansí robaban hazían tanto daño estas perjudicales Sátiras que muchos se ahorcaron de verse co[n] ellas afrentados [...] Y assí justame[n]te fueron prohibidas semejantes Satyras' (*Cisne de Apolo*, II, 65-66 [= Diálogo 3, §12, 'De las Satyras']). My emphasis.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Lupericio Leonardo de Argensola, who complains of 'la libertad con que en estas comedias se hacen las sátiras', *Memorial sobre la representación de comedias* (1598), included in Jesús María's *Las excelencias de la castidad*, pp.847b-54b (p.854b).

<sup>7</sup> See López Pinciano, *Philosophía antigua poética*, III, 234-35.

satirical elements in the *comedia* as no different from slander, and as presenting an additional threat to the well-being of society.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, certain passages suggest that it would be more appropriate to refer to satire in terms of the (more serious) offence of libel rather than slander, since the only distinction they draw between *murmuración* or *maldecir* and *satirizar* is that the last is set down in writing:

[...] Todos los ociosos en las cortes y grandes ciudades se deleitan con oír a los murmuradores, de suerte que parece que descansan de sus cuidados en la ofensa de otros. Hay algún género de enfermedad que halla alivio en el agravio del tercero, la invidia de aquél inquieta el ánimo de éste, y tiene templanza con desacreditar al merecimiento. La muerte y la vida están pendientes de la lengua y aun esto no es el mayor daño, porque el temor de que serán oídos y castigados reprime las pasiones; mas cuando la pluma desembarazada de recelos y con silencio quiere tomar venganza, cuando las sátiras se derraman, los libelos se publican, es la desdicha mayor. [...] porque todos llevados de la dulzura del verso, del concepto, las leen y encomiendan a la memoria adonde viven eternamente inmortales.<sup>9</sup>

Faced with charges of this sort, the theatre's apologists defend dramatic satire in the same way that they defend the *comedia* in general, distinguishing between two kinds of spectators (*discretos/vulgos*) and authors (poets/poetasters) by the criterion of rationality. This enables them both to admit that satire may be abused so as to become slanderous, and to contend that it is not inherently so.<sup>10</sup> In the case of satire, however,

---

<sup>8</sup> José de Jesús María speaks of '[una] manera de comedia que se llamó sátira adonde [...] se pudiesen reprehender y murmurar las faltas ajenas' (*Las excelencias de la castidad*, pp.807b), and the *Diálogos de las comedias* allude to 'algunas sátiras atrevidas [en las farsas] en que por vía de pasquines sacan en público las cosas que se murmuran en la corte [...]' (p.77 [= Diálogo 4]), whilst Leonardo de Argensola mentions '[...] sátiras a diferentes estados de gentes y naciones, que por fuerza han de engendrar odio contra la española' (*Memorial sobre la representación de comedias*, p.854b). My emphasis.

<sup>9</sup> Juan Pablo Martir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes y vida de Rómulo* (Madrid, 1626; repr., edited by José Antonio Maravall (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1945), pp.123-24 [= Chapter 22]).

<sup>10</sup> '[Lectura:] Sátira se llama la compostura en que se reprehende o vitupera algún vicioso o algún vicio. Pero ya está recibida por murmuración, apodo, o matraca, y por fisgar por malicia de los que en nuestros tiempos usan mal dellas' (Carvallo, *Cisne de Apolo*, I, p.62). See also Vicente Espinel: '[Unos] llaman satírico de pocos años a esta parte al que tiene ruin lengua [...] Las sátiras no nacen de la ponzoña

they also draw a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of satire on grounds of intent.

The theorists therefore commonly begin their discussions of satire with a reminder to the would-be satirist that *his aim must be to reprehend vice and not to spread malicious gossip*. As their subsequent remarks typically point out, the surest means of achieving this aim is not to attack particular individuals but rather the vice itself. Aside from its greater general utility - a point which is made with understandable emphasis - this approach protects the satirist from accusations of malice and the danger of provoking the enmity of others.<sup>11</sup>

Because of these hazards, particular caution is called for if the writer is to disregard this principle and mention specific individuals, and the *preceptistas* typically suggest three possible approaches: either the targets of the satire must be of a sort that presents no threat to the satirist (such as commoners, the inhabitants of distant lands, or those long deceased); or their identity must be disguised in such a way as to make them recognizable only to those of his own party; or the satirist must write in an 'obscure' style, so that his satire becomes implicit rather than explicit.<sup>12</sup> When these

---

de la lengua, sino del celo de reprender un vicio, que por ser insensible en sí, se reprende en quien lo tiene' (*Vida de Marcos de Obregón*, edited by Samuel Gili Gaya (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1969), p.237).

<sup>11</sup> Perhaps in answer to those who sought to legislate against satire, its apologists frequently defend its utility by comparing it to the public humiliation of wrongdoers that was customary under the penal code of the time. 'Reprender la sátira, cuando las materias son generales y toca en vicios escandalosos de la república, es quitar a los vicios públicos su castigo público' (Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo, *Don Diego de noche* (Madrid, 1623), fol 105r.). See also Carvallo, *Cisne de Apolo*, II, 64. Satires of this sort are also frequently equated with sermons: 'Que en los [tiempos] passados [la sátira] sufriera reprehender los vicios, como ahora lo es el de los sermones de los predicadores. Y por esto Oracio llama a sus satyras sermones. Y el verdadero oficio de los Poetas Satýricos es el que oy tiene[n] los predicadores.' (Carvallo, *ibid.*, II, 62). See also Cascales, *Tablas poéticas*, pp.180-81; and Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, II, 156-57 [= II.16].

<sup>12</sup> For examples of these aspects of the defence of satire, see: Carvallo, *Cisne de Apolo*, I, 62-69; Cascales, *Tablas poéticas*, p.180; and López Pinciano, *Philosophía antigua poética*, I, 172-83, 227; II, 289-90, and III, 232-43. Lope is also an advocate of the 'obscure' style here: 'En la parte satírica no sea/ claro ni descubierto [...]' (*El arte nuevo*, p.299, II.341-42).

conditions are not observed, however, satire ceases to be distinguished from slander - at least in lexical terms - and becomes synonymous with *murmurar*, *maldecir* and their cognates.

However, as López Pinciano observes, the problem with such indirect approaches is that the primary appeal of satire lies in attacking the vices of individuals: '[...] no será escuchado el poeta que no reprehenda a personas particulares, que de ay viene el deleyte mayor a esta especie de poética'.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis on pleasure is also evident in Alonso Jerónimo de Salas Barbadillo's *Don Diego de noche*:

Y como aquella parte [el teatro] se ha hecho campo de murmuración, y en ella, *por entretener al pueblo, se dicen muchos chistes y donaires satíricos*, es fuerza encontrarse con las costumbres de todos para variar las materias y *dar con esto mayor deleite*, con que viene a ser, no comedia, sino sátira general, y, al fin, una honda que tira a todos, y tan aprieta, que cuando yo me estoy riendo de ver que sacudió al que estaba a mi lado, ya él se consuela en su daño en el golpe que yo he recibido, no menor que el suyo. Y son los hombres de tan perversa naturaleza, que por no dejar de *alegrarse* en el daño de su prójimo, pasan *con gusto* en la propia fatiga. Que esto requiera pronto remedio es indubitable [...].<sup>14</sup>

In this way, vituperative satire comes to be associated not only with slander, but also with entertainment and pleasure as opposed to utility, and with passion rather than reason. Thus, as well as describing the reaction of the audience to satirical attacks on

---

<sup>13</sup> El Pinciano, *Philosophía antigua poética*, III, 238-39. It is noteworthy that Pinciano is careful to use the verb 'reprehender' rather than 'murmurar' to describe the action of this sort of vituperative satire at this point. Later, however, Fadrique refers to satire as 'maldezir' (ibid., p.240).

<sup>14</sup> Salas Barbadillo, *Don Diego de noche*, fols. 103v-04r (my emphasis). The passage quoted forms part of a mock trial of the *comedia* which takes place on Mount Parnassus. The case against the *comedia* is presented by Momos, refuted by Cicero, and judged by Seneca. Needless to say, the *comedia* is acquitted, and Momos bound over to keep silent (fols 103r-06r). Momos, as Salas was no doubt aware, was commonly thought of as the god of slander. Ludwig Pfandl describes him as 'el dios antiguo de la calumnia de la intriga y de las injustas censuras' (*Cultura y costumbres del pueblo español de los siglos XVI y XVII* (Barcelona: Araluce, 1929), p.193).

individuals in terms of *gusto* and *deleite*, contemporary criticism of satire also commonly portrays the satirist as compelled to write by an irrational, and even an obsessive impulse - something we may observe in the character of don Mendo.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, such critics also frequently complain about the satirist's lack of restraint and respect for decorum, and allude to his excessive *licencia* or *libertad*.<sup>16</sup>

It is not surprising, therefore, that the satirical mode is also commonly regarded as inherently base.<sup>17</sup> This is not generally because it deals with 'hombres viles e infames', as López Pinciano suggests, but rather because such satires are themselves

---

<sup>15</sup> Espinel speaks of the 'hambre y sed de la ruin lengua' (*Vida de Marcos de Obregón*, p.271), and Carvallo asserts in his *Cisne de Apolo* that the Classical satirists: 'Ya con amor, ya con odio o codicia infamaban a personas inocentes [...]' (II, 65-6). Similarly, el Pinciano introduces his discussion of the part played by the 'afectos' in the composition of poetry in general, with examples which repeatedly connect the writing of vituperative satire with base and destructive passions: 'La ira, dize Horazio, que armó a Archiloco de iambos. La indignación, dize Iuuenal, que le hizo hazer versos. La codicia y el interés dize Persio, que hace a los cuervos y picaças poetizar. El odio hizo a Salaya hazer las diras y maldiciones,' (*Philosophía antigua poética*, I, 227).

In the *Persiles* (1617), Cervantes presents a similar portrait of the slanderous satirist in the character of Clodio, who declares: 'aunque soy murmurador y maldiciente, el gusto que recibo de decir mal cuando lo digo bien, es tal, que quiero vivir, porque quiero decir mal' (*Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, edited by Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce (Madrid: Castalia, 1970), p.120 [Book 1, Ch.14]). This association is reinforced by the fact that Cervantes introduces Clodio chained to the lascivious Rosamunda, since their shared exile serves as an indication that he equates Clodio's passion for satire with the sexual licence represented by Rosamunda: 'Su lengua [le] desterró de su patria en compañía de la torpe y viciosa Rosamunda, habiendo dado igual pena el rey de Inglaterra a su maliciosa lengua como a la torpeza de Rosamunda [...]' (*ibid.*, p.181 [= Book 2, Ch.5]).

The addiction to satire of some authors is also indicated in Alarcón's *comedia*, *El semejante a sí mismo*, which contains a satirical passage in apparent imitation of Quevedo's *Sueño del juicio final*. At one point in this passage, a poet is ordered to appear before the tribunal because he has made a satirical jibe against a tailor ('sastre'): '[...] por la gracia discreta/ le mandaron parecer./ Súpose que eran sus galas/ solamente murmurar,/ y mandáronle quemar / entre cien comedias malas./ Mas él, que no se desdeña,/ a truco de hablar, de arder,/ dijo, < ¿Malas han de ser?! A fé que no falte leña >' (III.8.2301-10 [= *OC*, I, 363]).

<sup>16</sup> Thus, Argensola condemns 'la *libertad* con que en estas comedias se hacen las sátiras [...]' (*Memorial sobre la representación de comedias* p.854b), and the anonymous author of the *Diálogos de la comedias* refers to: 'Sátiras atrevidas en que, por vía de pasquines, sacan en público las cosas que se murmuran en la corte [...], haciendo con *libertad* y *descortesía*, y aun *desenfrenamiento*, burla y mofa de todo' (*Diálogos de las comedias*, p.220). The same emphasis on licence is evident when Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo speaks of, 'la pluma *desembarazada de recelos*' and 'Iras que [...] *no se recatan* a la mayor modestia' (*Norte de príncipes*, p.124). My emphasis.

<sup>17</sup> Cervantes claims in the *Viaje del Parnaso*: 'Nunca voló la humilde pluma mía/ por la región satírica, bajeza/ que a infames premios y desgracias guía' (Cervantes, *El viaje del Parnaso*, edited by Elias L. Rivers, Clásicos castellanos (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1991), p.52, whilst Espinel remarks that a compulsion to gossip about one's neighbours is a trait ordinarily found in people of the lowest sort. See *Marcos de Obregón*, p.237.

vicious and damaging to the reputations of others, and particularly to those in positions of authority.<sup>18</sup>

There is one more point of significance to be made as regards the portrayal of the malicious satirist in the Golden Age; this is the fact that he is frequently referred to as 'discreto'. Thus, in the *Persiles*, Cervantes writes: 'por lo menos, al maldiciente agudo, si le vituperan y condenan por perjudicial, no dejan de absolverle y alabarle *por discreto*'.<sup>19</sup> In the Golden Age, *discreción* commonly referred to a certain intellectual capacity. As Parker points out: 'The primary meaning of the *discreción* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when not used in a theological context, can best be understood by reference to its antonym [...] 'necio''.<sup>20</sup> It is in this sense that it is most often used by Cervantes and others to describe the wit of the satirist. In *El coloquio de los perros*, however, Cervantes appears to use the word in a different sense, implying prudence as opposed to mere wit: '[Cipión: ...] No es buena la murmuración, aunque haga reír a muchos, si mata a uno; y si puedes agradar sin ella, *te tendré por muy discreto*', and it is significant that in this example *discreción* is seen to lie in abstaining from utterances of a satirical kind.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, in *Las paredes oyen*, it will be seen

---

<sup>18</sup> López Pinciano, *Philosophía antigua poética*, III, 234. By contrast, Suárez de Figueroa regards such attacks as a mark of ignoble character, and rebukes playwrights for seeking to settle personal scores through the medium of the *comedia*: '[Don Luis:] Es sumamente vil tan género de venganza, y jamás la intentan sino ánimos cobardísimos, y los que, según parecer de todos, son centro de cualesquier faltas y vicios' (*El pasagero*, II, 583). A concern for the effect of satire on the reputations of those in authority is apparent in the *Diálogos de las comedias*, p.77 (Diálogo 4)). It is important to note that contemporary satirical theory permitted the satirist to attack public vices, but not to publicise the private failings of others - such matters were to be treated with discretion.

<sup>19</sup> Cervantes, *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda*, p.181 [= Book II, Ch.5], my emphasis.

<sup>20</sup> Parker, 'The Meaning of 'Discreción'', p.77.

<sup>21</sup> In *Novelas ejemplares* (1613), edited by Juan Bautista Avallé-Arce, 3 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1987), III, 251, my emphasis). Moreover, Aquinas asserts in *ST*, II-IIae, qu.72, art.2, that if a man should criticise another with the aim of admonishing him ('forte propter correctionem'), he should observe discretion and pick his words carefully, lest, by speaking incautiously he might injure that other's reputation ('In quo tamen necessaria est discretio, ut moderate homo talibus verbis utatur, quia posset esse ita grave convicium quod per incautelam prolatum auferret honorem ejus contra quem proferretur [...]').

prudence of the other characters in the piece, most notably, don Juan and doña Ana.

As the passages I have cited above make clear, satire is presented by authors of all types as a dangerous mode, closely linked with slander and fuelled by base passions. It is fully sanctioned only where it seeks to reprove vice by targeting general abuses rather than particular offenders. Elsewhere decency and prudence require that the subjects of satire be disguised behind an ingenious veil of obscurity. The moral utility of satire is thus less frequently apparent than its baser parts, with the result that the satirist himself risks losing his own reputation as he goes about to expose others. This is the background against which the satirical practices employed by Alarcón in his own works must be set.

\* \* \*

For Alarcón, the issue of satire was not simply a theoretical one, but a matter of personal concern, since, as Willard King notes, he was himself the target of numerous satirical attacks from the pens of his contemporaries.<sup>22</sup> Such offensive verses must have placed Alarcón in a dilemma. As he was also a writer, he could easily reply in kind, and it appears that on at least one occasion he did, issuing a counterblast to

---

<sup>22</sup> 'Alarcón, deforme como era, inevitablemente fue blanco de muchos tiros. Los comentarios despectivos, los epigramas crueles, lo acompañaron hasta que se retiró de los círculos literarios hacia 1626', King, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: letrado y dramaturgo*, p.167. Hartzbusch presents an anthology of these lampoons, which typically take the form of unsophisticated but savage attacks grounded on Alarcón's physical deformity, in his edition of the plays (BAE vol. 20, pp.xxxi-xxxvi). See also Moreta and Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, p.88, for a list of the terms of (supposedly witty) abuse directed at Alarcón by his contemporaries. The best known, and most extensive, satirical attack against Alarcón is a *letrilla* from the pen of Quevedo who seems never to have tired of baiting the man he scornfully referred to as 'Corcovilla'. See, King, 'El 'Corcovilla' de Quevedo y el 'Pata Coja' de Alarcón', *ibid.*, pp.247-64. Other attacks against Alarcón are noted by Ruth Lee Kennedy in two articles: 'Tirso's Satire of Ruiz de Alarcón', *BCom* 16 (1964), 1-12; and 'Contemporary Satire against Ruiz de Alarcón as a Lover', *HR*, 13 (1945), 145-65. See also Lope's preface to his *comedia*, *Los españoles en Flandes*, in *Obras de Lope de Vega*, BAE vol. 26 (Madrid, 1969), pp.281-82; Suárez de Figueroa, *El pasajero*, pp.571, 647.

Quevedo in the form of a *letrilla* addressed to 'Patacoja'. Yet he must have been aware that in doing so he was sinking to a level little better than that of his savagely puerile detractors. To refrain entirely from replying, however, must have appeared intolerably passive.<sup>23</sup>

King describes Alarcón's response in terms which suggest that Alarcón's satirical practice was in accord with the theories put forward by the *preceptistas*, at least with regard to questions of dissimulation and restraint: 'Alarcón no contestó a insultos con insultos; se limitó a réplicas mesuradas, sin mención de nombres, entreveradas en los diálogos de sus comedias: los conocedores entenderían y celebrarían esas alusiones'.<sup>24</sup> In *Las paredes oyen*, however, Alarcón's refutation of his enemies' criticisms takes a more sophisticated form, as I will show.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>23</sup> However, according to Martir Rizo, even princes thought it best to feign indifference to such slights:

El nuevo código tiene una ley que dice: 'Si alguna persona poco modesta e imprudente se persuadiere que le han de consentir que con murmuraciones perversas y dañosas injurie la potestad imperial y siendo inferior a sus afectos reprendiere nuestro gobierno, no es nuestra voluntad que se procediere contra él, ni que sea castigado con rigor; porque si esto lo hace por flaqueza, es justo perdonarle, si por ser loco, se le ha de sufrir, si por injuriarnos, las ofensas se han de remitir y por esto determinamos que dejamos y aplicamos a nosotros mismos el conocimiento de esto delito, porque por la calidad de la razones y el autor de ellas sabremos si será lícito que se castigue o si con disimulación se ha de despreciar. [...] Concluyo que las ofensas de las sátiras, de los libelos, palabras disimuladas se olvidan y repetidas se hace mayor el agravio, de quien no se ha de tomar satisfacción por las razones que hemos referido, y así el príncipe, disimulando estos escritos, alcanzará venganza del atrevimiento, porque hay delitos que sólo en desprecio tienen satisfacción (*Norte de principes*, p.125).

<sup>24</sup> King, *ibid.* pp.168-69. Allusions of this type are to be found in at least two of Alarcón's comedias: *Los pechos privilegiados* (III.3.2164-92 [= *OC*, II, 722-23]), and *La cueva de Salamanca* (II.2.1226-36 [= *OC*, I, 423-24]). In the latter, he makes a telling remark about a satirist (whom King assumes to be Suárez de Figueroa), 'que por más honras que quita/ jamás le queda ninguna'. Literary concerns apart, the avoidance of explicit references to known persons was clearly wise in so litigious a country as Spain in the seventeenth century. Alarcón himself hints at this when in *El desdichado en fingir the gracioso*, Sancho, states his intention to speak ill of everyone, except notaries, of whom he dare say nothing (II.2.1059-60 [= *OC*, I, 685]).

As we have seen, the *preceptistas* sought to refute the universal condemnation of satire on the part of the theatre's detractors by drawing a clear division between legitimate satire, whose purpose was to reprehend vice (*reprehender*), and illegitimate satire, which sought only to damage the reputations of others by spreading slander (*murmurar*). It is surprising, therefore, that in *Las paredes oyen* Alarcón does not seem to make much of such lexical distinctions, and appears to regard *satirizar* as synonymous with *murmurar*, *maldecir* and *hablar mal*. Thus, in his use of these key terms at least, he is closer to the position of the theatre's critics than to that of its apologists.

Though the language of the play offers no obvious distinctions between different kinds of satire, this is not true of its structure, which presents satire in three significantly different forms - of which two are obvious and explicit, and one more subtle and implicit.<sup>25</sup>

The first form of satire brought to our notice by Alarcón conforms to the model of illegitimate (i.e. personal and vituperative) satire outlined above; its author aims to impress his audience with the sharpness of his wit, rather than seeking to correct vice, and impugns the reputations of others in doing so. Nevertheless, Alarcón does not present this as a literary form of satire but rather associates it directly with slander, describing it as *maldecir* and *murmuración*, with the result that, within the play, the impulse to make satirical remarks of this kind appears unambiguously as a vice. Despite this, however, it is embodied not by a base character but by the wealthy, aristocratic

---

<sup>25</sup> It is typical of Alarcón's dramatic technique that these three forms are presented through a set of contrasting characters whose alliances and rivalries, and whose ultimate punishment or reward in the *desenlace*, invite the audience to discriminate and to judge between them.

and handsome don Mendo.<sup>26</sup> This is a surprising piece of characterization in view of the fact that the satirical speeches in Alarcón's plays are usually given to the *graciosos*, and especially to those who are not the *hidalgos venidos a menos* considered to be distinctive of Alarcón's theatre. Nevertheless, in his portrayal of don Mendo, Alarcón appears to go against his usual practice by according noble status to a character with a satirical cast of mind and by endowing him with both wealth and affection.<sup>27</sup>

There are a number of possible explanations for this. Firstly, in a play which is so much concerned with slander and satire, it was clearly a practical necessity to have a character of this type in the primary plot, in which the protagonists commonly belong to the upper classes; secondly, Mendo's wealth and popularity enable the dramatist to indicate how little cause Mendo has to envy others and so to slander them; and thirdly, it allows him to present Mendo as a man with a good deal to lose by such behaviour, thereby lending emphasis to the *desenlace*.<sup>28</sup>

Whereas Alarcón presents illegitimate satire through the character of don Mendo, he presents legitimate satire through a less unusual character - the *gracioso* Beltrán. Though Beltrán's satire sometimes tends towards slander when he criticises don Mendo, it more often takes the form of a general critique of vices and mores (which

---

<sup>26</sup> '[Beltrán]: [...] aquesto de decir mal/¿es defecto cualquiera?' (I.1.75-76 [= OC, I, 209]); '[Beltrán:] En la corte hay un señor,/ que muchas veces oí,/ [...] / que está malquisto de modo/ por vicioso en murmurar,/ que si lo vieran quemar/ diera leña el pueblo todo./ ¿No conoces a don Mendo / de Guzmán?' (III.5.293-302 [= OC, I, 274]).

<sup>27</sup> The satirical bent of many of Alarcón's *graciosos* is particularly apparent in speeches by Zamudio in *La cueva de Salamanca* (II.2.1182-1236 [= OC, I, 422-24]), Sancho in *El semejante a sí mismo* (III.8.2238-2374 [= OC, I, 361-64]), and Cuaresma in *Los pechos privilegiados* (III.3.2164-95 [= OC, I, 722-23]).

<sup>28</sup> As I will explain subsequently, it is also possible that Alarcón had reasons of a more personal nature which led him to portray don Mendo as he did.

includes slander and malicious gossip), as well as plain-speaking and parody.<sup>29</sup> Despite the fact that he is not of *hidalgo* stock, Beltrán is not simply representative of the *vulgo*, since he has been educated and has an fondness for literary allusions, as Alarcón makes clear in the first scene: '[Beltrán:] Aunque sirviente, sabes/ que a ratos escribo y leo' (I.1.19-20 [= *OC*, I, 208]).

Beltrán's master, don Juan, provides us with the third perspective on satire in that he is essentially anti-satirical in his attitudes. His conduct and discourse are in complete contrast to that of his rival, since he refuses either to think the worst of others or to speak ill of them. Lacking don Mendo's wealth and good looks, don Juan is disdained by doña Ana, whereas Mendo is adored, yet he makes up in his conduct for what he lacks in fortune, so that whereas Mendo is arrogant and egotistical, Juan is humble and sensitive to the needs of others. His most apparent weaknesses, however, are his excessive reticence and his propensity for self-doubt. Nevertheless, as the play progresses, he gradually overcomes these personal failings and develops an ability to speak and to act effectively in the defence of virtue. The way in which he does so will be of considerable interest to the present study.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>29</sup> Beltrán's plain speaking is apparent in the opening scene when his master rebukes him for speaking ill of don Mendo: '¿No es eso murmurar?' and Beltrán replies: 'Esto es decir lo que siento' (I.1.78 [= *OC*, I, 209]). His liking for parody shows itself later in the act when Beltrán parodies the final tercet of his master's sonnet of amorous despair: '[Don Juan]: [...] Triste donde es el no esperar forzoso,/ donde el desesperar es la vitoria,/ donde el vencer da fuerza al enemigo./ [Beltrán:] ¡Triste donde es forzoso andar contigo,/ donde hallar que comer es gran vitoria,/ donde el cenar es siempre de memoria!' (I.6.331-33 [= *OC*, I, 216]). Beltrán's literacy and learning is evident from the very first scene (*OC*, I, 207-11), and in numerous literary allusions included in his speeches throughout the play; he cites lines taken not only from Classical authors such as Martial (II.2.1310-17 [= *OC*, I, 244]), but also from at least one of Alarcón's contemporaries, alluding ironically at one point to Góngora's *romance*, 'Amarrado al duro banco' (I.16.712 [= *OC*, I, 228]). We need not therefore doubt that don Juan is sincere when in Act II he remarks that Beltrán 'Es agudo y ha estudiado varios años [...]' (II.1.1144-45 [= *OC*, I, 240]).

The fourth major character in the play is doña Ana, a wealthy, aristocratic and virtuous widow. Loved by both don Mendo and don Juan, and therefore at the centre of the main plot, her responses to each of her suitors (and also to Beltrán in her conversations with him) mark out a series of judgements on the behaviour of these three characters which the audience are expected to follow, since they serve to emphasise the salient points of Alarcón's critique of satire.

When the play opens, doña Ana is in love with don Mendo, whom she intends to marry once she has completed certain *novenas* she has promised to observe in honour of San Diego. Although she is initially repelled by don Juan's appearance and makes fun of his declarations of love, her feelings towards him begin to change as she becomes increasingly aware of don Mendo's faults of character (slander/mendacity).

This process begins when she breaks off her *novenas* in Alcalá de Henares and comes back secretly to her home in Madrid in order to celebrate the midsummer feast of San Juan. Listening at a window overlooking the street, she overhears a conversation between don Mendo, don Juan and the young Duke of Urbino, to whom her two suitors are showing the sights of Madrid. On approaching doña Ana's house, a disagreement arises between don Juan and don Mendo regarding its occupant, whom both men believe to be absent. Concerned that if he praises doña Ana, he will arouse the interest of a potential rival, don Mendo savagely slights her both her beauty and her intellect, and is vehemently contradicted by don Juan who, unlike don Mendo, refuses to put his own interests before her reputation. Doña Ana is considerably shocked by what she has heard, and begins to reconsider her intention to marry don Mendo.

Though Mendo appears to believe that he is justified in seeking to deter a potential rival in this way, and subsequently attempts to explain his motives to doña Ana (III.15.2773-80 [= *OC*, I, 288]), she rejects his arguments on the grounds that

such acts are not to be judged on the basis of intention alone, but also on their effect: '[Doña Ana:] Digo que fue la intención/ con que hablaste mal de mí/ al duque, querer así/ librarme de su afición;/ más fue público el hablar;/ la intención oculta fue' (III.16.2847-52 [= *OC*, I, 290]).<sup>30</sup> Moreover, she makes it clear that, whatever one's motives, one should always employ legitimate means to attain one's ends (and closes her reproof with a pointed reference to the quality of *discreción* on which don Mendo so prides himself):

Doña Ana      Y agora te desengaña  
                     de cuán malo es hablar mal,  
                     pues con ser la causa tal  
                     y el fin tan bueno, te daña.  
                     Por el mal medio, condeno  
                     el buen fin: todo lo igualo;  
                     en que verás que lo malo,  
                     aun para buen fin, no es bueno.  
                     Tu lengua te condenó  
                     sin remedio a mi desdén:  
                     a toda ley, hablar bien;  
                     que a nadie jamás dañó.  
                     Con esto, si eres discreto,  
                     mudar intento podrás.<sup>31</sup>

In Act III, Mendo responds to doña Ana's growing coolness towards him by resolving to force himself upon her. I have already outlined the essential details of this episode, and argued that it has considerable emblematic significance within the

---

<sup>30</sup> Doña Ana's argument here appears to reflect what Aquinas says of slander in the *ST*: 'Contingit tamen quandoque quod aliquis dicit aliqua verba per quae diminuitur fama alicujus, non hoc intendens sed aliquid aliud [...] Et si quidem verba per quae fama alterius diminuitur proferat aliquis propter aliquod bonum necessarium, debitis circumstantiis observatis, non est peccatum nec potest dici detractio [...] nisi forte verbum quod dicitur sit adeo grave quod notabiliter famam alicujus laedat, et praecipue in his quae pertinent ad honestatem vitae. Quia hoc ex ipso genere verborum habet rationem peccati mortalis' (*ST*, IIaIIae, qu.73, art.2).

Without wishing to make this connection bear more weight than it can carry, a reading of the parts of the *ST* which deal with defamation and detraction seem as enlightening as regards what we find in this play as do the passages in which he deals with lying as regards the argument of *La verdad sospechosa*. Indeed, the frequency with which particular passages in the *ST* seem to shed light on the arguments of Alarcón's plays leads me to regard such comparisons as a means of analysis which is cumulatively persuasive as regards the serious and orthodox nature of the moral vision expressed in Alarcón's plays.

<sup>31</sup> III.16.2855-68 [= *OC*, I, 291].

argument of the play. However, it is also important as regards the development of the plot, since it both confirms doña Ana's rejection of don Mendo, and (when she discovers the true identity of the coachmen) convinces her of don Juan's virtue and devotion. Whereas her former love for don Mendo was based primarily upon the appeal of his appearance, her love for don Juan is founded upon a knowledge of his true character which has been confirmed by experience. This combination of emotional inclination and intellectual certainty enables her to resist not only don Mendo's subsequent attempts to win her back, but also the amorous protestations of the Duke who has fallen in love with her himself, so that she finally rejects both suitors and gives her hand to the virtuous don Juan.

\* \* \*

The incident on the Madrid road is, however, simply the most crucial of a number of episodes which make an important contribution to Alarcón's critique of various types of satirical discourse within *Las paredes oyen*. Of these, the first occurs when the young Duke of Urbino, a recent arrival in Madrid, commissions don Juan and don Mendo to show him around the capital.<sup>32</sup>

This episode also has a deeper significance; in enjoining his guides to provide

---

<sup>32</sup> '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 fé os escojo/ capitanes veteranos/ deste soldado bisoño./ Acompañadme los dos,/ advertidme lo que ignoro,/ decidme el nombre, el estado/ y la calidad de todos;/ y en lo de las cortesías/ principal cuidado os pongo,/ advirtiéndome que con nadie/ pretendo pecar de corto:/ que el señor siempre es señor,/ como Apolo siempre Apolo,/ aunque en lugares indignos/ entren sus rayos hermosos./ Lengua honrosa, noble pecho,/ fácil gorra, humano rostro/ son voluntarios Argeles/ de la libertad de todos./ Enseñadme los bajíos/ en que tocar suelen otros;/ cuál es Acates fiel,/ y cuál Sinón cauteloso;/ ya el dulce lisonjero/ el veneno en vaso de oro,/ ya la canora Sirena,/ porque me defienda sordo./ Al fin los dos sois el hilo;/ la corte, el cretense monstro:/ por mí corren mis aciertos,/ y mis yerros por vosotros' (I.17.808-51 [= OC, I, 230-31]).

a detailed commentary on all aspects of Madrid society, avoiding flattery and gossip, and preserving the highest standards of probity and decorum, the Duke is assigning them a role analogous to that of the ideal satirist. By setting it in this context - so that it is commissioned by a man of evident nobility for purposes of moral education, and accepted out of a sense of duty and obligation - Alarcón presents the satirist's role in a positive moral light and in such a way as to free it from any taint of malice or self-interest.

Nevertheless, it soon becomes apparent that it is no easy task to comply with the Duke's instructions, and that each of the Duke's guides responds to the task he has set them in a different manner, so that, as they walk around the city and the Duke questions them about the sights, don Mendo's satirical observations contrast sharply with don Juan's benevolent responses. The comparison is not necessarily favourable to don Juan, however, since, whilst don Mendo's slighting remarks provide a wry commentary on the sights of the city which one feels his audience would have relished, don Juan's anodyne comments display little *ingenio* and risk appearing either ingenuous or unduly eulogistic.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, it seems that don Juan cannot find one criticism to make, despite the Duke's express wish to be shown 'los bajíos,/en que tocar suelen otros'. By contrast, don Mendo's cynical remarks not only have more vigour but also strike the audience as more truthful than the punctiliously uncritical observations of don Juan.

---

<sup>33</sup> '[Don Mendo:] Ésta es la calle Mayor./ [Don Juan:] Las Indias de nuestro polo./ [Don Mendo:] Si hay Indias de empobrecer,/ yo también Indias la nombro./ [Don Juan:] Es gran tercera de gustos./ [Don Mendo:] Y gran cosaría de tontos./ [Don Juan:] Aquí compran las mujeres./ [Don Mendo:] Y nos venden a nosotros./ [Duque:] ¿Quién habita en estas casas?/ [Don Juan:] Don Lope de Lara, un mozo/ muy rico, pero más noble./ [Don Mendo:] Y menos noble que tonto./ (*Hacen dentro ruido de baile.*)/ [Duque:] Tened, que bailan allí./ [Don Juan:] San Juan es fiesta de todos./ [Don Mendo:] Yo aseguro que van estos/ más alegres que devotos./ [Duque:] ¿Quién vive aquí?/ [Don Juan:] Una viuda/ muy honrada, y de buen rostro./ [Don Mendo:] Casta es, la que no es rogada./ alegres tiene los ojos./ [...]/ [Don Juan:] Esta imagen puso aquí/ un extranjero devoto./ [Don Mendo:] Y entre aquestas devociones/ no le sabe mal un logro./ [Don Juan:] Un regidor de esta villa/ hizo este hospital famoso./ [Don Mendo:] Y primero hizo los pobres' (I.17.864-92 [= OC, I, 232]).

No such impression of truthfulness is conveyed, however, when don Mendo makes a number of scathing comments about doña Ana in order to deflect the Duke's interest in her. As we have already seen, the plan misfires badly; don Mendo's groundless slanders are emphatically contradicted by don Juan, with the result that the Duke is intrigued rather than repelled, and resolves to see doña Ana for himself. Furthermore, don Mendo is overheard by doña Ana herself, who is appalled to hear herself spoken of in such a way by a man who professes to love her.

In this scene, Alarcón allows don Mendo to progress from general to more specific satire whilst entertaining, and so presumably winning the approval of the audience. The remarks he makes at the expense of individuals are more shocking than his quips at more general targets, yet at this stage they presumably provoke more admiration for the acerbity of his wit than disapproval at his irreverence.

The likely response of the audience to don Mendo's remarks in this scenes is suggested by Cervantes' comment that: 'al maldiciente agudo, si le vituperan y condenan por perjudicial, no dejan de absolverle y alabarle por discreto' (*Persiles*, p.181). A more explicitly critical view is offered by Aquinas, who acknowledges that one may make lighthearted insults by way of entertainment and fun, but regards it as vicious for a person not to mind if he upsets the object of his witticism provided only that he makes the others laugh.<sup>34</sup> This seems to be an echo of Aristotle (*Nichomachean Ethics*, Book IV, Chapter 8), who presents virtue in conversation as a combination of ready wit and tact which represents the mean between the excess of the buffoon - who 'striv[es] after humour at all costs, and aim[s] rather at raising a laugh rather than at saying what is becoming and at

---

<sup>34</sup> 'Si vero aliquis non reformidet contristare eum in quem profertur hujusmodi jocosum convicium, dummodo aliis risum excitet, hoc est vitiosum, ut ibidem dicitur' (*ST*, IIaIIae, qu.72, art.2).

avoiding pain to the object of their fun' - and the deficiency of the boor - who 'contributes nothing and finds fault with everything'.<sup>35</sup>

The audience's attitude to don Mendo's satirical remarks must change, however, when he speaks of doña Ana, because here, for the first time, they are made to witness what it means to be the victim of slander. Whilst Mendo's previous targets, such as don Lope de Lara, may be both absent and unknown to the audience, doña Ana is both present and familiar and so elicits its sympathy. Moreover, whether don Mendo's previous satirical remarks about the life of the capital are justified or not, as we have seen, no such justification exists for his injurious and mendacious comments about doña Ana, particularly since, in speaking of doña Ana in the way he does, don Mendo clearly (if unwittingly) contravenes the Duke's order that he should not cause offence to anyone.<sup>36</sup> That don Mendo is at fault here is also apparent when one considers his remarks in terms of the precepts of satire since he imprudently contravenes the *preceptistas*' warnings not to mention individuals by name or to speak of places and persons which are directly present.

So acerbic is don Mendo's commentary on Madrid life that even Beltrán is shocked despite his own taste for satire: 'Bien haya tan buena lengua,/ vive Cristo que es un Momo./ [...] / por Dios que lo arrasa todo' (I.17.884-85, 893 [= *OC*, I, 232]).<sup>37</sup> Unlike don Mendo, Beltrán remains true to the approved practices of the

---

<sup>35</sup> Aristotle, *Ethics*, 1128a5-b2. The passage is also interesting because in contrasting the jests of educated and well-bred persons with those of uneducated people of the common sort it appears to connect the former with New Comedy and the latter with Old Comedy. The appeal of such comments for a subtle satirical dramatist such as Alarcón is undeniable.

<sup>36</sup> Alarcón often appears to distinguish between satire and slander by the criterion of veracity. This is apparent in *La prueba de las promesas* when one of the *graciosos*, Tristán, says: 'Pues, señor, a no mentir / el maldiciente, ¿lo fuera?! Aquel es murmurador/ que divulga falsedades;/ que a quien dice las verdades/ llamo yo predicador' (III.13.2377-82 [= *OC*, II, 814]). By this criterion alone, don Mendo's pejorative comments in *Las paredes oyen* should be regarded as slanderous rather than satirical.

<sup>37</sup> 'Un Momo': 'Momo' = Momos, the god of satire and slander.

232]).<sup>37</sup> Unlike don Mendo, Beltrán remains true to the approved practices of the Golden Age satirist, treating his subjects in general terms without naming individuals, and whilst maintaining a humorous tone.<sup>38</sup>

At the beginning of Act II, don Juan and Beltrán meet the Duke outside the Plaza Mayor where a *corrida* is in progress. Disappointed at his inability to catch a glimpse of doña Ana in the crowd, the Duke has sought to entertain himself at cards and has lost heavily.<sup>39</sup> The conversation between don Juan and the Duke illustrates don Juan's characteristic concern for the well-being of his friend but it also shows that he is not too shy to communicate his disapproval nor so ungracious as to do it in any way other than amicably. This form of reproof is perhaps exemplary since it is both witty and well-intentioned. Beltrán, however, clearly interprets it as a cue for further satire, and picks up don Juan's theme with enthusiasm, though in a key appropriate to his status and to his role as *gracioso*.<sup>40</sup> Despite the fact that Beltrán's remarks are undoubtedly entertaining, free of malice and moral in character, don Juan still rebukes him mildly but scrupulously for his

---

<sup>37</sup> 'Un Momo': 'Momo' = Momos, the god of satire and slander.

<sup>38</sup> '[Beltrán:] Qué, noche de San Juan, hallo,/ si un peón sabe embestir,/ que suele sólo 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./ Cuál llega el poblado coche/ de angélica jerarquía,/ y siendo paje de día,/ pasa por marqués de noche./ Cuál sin pensar se acomoda/ con la viuda disfrazada,/ que entre galas de casada/ hurta los gustos de boda./ Cuál encuentra y desbarata/ una sarta de doncellas,/ de quien son las manos bellas/ engazaduras de plata./ Cuál se llega a las que van/ brindando los retozones,/ y trueca a mil refregones/ un pellizco que le dan [etc.]' (I.16.716-39 [= *OC*, I,228]).

Beltrán's satires compare well with Cascales' description of a satirical technique characteristic of Horace: 'Es artificio suyo no ensangrentar la lanza contra uno, sino, tratando de una cosa, picar a éste y al otro de camino; de manera que parece que no hace nada, y les dé de medio a medio, conio si fuera su intento tratar particularmente a cada uno', *Cisne de Apolo*, p.181.

<sup>39</sup> '[Duque:] ¿Cómo los toros dejais?/ [Don Juan:] Viéndome sin vos en ellos,/ estaba de los cabellos./ Del juego ¿cómo quedais?/ 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' (II.1.1050-59 [= *OC*, I, 237]).

<sup>40</sup> The result is that Beltrán mocks not the bullfights of the aristocracy but the antics of *pelota* players, and then moves on to a criticism of hunting (II.1.1059-1105 [= *OC*, I, 237-39]).

Señor,/ no predomina este humor?'.<sup>41</sup>

When don Juan warns him of the dangers of satire, however ('[Don Juan:] 'Como matas morirás'), Beltrán replies that he is already well aware of them, and embarks on a satirical description of slanderers and the life they lead, which implicitly identifies him as a satirist rather than a slanderer since it reprehends slander, except insofar as the fear of such injurious gossip serves as an inducement to virtue.<sup>42</sup>

Though there are echoes of the kind of Horatian satires favoured by Cervantes and the *preceptistas* when Beltrán compares slanderers to preachers and slanders to sermons, his remarks remain ironic, not to say paradoxical, and so blur rather than clarify the differences between legitimate satire and slander. Alarcón is apparently reluctant to give unreserved approval even to the supposedly legitimate form of satire represented by Beltrán. Thus, in spite of the fact that Beltrán's entertaining style, ready wit and literary affinities incline us to see him as an acceptable model for the satirist, Alarcón excludes him from the *hidalgo* class to which many of the *criados* in his plays belong, and in making him a commoner, places him in a social group which is commonly characterised by a predilection for

---

<sup>41</sup> II.1.1106-8 [= *OC*, I, 239]. Don Juan's behaviour here corresponds to Aristotle's observation that there are certain kinds of jokes to which the well-bred man will not listen (1128a, 1.28 (ed.cit., II, 1780)), and Aquinas' assertion that one should not countenance detraction in others (IIaIIae, qu. 73, art.4).

<sup>42</sup> '[Beltrán:] En Madrid estuve yo/ en corro de tal tijera,/ que la pegaba cualquiera/ al padre que lo engendró;/ y si alguno se partía/ del corro, los que quedaban,/ mucho peor dél hablaban/ que él de otros hablado había./ Yo, que conocí sus modos,/ a sus lenguas tuve miedo,/ y, ¿qué hago? Estoyme quedo/ hasta que se fueron todos./ Pero no me valió el arte;/ que ausentándose de allí,/ sólo a murmurar de mí/ hicieron un corro aparte./ Si el maldiciente mirara/ este solo inconveniente,/ ¿hallárase un maldiciente/ por un ojo de la cara?/[...]/ más que cien predicadores/ importa un murmurador./ Yo sé quién ni con sermones,/ ni cuaresmas, ni consejos/ de amigos sabios y viejos,/ puso freno a sus pasiones,/ ni sus costumbres redujo/ en gran tiempo; y solamente/ de temor de un maldiciente,/ vive ya como un cartujo' (I.1.1110-41 [= *OC*, I, 239]).

gossip and slander.<sup>43</sup>

Doña Ana's reaction to slander (*maldecir*) has already been noted in relation to the incident on St. John's Eve (Act I, Scene 18), and in Act III Alarcón shows how she responds to satire when she encounters Beltrán during one of his visits to her maid, Celia, whom he is courting. The theme of satire is introduced when Beltrán quips that he has come to visit Celia in order to keep don Juan company in love, and doña Ana asks him if he is mocking her for rejecting don Juan ('[Doña Ana: ...] ¿Satirizas?'). Beltrán replies that satire is only appropriate for those who have nothing to lose, and goes on to summarise his earlier statements about the nature of slander, again using the phraseology of preaching which is associated with moral satire.<sup>44</sup> Doña Ana responds by teasingly questioning Beltrán's outright rejection of satire, contrasting as she does so the wisdom of remaining silent and the pleasure to be derived from *murmuración*: 'Tu gusto desacreditas/ con esa cuerda intención,/ porque a la conversación/ la mejor salsa quitas' (I.5.2265-68 [= OC, I, 273], my emphasis).<sup>45</sup> Though refusing to be drawn into approving satire openly, Beltrán nevertheless continues in an increasingly critical vein, becoming ever more specific ('En la corte hay un señor') up to the point where he mentions don Mendo

---

<sup>43</sup> In *Ganar amigos*, Alarcón refers to, 'el vulgo murmurador' (III.22.2856 [= OC, II, 362]); in *El tejedor de Segovia*, a character remarks: 'El pueblo me murmura' (1.13.513 [= OC, II, 582]), and another recounts how he was singled out by his neighbours ('la vecindad') 'con risa y murmuración' (II.61221 [= OC, II, 604]); and in *Las paredes oyen*, doña Ana refers to 'El vulgo maldiciente/ que a lo peor aplica las acciones' (I.10.508-09 [= OC, I, 222]).

<sup>44</sup> '[Beltrán:] No conviene;/ que eso puede sólo hacer/ quien no tiene qué perder,/ o qué le digan no tiene./ Pero yo, ¿cómo querías/ que predique sin ser santo?/ ¿Qué faltas diré, si hay tanto/ que remediar en las mías?' (III.5.2257-64 [= OC, I, 273]).

<sup>45</sup> Cf Cervantes' comment in the *Persiles* that: 'la agudeza maliciosa no hay conversación que no la ponga en punto y dé sabor, como la sal a los manjares' (p.181).

by name ('¿No conoces a don Mendo de Guzmán?').<sup>46</sup> As is clear from the 'aside' which precedes his mention of don Mendo ('esto encaja bien aquí/ para quitarle el amor'), Beltrán's apparently exemplary criticism of satire is no more than a stalking horse designed to introduce this note of personal criticism. However, doña Ana is both sufficiently intelligent to recognise the trap he has set for her, and too scrupulous in such matters to sanction direct criticism of this kind, however well-deserved, and she rebukes him for practising the very vice he is condemning.<sup>47</sup>

This incident suggests that doña Ana's attitude to satire is broadly in accordance with the views of the *preceptistas*, since it is only when Beltrán's satires are directed at an individual (don Mendo) rather than at a vice (slander) that they become unacceptable to her.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate forms of criticism which is latent in this scene is rendered problematic by the disingenuous nature of Beltrán's discourse, which employs legitimate forms as a screen for more dubious ends. The point Alarcón appears to be making here is

---

<sup>46</sup> '[Beltrán:] Si ella es salsa, es muy costosa./ señora: que bien mirado./ ni hay mas inútil pecado/ ni falta más peligrosa./ Después que uno ha dicho mal:/ ¿saca de hacerlo algún bien?/ Los que escuchan más bien./ ésos lo quieren más mal;/ que cada cual entre sí/ dice, oyendo al maldiciente:/ "Éste, cuando yo me ausente./ lo mismo dirá de mí."/ Pues si aquél de quien murmura/ lo sabe, que es fácil cosa./ ¿qué mesa tiene gustosa?/ ¿Qué cama tiene segura?/ Viciosos hay de mil modos/ que no aborrecen la gente./ y sólo del maldiciente/ huyen con cuidado todos./ Del malo más pertinaz/ lastima la desventura:/ solamente al que murmura/ lleva el diablo en haz y en paz./ En la corte hay un señor./ que muchas veces oí .../ (aparte: Esto encaja bien aquí/ para quitarle el amor)/ que está malquisto de modo/ por vicioso en murmurar./ que si lo vieran quemar/ diera leña el pueblo todo./ ¿No conoces a don Mendo/ de Guzmán?' (III.5.2269-2302 [= OC, I, 273-74]).

<sup>47</sup> '[Doña Ana:] Beltrán, detente:/ el vicio de maldiciente/ has estado maldiciendo./ ¿y con tal desenvoltura/ de don Mendo has murmurado?/ [Beltrán:] Pienso que es exceptuado/ murmurar dél que murmura./ Dicen que el que hurta al ladrón./ gana perdones, señora./ [Doña Ana:] Dicen mal./ Vete en buena hora' (III.5.2302-10 [= OC, I, 274]).

<sup>48</sup> Further confirmation of dona Ana's critical attitude towards slander is provided towards the close of the play, when she refuses to accept don Mendo's excuses for speaking ill of her on St. John's Eve on the grounds that slander is so serious a crime that it is inexcusable even when well-intentioned: '[Doña Ana:] Y agora te desengaña/ de cuán malo es hablar mal./ pues con ser la causa tal/ y el fin tan bueno, te daña./ Por el mal medio, condeno/ el buen fin: todo lo igualo;/ en que verás que lo malo./ aun para buen fin, no es bueno./ Tu lengua te condenó/ sin remedio a mi desdén:/ a toda ley, hablar bien;/ que a nadie jamás dañó./ Con esto, si eres discreto./ mudar intento podrás' (III.16.2855-68 [= OC, I, 291]).

that there is an almost seamless scale in moral discourse which begins with the pulpit and ends with slander, and which obliges those who would criticise the moral conduct of others to proceed with extreme caution lest they fall into vice whilst seeking to condemn it (and those who would listen to such criticisms to exercise both judgement and restraint).

It appears, therefore, that Alarcón draws no absolute distinction between satire and slander, but rather one of degree, since, whilst both characters are accused of *murmuración* and *maldecir* during the play, the verb *satirizar* is twice applied to Beltrán but never to don Mendo. This suggests that whilst a slanderer is not necessarily a satirist, it is hard for the satirist to escape being considered a slanderer. Indeed, in presenting the contrast between the two types of satire represented by Beltrán and don Mendo (and in inviting a further contrast between the satirical nature of their discourse and the reticence and chivalry characteristic of don Juan), Alarcón implies that neither kind of satire is entirely blameless. This presents a problem, since, as a satirist himself, and as a man with aristocratic pretensions, Alarcón is obliged to find a way of ennobling satire, so as to confirm its moral value and protect his own reputation. His solution to the problem is, I believe, a subtle one, and determines the form of the principal emblematic episode in the play - the scene in which don Juan and the Duke defend doña Ana disguised in the cloaks of her coachmen.

As I have already remarked, this looks like standard *capa y espada* fare, until one looks at the scene as a comment on dramatic satire. What makes this interpretation possible is the association commonly made in the Golden Age between the stock figure of the avaricious and unreliable *cochero*, and the base and slanderous aspects of satire. The *cochero* was a frequent target of contemporary

satire because seventeenth-century moralists condemned the coach not just as a conspicuous symbol of wealth, but as a place for assignations and an instrument of lechery.

In his study of the social background to Alarcón's plays, Alva Ebersole writes that: 'El sueño dorado que para toda mujer constituía el pasear en coche era también el mayor peligro para su decoro. La vanidosa ostentación de lo que entonces [...] pasaba por la quintesencia de lujo y el buen tono, no podía satisfacerse por medios honestos', remarking that: 'Tal fue el abuso de coches, que hubo que legislar contra el uso'.<sup>49</sup> In his *Discursos y apuntamientos* of 1622, Mateo de Lisón y Viedma also condemns 'las demasías de los [...] coches', and argues that the possession of private coaches is dangerous to the morals of women and young people. Similar criticisms are expressed by one Luis Brochero, in a work entitled *Discurso problemático del uso de los coches* of 1626.<sup>50</sup> In this work Brochero cites an allegory in which sensual pleasure ('el deleite') is compared to a carriage made up of four vices:

De gula en cuanto al vientre, de apetito en la concupiscencia, de delicadeza en trajes, y finalmente de aprehensión de ociosidades, y a este coche [...] le tiran dos caballos, que son prosperidad de vida, y abundancia de riquezas; pero también [...] para que no sea el gusto tan cumplido, *les sirven de cocheros la torpeza de la culpa, y la infiel seguridad del vicio*'.<sup>51</sup>

Alarcón himself combines an attack on slanderers with a sally against *cocheros* in

---

<sup>49</sup> Ebersole, *El ambiente español*, p.71.

<sup>50</sup> Mateo de Lisón y Viedma, *Discursos y apuntamientos* (Madrid, 1622), p.11. Cf. Luis Brochero, *Discurso problemático del uso de los coches* (Seville, 1626), p.56: 'En cuanto a las mujeres [...] son notables los incentivos de liviandad [...] que se les recrecen de semejantes actos'.

<sup>51</sup> Brochero, *Discurso problemático*, p.56 (my emphasis).

*La cueva de Salamanca*, when don Diego (with somewhat twisted moral logic) frees a ruffian from prison for having knifed a coachman without asking for payment.<sup>52</sup> Don Mendo also remarks on the base and corruptible nature of coachmen in *Las paredes oyen*: ‘El primero cochero ahora/ no será que a su señora/ haya servido de Judas’ (II.11.1899-1901 [= *OC*, I, 261]).

In this scene, however, Doña Ana’s honour is preserved by the fact that her *cocheros* are villains in appearance only. Their coarse cloaks (‘los capotes groseros’) conceal gentlemen of nobility and clear moral character. In the same way, Alarcón seems to be implying, nobility and fine motives may lie behind the appearance of satire, despite its reputation as a base literary mode. In resolving his plot in the way he does, Alarcón appears to be arguing that if gentlemen may successfully defeat vice by adopting ignoble disguises, then the writer or playwright may assume the mantle of satire to the same ends and without impugning his own nobility. Indeed, one of the primary advantages of disguise is that in concealing the identities of those involved it also protects their reputations. The arrangement of this episode even seems to be in accord with the *preceptistas*’ advice that the satirist should use the disguise of obscurity if it should be necessary to attack individuals. Nevertheless, it is only when don Juan reveals his true identity to doña Ana (III.2 [= *OC*, I, 268-71]), and when she in turn reveals his identity to don Mendo (III.16.2887-89 [= *OC*, I, 291]), that the suspicions aroused by this incident (‘[Mendo: ...] mal sospecho,/ que tal brío en bajo pecho,/ de tus favores nació’ (III.16.2880-82 [= *OC*, I, 291])) are wholly laid to rest. The conclusion to be drawn from this is that it is

---

<sup>52</sup> ‘[Don Diego:] Tú, ¿por qué estás/ preso? Dílo brevemente./[Preso 2º:] Porque maté un maldiciente./[Don Diego:] ¡Qué buen gusto! Libre vas./[Vase el 2º; Sale un preso 3º]/[Don Diego:] Y tú, ¿por qué?/[Preso 3º:] Di a un cochero/ exento una cuchillada./ [Don Diego:] Cosa tan bien empleada,/ la premiara yo primero./ Libre vas’ (III.5.2143-51 [= *OC*, I, 451-52]).

only by suggesting that he is a satirist in appearance alone, and that his primary concern is to applaud virtue rather than to reprehend vice, that Alarcón can achieve his aim without bringing his own reputation into question.

\* \* \*

The differences between the two key episodes of the 'tour of Madrid' and the defence of doña Ana on the road show the development of Alarcón's arguments about satire. Whilst the former is characterised by language and observation, the latter is characterised by action and intervention and is genuinely dramatic. Throughout the play, actions appear to be more reliable than words, so that, whilst in the earlier scene don Mendo's satirical remarks about the capital are more entertaining than don Juan's discreet praise, don Mendo's assault on doña Ana's virtue reveals the full extent of his moral corruption.<sup>53</sup> Alarcón's satirical model, therefore, is not based upon verbal criticism, but upon action. As if to illustrate this fact, don Juan pretends to be dumb when he is disguised as a coachman so as to conceal his true identity - an act which would also seem to prevent any accusation of *murmuración*.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, despite its active nature, Alarcón's dramatic satire is discreet and restrained, a defensive rather than an offensive strategy whose aim is to reprove vice without doing damage to anyone's reputation.

Don Juan's disguise also serves as a metaphor for the superficial nature of physical appearances. Because of her experiences in the play, doña Ana is able at

---

<sup>53</sup> It may also be intended to suggest a link between slander and sexual licence as suggested by Cervantes in the passage from the *Persiles* cited earlier.

<sup>54</sup> '[Celia:] El otro [don Juan] está/ siempre cubierto y callado: [...] se finge mudo' (III.1.2021-22, 2051 [= OC, I, 266-67]).

its close to distinguish between material attributes and spiritual qualities. Alarcón must hope that he has educated his audience in the same way and that it will pass over his faults of form, literary and physical, and recognise the underlying nobility and virtue which he seeks to project. The play demonstrates that direct critical or satirical tactics may prove inadequate or counter-productive and implies that vice requires a response that is more complex, and even, more theatrical than don Juan's straightforward and humble virtue.

\* \* \*

In *Las paredes oyen* the themes of discretion and dissimulation are in direct contrast to the licence and falsehood of the slanderer. In part, this is because discretion and dissimulation are the principal defence against malicious gossip, a point made by don Juan in the opening scene:

Don Juan      [...] como es tan delicada  
                   la honra, suele perderse  
                   solamente con saberse  
                   que ha sido solicitada.  
                   Y así, del murmurador  
                   pretendo que esté segura  
                   mi desdicha o ventura,  
                   su flaqueza o su valor;  
                   que aun a ti mismo callado  
                   estos intentos hubiera,  
                   si en ti, Beltrán, no tuviera  
                   más amigo que criado.<sup>55</sup>

What is also apparent here, however, is that there are times when the truth should be concealed or withheld, rather than revealed.<sup>56</sup> Accordingly, don Juan's

---

<sup>55</sup> I.1.133-44 [= *OC*, I, 211].

<sup>56</sup> Cf don Juan's assertion earlier in the same scene that 'Lo que siente el pensamiento/ no siempre se ha de explicar' (I.i.79-80 [= *OC*, I, 209]).

behaviour is characterised by various forms of discreet dissimulation, expressed in terms of silence, secrecy, and *recato*, and exemplified in his feigned dumbness, and the use of disguise and concealment. Doña Ana acts in a similar way, returning secretly to Madrid, and observing the festivities unseen.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, both the key scenes which contain don Mendo's slanders against doña Ana and his physical assault on her honour are followed by scenes in which, by remaining hidden, characters come to recognise the full extent of his calumnies, and it is these scenes which justify the title of the play. Don Juan distinguishes such strategies from deceit when the Duke accuses him of being a false friend when he agrees to marry doña Ana: '[Duque:] (*Empuñando contra don Juan.*) Vuestra amistad engañosa/ castigaré./ [Don Juan:] Detenéos;/ que yo nunca os engañé./ *Recato y no engaño fue/* encubriros mis deseos;' (III.17.2902-06 [= *OC*, I, 292], my emphasis).

Just as dissimulation is here distinguished from deceit, so there is also a difference between don Mendo's conception of discretion and that of don Juan. Don Mendo considers himself to be *discreto* by virtue of his satirical wit, regarding others as stupid by comparison and referring to them as *necios*. For example, he calls Lucrecia 'necia' in Act I (I.7.336 [= *OC*, I, 217]), and refers to don Juan in Act II as 'el necio' (II.7.1687 [= *OC*, I, 255]), and to the Duke as 'el necio rapaz' (II.7.1739 [= *OC*, I, 256]). Whereas Mendo regards *discreción* merely as a matter of intellect, however, for don Juan it is not simply the opposite of stupidity but a quality of prudent and considerate circumspection. The difference in their understanding of the term is evident in Act I, where don Juan's praise of doña Ana's 'virtud y discreción' contrasts with don Mendo's subsequent and scathing comment

---

<sup>57</sup> '[Duque:] ¿Y está en los toros doña Ana?/[Don Juan:] No la he visto, pero sé/ que cuando en ellos esté,/ ni en andamio, ni en ventana/ de suerte estará que pueda/ ser de nadie conocida:/ que no por fiestas olvida/ obligaciones que hereda' (II.1.1154-61 [= *OC*, I, 240]).

about her 'mediano entendimiento' (I.18.967, 987 [= *OC*, I, 235]). This distinction - between *discreción* as an intellectual quality, and *discreción* as an aspect of prudence - is also apparent in Lucrecia's rejection of don Mendo at the end of the play, where she accuses him of 'imprudencia' and explains that she is not so stupid ('necia') as to marry someone who has spoken ill of her, as he has (III.17.2940, 2943 [= *OC*, I, 255]).

By contrasting don Mendo's slanders with Beltrán's satirical discourse, Alarcón shows that, whilst satire has a tendency to incline towards slander, and whilst it remains somewhat suspect even when it observes the limitations proposed by the *preceptistas*, it may be distinguished from slander for practical purposes on grounds of intention, form and effect, and that, if Beltrán is to be believed, it may even have a certain utility of a moral kind. Nevertheless, although it makes use of the satirical mode, the argument of the play favours other approaches to moral criticism, offering an alternative to the critical language of satirists and slanderers alike in the combination of magnanimous courtesy and discreet action exemplified by don Juan. By countering don Mendo's assault on doña Ana's honour by a stratagem which is evidently prudent, necessary and both conceived and carried out by men of exemplary status and conduct, Alarcón offers a parallel and an alternative to more familiar satirical strategies and so subtly justifies his art and his own role as a satirical playwright.<sup>58</sup>

\* \* \*

---

<sup>58</sup> By presenting both a slanderer and a satirist within a play which is critical of both, Alarcón is able both to have his cake and eat it, both profiting from the entertainment to be derived from the satirical mode, and distancing himself from it so as to preserve his own reputation.

He defends himself in particular terms as well. As I have mentioned earlier, Alarcón was the target of a good many satires far less subtle than his own, from pens otherwise as eminent as Quevedo's - satires which exaggerated his physical deformity and presented him as mendacious, slanderous and, however unlikely it might seem, as a *burlador de mujeres*.<sup>59</sup> In *Las paredes oyen*, whilst he endows his namesake, Juan de Mendoza, with a deformed physique, he appears to project the other characteristics attributed to him by his enemies and literary rivals on to don Mendo - a fact which may even account for Mendo's name, a possible reference to the nickname (*apodo*) of 'mendacio' given him by Lope because he had not only assumed Mendoza as an *apellido* but the title of *don* into the bargain.<sup>60</sup> By his criticism of the character of don Mendo, and by causing him to be chastised for his slander in the *desenlace* of the play, Alarcón simultaneously rebuts the moral charges levelled against him and condemns their authors, whilst - by marrying his don Juan to the beautiful doña Ana - the playwright both acknowledges the attacks on his appearance and indicates their irrelevance. Indeed, it seems likely that Alarcón portrayed himself more closely in this play than in any other precisely in order to refute the intensely personal attacks which had been made against him from at least 1617 onwards. He does so, however, in such a way as to separate the physical or circumstantial from the moral and to discount the former as irrelevant

---

<sup>59</sup> See Quevedo's 'Letrilla' against 'Corcovilla' in King, *Ruiz de Alarcón*, p.250 [l.70]. In her article on Tirso's satire of Alarcón, Ruth Lee Kennedy notes that *indianos* were reputed to have an innate taste for gossip. 'Tirso's Satire of Ruiz de Alarcón', p.3.

<sup>60</sup> 'Los apellidos de don Juan crecen como hongos; ayer se llamaba Juan Ruiz: añadiósele el Alarcón, y hoy se ajusta el Mendoza, que otros leen Mendacio. ¡Así creciese de cuerpo! Que es mucha carga para tan pequeña bestezuela. Yo aseguro que tiene las corcovas llenas de apellidos. y adviértase que la D no es don, sino su medio retrato' (*Obras de Lope de Vega*, BAE vol.52, 589a).

and the latter as misapplied.<sup>61</sup>

\* \* \*

*Las paredes oyen* should be seen, therefore, not only as a carefully measured response by Alarcón to the personal attacks to which he had been subjected by his peers, but also as a piece of self-examination in which the dramatist analyses both his personality and his art. Like the orator, the Golden Age satirist understood that if he was to persuade his audience, it was not enough to appeal to their heads and to their hearts, and that his success in persuasion depended upon his audience's estimation of his own particular character.<sup>62</sup> In *Las paredes oyen*, Alarcón uses both rational argument and the emotions, all centred upon the question of which of the rival *galanes* is to marry doña Ana, to persuade his audience that gossip is truly pernicious and that the satirical mode must be handled with discretion if it is to be employed at all. Yet at the same time he takes pains to reassure his audience of the virtue of his own moral character by identifying himself with a noble character (don

---

<sup>61</sup> Alarcón employs a similar technique, though in a less explicit manner in *La verdad sospechosa* in which don García is the counterpart of don Mendo and don Juan de Sosa the counterpart of don Juan de Mendoza. I am reluctant, however, to follow Amezcua in identifying don García so closely with Alarcón as to see the *desenlace* as an act of self-castigation on the part of the author ('la justicia ejercida sobre el personaje refiere una especie de autocastigo, una pena para él también, para Juan Ruiz de Alarcón' ('La poética del desenlace', p.40). More valuable, however, is his suggestion that don García's punishment is analogous to a kind of dramatic censorship - provided that it is understood that it is don García's '*comedia*' that is being censored and not Alarcón's - since this is in line with the criticism of literary form I have identified as a major strand of the underlying argument of the play.

<sup>62</sup> As James S. Bauman observes in his essay on Elizabethan satire: 'neither pathetic nor logical proof appears as crucial to the effect of satire as the third and final mode of rhetorical proof, *ethos*. Aristotle observes that the rhetor's character 'may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses, for only by projecting an image of good sense, good will, and good moral character can the rhetor gain the trust of his audience' (James S. Bauman, 'Generic Contexts of Elizabethan Satire: Rhetoric, Poetic Theory and Imitation', pp.444-67, in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, edited by Barbara Keifer Lewalski (Harvard University Press: Cambridge MA., 1986), p.446. For the passage from Aristotle referred to by Bauman see the *Rhetoric*, 1358a, ll.2-21.

Juan de Mendoza) who habitually eschews both slander and satire, and adopts them (albeit in a modified - and dramatic - form) in circumstances of extreme necessity and for the purpose of overcoming vice. With don Juan, Alarcón is wholly aware 'que tiene aquél que murmura/ en su lengua su enemigo' (II.1.83-84 [= *OC*, I, 209])), but the analytical clarity of his approach enables him to navigate safely through the dangers of his medium. Thus, whilst *Las paredes oyen* demonstrates the conflict which may be generated in the theatre between the tastes of the audience, in this case for quasi-slanderous satire, and the moral aims of the dramatist, it also shows how a skilful dramatist can make use of such predilections to arrive at an outcome which is both dramatically and morally satisfactory.

To conclude, Alarcón's examination of satire in this play is closely bound in with his interest in deception, and with his argument that there are certain forms of deception which are properly regarded as virtuous because their moral utility shows them to be examples of prudence.

*Las paredes oyen* presents two principal forms of deception. On the one hand there is illicit deception: this is an offensive strategy and takes the form of outright lying; its effects are harmful both to the liar and to others, most particularly as regards their reputations; and it is represented in *Las paredes oyen* by don Mendo's slanders which, though more harmful, are broadly equivalent to don García's bragging tales in *La verdad sospechosa*. On the other hand there is legitimate deception: this is a defensive strategy and takes the form of dissimulation. Dissimulation itself takes a number of forms in the play - eavesdropping, humble disguise, feigned dumbness - all of which involve concealment. The effect of these strategies is beneficial, since they reveal the truth and preserve the reputations of those involved.

## Chapter 4

### Illusion in Magic and Drama:

#### *La cueva de Salamanca, Quien mal anda en mal acaba, and La prueba de las promesas*

In previous chapters I have argued that Alarcón's plays show him to have had a serious and sustained interest in the nature of deceit and in the uses to which it might be put. I have also argued that the manner in which Alarcón presents the theme of deceit indicates that he was well aware of the nature of the opposition to dramatic fiction on the part of many contemporary theologians and moralists, and that he defended the moral legitimacy of his own dramatic fictions by writing plays which, to a greater or lesser extent, advance the somewhat controversial view that there are situations in which certain kinds of deception are the only means by which the common good may be preserved or enhanced.

In the plays discussed in the previous chapters, the forms of deception most favoured by Alarcón are indicative of prudence rather than cunning; they are characterised by concealment rather than ostentation; and they are employed defensively, so as to reveal or confirm the truth about the moral character of others, rather than offensively, with the aim of projecting a flattering but illusory image of the deceiver himself. Moreover, in Alarcón's plays, prudent deception is invariably concerned with the maintenance of honour-virtue, and the discovery of moral truths, whilst cunning is employed in the pursuit of worldly or sensual goals such as social advancement, riches, and sexual gratification. A circumspect and reasoned approach often proves sufficient to expose the deceptions practised by others, but Alarcón's

protagonists must also learn to overcome the inducement to self-deception presented by the allure of worldly attributes such as beauty, wealth and social status, and to regard these as irrelevant or illusory - and this kind of *desengaño* requires a higher degree of wisdom.

The plays discussed in this chapter put forward a very similar view of deception, yet they do so by even more controversial means, since they present magical illusion as an extension of those varieties of deception (both prudent and cunning), practised elsewhere in Alarcón's works.

The inclusion of magical elements in these plays has two principal consequences: 1) it increases the tension, present throughout Alarcón's works, between the audience's taste for those aspects of the dramatic performance which have an immediate sensory and imaginative appeal, and the moralists' condemnation of such elements as detrimental to the common good, and 2) it focuses the play's argument on the larger theme of *desengaño*, and the recognition of the illusory nature of worldly pleasures, rather than on the specific distinctions between cunning and prudent deception, lying and dissimulation. This is because, in a world distorted by magical illusion, it is all but impossible to ascertain the truth by empirical methods, with the result that, in these plays as in Calderón's masterpiece *La vida es sueño*, right action comes to depend on reason, constancy and faith rather than on the evidence supplied by the senses.

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.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in each of the three plays discussed in this chapter the practice of magic has a different moral value, which ranges from the negative example of *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, through the careful ambiguity of *La cueva de Salamanca*, to the exemplary magic of *La prueba de las promesas*, according to the degree of wisdom and prudence with which it is conceived and executed.<sup>2</sup>

In the first of these plays, magic takes the form of an express demonic pact entered into by the illiterate *morisco* Román Ramírez out of lust for the beautiful doña Aldonza. Here, as the Devil himself points out, magic functions as a supernatural extension of cunning or *astucia* which plays on the desires and fears of its victims and which is explicitly condemned, not only by the visible presence of the devil on the stage but also by the dénouement, in which Román is arrested, and the Devil put to flight, by officers of the Inquisition.

In *La cueva de Salamanca*, however, there is no explicit demonic involvement and the two learned magicians in the play, the aristocratic don Enrique de Villena and the ascetic philosopher Enrico, are otherwise exemplary in their moral conduct. In this play, magic appears to be used for purposes which are illicit or merely trivial, but is subsequently revealed to have effects which are both morally instructive and socially beneficial. Nevertheless, when, in Act III, Enrico is challenged to defend magic in public debate against a Doctor of Theology, he is defeated, and renounces both the

---

<sup>1</sup> The presence of neo-Stoic ideas in Alarcón's works is widespread, and deserving of more attention than I am able to give it here.

<sup>2</sup> *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* does not appear in either of Alarcón's *Partes*, but is attributed to him in an undated *impresión suelta*, published in Seville by Francisco de Leefdael, between 1706 and 1717, and widely accepted as being authentic. See Francisco Escudero y Perroso, *Tipografía hispalense* (Madrid, 1894). It has many similarities with Alarcón's authentic plays, among them, its presentation of a 'villain' whose actions within the play are characterised by the use of *engaño* for selfish ends, and whose deceitful activities in a given social milieu threaten its harmony and stability.

study and the practice of the art, indicating that there are times when illusion, however beneficial, is no longer acceptable.

It is surprising therefore, when, in *La prueba de las promesas*, the practice of necromancy by don Illán is neither censured nor punished, but accepted without murmur by all those affected by it. I will discuss the reasons for this later, but it is sufficient to observe here that the exemplary character of the magical illusion created by don Illán in this play makes it a problematic work (and shows it to be outspoken in a way that the others are not), because it appears to argue that the use of magic, which it admits to be illicit, may be justified if directed towards ends which are morally and socially desirable - a view which, it will be remembered, directly contradicts doña Ana's assertion in *Las paredes oyen* that good intentions are no justification for unethical methods.<sup>3</sup>

Alarcón's magic plays also constitute that part of his work which is most open to interpretation as 'metatheatre'. Indeed, the presence of this additional dimension appears to be a feature of the 'magic play' as a type, not only in Spain but also in England and France. Both Marlowe's *Faustus* and Shakespeare's *Tempest* contain magical illusions or visions which take the form of masques or dramatic tableaux, and, in *L'illusion comique*, Corneille explicitly presents the summoning up of magical illusions in relation to the creation of illusions in the theatre.<sup>4</sup> The reason for this

---

<sup>3</sup> See Charles E. Perry, 'The Question of Means and Magic in Alarcón's *La prueba de las promesas*', *BCom*, 27 (1975), 14-19.

<sup>4</sup> See Espanoso-Foley, 'The Structure of Ruiz de Alarcón's *La prueba de las promesas*'; Orozco Díaz, *El teatro y la teatralidad del Barroco*, pp.179-99; and Díez Borque, 'Teatro dentro del teatro', p.127. On Corneille's *L'illusion comique*, see Robert J. Nelson, 'Pierre Corneille's *L'illusion comique*: The Play as Magic', *PMLA*, 71 (1956), 1127-40. See also Roger Moore, 'Metatheatre and Magic in *El mágico prodigioso*', *BCom*, 33 (1981), 129-38, which deals with the connection between drama and magic in Calderón's most famous 'magic play'.

imaginative association is suggested by Henry Phillips in his study of the theatre and its critics in seventeenth-century France when he observes that:

Both [theatre and witchcraft] seduce men's minds by casting a spell (in the context of drama 'charmer' and 'enchanter' retain very much of their literal meaning), and both possess individuals with specialised skills able to conjure up an alternative world'.<sup>5</sup>

Both the magician and the dramatist possess a repertoire of spectacular devices which appeal strongly to the senses of their audience. Indeed, the term *apariencia*, used by don Illán in Act I of *La prueba de las promesas* to describe the nature of his magic, provides a semantic link between the illusions created by the magician and the dramatist, since it also has a specific theatrical sense associated with the creation of spectacular scenic effects.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, as I shall suggest later, there may well be more profound similarities between magical and dramatic illusion.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth Century France*, p.248.

<sup>6</sup> See *La prueba de las promesas*, I.11.822 [= *OC*, II, 769]). The following definitions give a good idea of both the moral and theatrical senses of this word: 'Apariencia: Lo que a la vista tiene un buen parecer y puede engañar en lo intrínseco y sustancial. Razones aparentes, los que de repente mueven, pero consideradas no tienen eficacia, ni son concluyentes. Apariencias son ciertas representaciones mudas que, corrida una cortina, se muestran al pueblo y luego se vuelven a cubrir [...] (Sebastián de Covarrubias Horozco, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1611; repr. Barcelona: Horta, 1943), p.130a); 'Apariencia. [...] lat. Species, imago fallax. [...] No juzgues por la apariencia sino por la verdad. [...] Se llama así la perspectiva de bastidores con que se visten los teatros de Comedia que se mudan, y forman diferentes mutaciones y representaciones. [...] CERV. Quix. tom.I.cap.48. Sin más respecto, ni consideración, que parecerles que allí estará bien el tal milagro y apariencia, como ellos llaman' (*Diccionario de autoridades* (Madrid: Francisco de Hierro, 1726; repr. 3 vols, Madrid: Gredos, 1984, I, 327a); 'Apariencia - [...] Aspecto o parecer exterior de una persona o cosa. [...] 3. Cosa que parece y no es. 4. Telón, bastidor o caroca con que en el teatro se representaban por medio de la pintura, cosas verdaderas o fantásticas' (*Diccionario de la lengua española*, 20th edn., 2 vols (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1984), I, 107b).

As a number of scholars have shown, Alarcón's magic plays indicate that he was well versed in the subject of magic (and other superstitious practices known to his contemporaries), aware of the Church's position on such matters, and careful to confirm its teachings in his own works - a posture which is nowhere more evident than in the formal debate concerning the legitimacy of magic in Act III of *La cueva de Salamanca*.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the body of work on this aspect of Alarcón's magic plays is such that there is no need to discuss it further here. What has not been done, however, is to consider the correspondences between the Church's teaching on magic and contemporary ideas about the nature and function of dramatic illusion. I consider three points to be of particular relevance in this regard, namely: 1) the association of magic with the pursuit of worldly desires; 2) its reputation as a deceitful and illusory art; and 3) the belief that magic had the power to persuade, but not to coerce the will.

Those who sought to use magic were commonly described as being motivated either by excessive curiosity or, more commonly, by immoderate worldly desires and fears, and regarded as being more likely to fall into error and be deceived by the wiles of charlatans or demonic agents for that reason.<sup>8</sup> The plays studied here reaffirm this

---

<sup>7</sup> See Ysla Campbell, 'Magia y hermetismo en *La cueva de Salamanca*', in *Texto y espectáculo* (Selected Proceedings of the Symposium on Spanish Golden Age Theatre, The University of Texas at El Paso, 1987), edited by Barbara Mujica (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), pp.11-24; David H. Darst, 'El discurso sobre la magia en *La cueva de Salamanca*, de Ruiz de Alarcón', *DHR* 9 (1970), 31-44; Ebersole, 'Supersticiones españolas', and his *El ambiente español visto por Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Madrid: Castalia, 1959), pp.153-76; Augusta Espantoso Foley, 'The Structure of Alarcón's *La prueba de las promesas*', *HR*, 51 (1983), 29-41, and her *Occult Arts and Doctrine*.

<sup>8</sup> See Martín de Castañega, *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* [Logroño; Miguel de Eguía, 1429] prologue by Agustín G. de Amezúa (Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1946), pp.18-19; Pedro Ciruelo, *Reproución de las supersticiones y hechicerías* [Salamanca: Pedro de Castro, 1538], edited by Alva. V. Ebersole (Valencia: Albatros, 1978), p.47; and Juan de Covarrubias y Horozco, *Tratado de la verdadera y falsa profecía*, (Segovia: Juan de la Cuesta, 1588), fol.37v.

'Curiosity' is not a trivial motive, but plays an important part in Augustine's conception of mankind's creative activity and its relation to the pursuit of the Divine. As O'Connell remarks, Augustine regards curiosity as an impulse which is opposed to true knowledge: '[He dismisses] man's tendency to linger over sensual experience [...] as *curiositas*: the temptation to inquire into spiritual realities with the "earthly eye". [...] the images of sense must be banished, turned away from by the mind in its ascent towards vision' (*Art and the Christian Intelligence*, p.57). But curiosity is just one of a number of factors which hinder that ascent: 'The psychology of 'distraction' is [...] complex; its causes range from the

view: Enrico and don Enrique of *La cueva de Salamanca* are attracted to the study of magic out of intellectual curiosity; Román Ramírez, don Diego of *La cueva de Salamanca*, and don Juan of *La prueba de las promesas*, are drawn to it for reasons of desire; and other characters in these plays, such as doña Aldonza and don Juan of *Quien mal anda*, and don Juan of *La prueba de las promesas*, are rendered particularly susceptible to magical illusions as a result of their own ambition, cupidity, lust, and jealousy.

Theologians had long denied that the devil could work miracles, but they accepted that he might simulate them in such a way as to deceive the senses of those who witnessed such marvels; an essential distinction between demonic tricks of this sort and true miracles was that the devil could not alter the substance of things but only their outward appearances.<sup>9</sup> For this reason, Martín de Castañega, Pedro Ciruelo and other theologians were able to assert that a great many marvellous events were without

---

desire for sensible pleasure and for acting on bodies, to the delight in "imitating" God's own Art and the disquieting love of "vain" knowledge that Augustine terms curiosity' (ibid., p.78). Nevertheless, some aspects of sensible reality do indeed point toward the Divine; these Augustine terms *admonitiones*, and regards as being worthy objects of study: 'to dwell upon the sensible world of admonitions [...] is not merely to make them objects of mere curiosity. [...] Augustine develop[s] a new category to designate the mind's legitimate enquiry into the world of temporal realities: now they become objects of *scientia*, and worthy, as such, of the Christian's careful attention (p.140)). Thus, *scientia*, the study of God's design inherent in created things stands in opposition to *curiositas*, the mere fascination with creation itself. As we shall see, this distinction is of some relevance to Alarcón's presentation of magic in these plays.

<sup>9</sup> See Covarrubias, *La verdadera y falsa profecía*: '[...] el demonio [...] no puede hacer milagros, y los que hace son como invenciones de juegos con sutileza de manos, [...] y así el demonio puede en el aire formar figuras, que lo son en la apariencia y no en la realidad, como es lo que se hace con el arte de unos espejos que representan en el aire la figura que habían de representar en sí. [...] puede sin esto, alterando los humores con sutileza, representar en la vista figuras que parezca que realmente es verdadero lo que se pone delante, y el engaño principalmente está en la imaginación en que asienta aquellas figuras con tanta fuerza que parece sin duda que se ven' (fols 34r-34v). Covarrubias views are in accordance with Aquinas' statements on the subject (*ST*, I, qu.114, art.2-4).

The Church's teaching on the issue of free will is summarised by Espantoso-Foley in the following terms: '[T]he devil does not have the power to introduce thoughts into our minds through internal means, since the intellect and its faculties are subject to the will. However, the devil is able to kindle our thoughts insofar as he incites us to think upon certain lines by persuasion or by rousing the passions.'<sup>12</sup> The belief that magic has no irresistible power over the will is also expressed in both *La cueva de Salamanca* and in *La prueba de las promesas*, and a similar assertion is made in *El dueño de las estrellas* with regard to astrological prediction.<sup>13</sup>

Alarcón's magic plays provide a good deal of evidence to suggest that he was familiar with the view, expressed by Aquinas and other authorities on such matters, that demons were able to deceive men by disturbing their senses so as to create illusions which would rouse their passions and so persuade them to sin.<sup>14</sup> If this is so, it would seem probable that he was also aware of the complementary belief that good angels may also cause imaginative visions, not so as to deceive men, but with the effect of enlightening their minds so as to enable them to understand the meaning

---

<sup>12</sup> Espantoso-Foley, *Occult Arts and Doctrine*, p.66. Foley is referring here to Aquinas, *ST*, I, qu.111, art.2-4; see also qu.114, art.2, ad 3: '[...] daemon, etsi non possit immutare voluntatem, potest tamen [...] aliquid immutare inferiores hominis vires; ex quibus etsi non cogitur voluntas, tamen inclinatur'; and Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, Book 1, Ch.11, and Book 2, Ch.5: 'Sensus interior praestat externis sensibus, quorum est moderator et iudex' (*PL* XXXII, 1233-34, 1246).

<sup>13</sup> See *La cueva de Salamanca* II.13.1861-64 [= *OC*, I, 443]; *La prueba de las promesas*, II.2.1180-98 [= *OC*, II, 779]; and *El dueño de las estrellas* II.2.1160-79 [= *OC*, II, 47-48]. In *Quien mal anda*, Román denies the existence of free will only moments before he enters into a pact with the Devil (I.5.142-48 [= *OC*, III, 176]). See also Mario, N. Pavia in his *Drama of the Siglo de Oro: A Study of Magic, Witchcraft and Other Occult Beliefs* (New York: Spanish American Printing Co., 1959), p.151: 'From the religious standpoint, [the authors'] attitude toward magic, as exemplified by Cervantes and Calderón, is that man's free will cannot be coerced by any occult power'.

<sup>14</sup> See Aquinas, *ST*, qu.114, art.4, ad 1 & 2: 'Antichristi opera possunt dici esse signa mendacii; vel quia mortales sensus per phantasmata decepturus est, ut quae non facit, videatur facere; vel quia si sint vera prodigia, ad mendacium tamen pertrahent credituros. [...] daemon potest mutare phantasiam hominis, et etiam sensus corporeos, ut aliquid videatur aliter quam sit [...]'. The first part of this quotation is well illustrated by Alarcón's own *El anticristo*, which, regrettably, there is no space to discuss in the present study.

of such visions.<sup>15</sup> In such a case, it is hard to believe that he failed to see the correspondence between what the theologians had to say about the nature and effects of supernatural illusions and the views of his contemporaries on both sides of the controversy concerning the legitimacy of dramatic fiction.

At this point, it seems appropriate to cross over from a summary of contemporary beliefs about the nature of 'real' magic, to a consideration of the use of magic on the stage in the the Spanish Golden Age.

In her study of the occult elements in Alarcón's work, Augusta Espantoso-Foley expresses the view that he employed elements of this sort not because he was interested in magic *per se* but rather for the pragmatic reason that they had the power 'to create unexpected situations [and] to produce on the audience of his day an effect similar to that of a modern thriller'.<sup>16</sup> However, Foley's laudable intention to present Alarcón as a practical man of the theatre leads her to emphasise the audience's taste for the marvellous and the spectacular, and to ignore the fact that many of Alarcón's contemporaries (and, I would argue, Alarcón himself) harboured serious reservations about the morality of pandering to the appetites of the *vulgo* in this way.

The frequency with which occult elements appear in the the *comedias* and *entremeses* performed in the corrales (and in that other notorious form of popular

---

<sup>15</sup> See *ST*, qu.111, art.3, ad 4: '[...] Angelus causans aliquam imaginariam visionem, quandoque quidem simul intellectum illuminat, ut cognoscat quid per hujusmodi similitudines significetur; et tunc nulla est deceptio [...]'. The proximity of the relevant sections in Aquinas' work is such that, if Alarcón did indeed know the *Summa theologiae*, he could hardly have been aware of one and not the other; and even if he did not, it is improbable, in view of Alarcón's well attested knowledge of the theology relating to the occult, that he was not aware of these beliefs from some other source.

<sup>16</sup> Foley, *Occult Arts and Doctrine*, p.33. See also p.90: 'In his utilization of pacts, conjuros, hechizos, magical statues, symbols and chiromancy, Alarcón did not dwell for any considerable amount of time on the act itself: it was the *effect* of the particular occult element that Alarcón emphasised and used to his greatest advantage in the course of a dramatic action'; my emphasis.

literary entertainment, the chivalric romance), leaves little room for doubt that the occult was a subject which commanded considerable popular interest in the Spanish Golden Age, and it is not surprising, therefore, to find that such elements were commonly included as a means of attracting an audience.<sup>17</sup>

However, neither those opposed to dramatic fiction nor its more serious-minded exponents regarded such elements, or their effect on an audience, as morally neutral. Regardless of the 'magical' content of the plays performed there, the theatre's opponents already regarded the *corrales* as diabolical institutions and repeatedly presented them as such.<sup>18</sup> Their concern stemmed to a large extent from the fact that they saw the theatres as encouraging licentious behaviour, and indeed, the dramatic conventions of popular theatre in the Spanish Golden Age are frequently characterised by a lifting of the normal restraints imposed on the individual by society. Such conventions express the desire for social status, power,

---

<sup>17</sup> 'Estando escribiendo esto me dijo una persona que le había dicho un autor destas comedias, convidándole fuese a oír una, que vería una dancilla nueva que parecía que todos los diablos del infierno se habían juntado a inventarla: *esta loa dan a sus cosas cuando quieren más calificarlas y esta salsa les echan cuando temen que este manjar ha de enfadar*. Pues los títulos que ponen a sus comedias y los fijan por esos cantones de esas plazas, que son como las ramas de las tabernas, o como los títulos en los botes de las boticas, para que se conozcan y vendan bien, son muy buenos [= eficaces]. Otro amigo me dijo venía de oír una comedia intitulada *Gusto del Infierno*, toda ella sacada de aquel lugar' (P. Pedro de Guzmán, *Bienes del honesto trabajo y daños de la ociosidad, en ocho discursos* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1613), p.348) my emphasis.

The extent to which occult elements were employed by the dramatists of the Golden Age is well demonstrated by Pavia, *Drama of the Siglo de Oro*. A good many *relaciones de sucesos* which have survived from the Golden Age also testify to public interest in sorcery and its punishment. See Mercedes Agullo y Cobo, 'Relaciones de sucesos I: Años 1477-1619' (Madrid: CSIC, 1966), 3-4 & 40-85; and 'Relaciones de sucesos (1620-1621)' in *Homenaje a don Agustín Millares Carlo* (Gran Canaria: Caja Insular de Ahorros de Gran Canaria, 1975), pp.349-80.

<sup>18</sup> In his *Excelencias de la Castidad*, for example, José de Jesús María attacks the *corrales* in the following terms: 'los teatros son templos del demonio, y los comediantes sus ministros', and later: 'Los teatros de las comedias no son otra cosa sino templos de ídolos adonde se hacen sacrificios públicos al demonio' (Cotarelo y Mori, *Bibliografía*, p.379). Such objections were founded on a number of passages in the *City of God* in which Augustine compares the Roman theatres to pagan temples because of the appearance of Classical deities in the plays performed there (*De civitate Dei* I, xxxii-xxxiii, and II, vii-viii and xx). All the theatre's critics in the Golden Age had to do was to follow the common practice of substituting *demonios* for *dioses* in their translations and glosses, and they had a rich store of ammunition with which to attack the *corrales*. See, for example, the *Diálogos de las comedias*, p.59.

wealth and sex, and they promote *ingenio*, *engaño*, or what Alarcón often terms *industria* as the means to attain these goals. Dramatic magic serves essentially the same function, and, like 'real' magic, was also regarded as providing a short-cut to the gratification of desire. Yet because it seems to derive its appeal from the breaking of religious as well as social taboos, and so to encourage sins of the spirit more serious than the carnal transgressions thought to be fostered by the *comedia* in general, the *comedia de magia* was ultimately a more contentious kind of theatre than the *comedia de enredo*. In his study of the use of magic in the popular theatre, Julio Caro Baroja sums up the nature of the concern felt by the theatre's opponents on this matter:

Los rigoristas que veían en el teatro un centro de propaganda de toda inmoralidad se escandalizaron pronto de que se pusieran tantas hechicerías en escena, tantas historias profanas y escandalosas, de gentiles, e incluso de de algunos cristanos. ¿No serían las tablas una buena escuela para aprender la magia, un lugar para observar, además de formas de desenfreno carnal otras de desenfreno espiritual? Los rigoristas creían que sí y los defensores del teatro dieron sus argumentos para demostrar lo contrario.<sup>19</sup>

Because of the existence of such concerns, it is not sufficient simply to regard the occult elements in the plays dealt with in this chapter as a means of providing spectacular entertainment, since, in the context of the contemporary debate about the legitimacy of dramatic fiction, the dramatist is obliged to justify his use of such elements on moral grounds if he is not to be condemned for including matter that is 'en perjuicio de la fe y las buenas costumbres'. Closer investigation of some of

---

<sup>19</sup> Julio Caro Baroja, *Teatro popular y magia*, p.68.

Alarcón's plays will demonstrate the exemplary nature of his own treatment of the occult.

### *La cueva de Salamanca*

The first play I will deal with here is *La cueva de Salamanca*, a work whose title would have left a prospective spectator in no doubt that it was to contain magical elements.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, at one level the play seems designed to bring together as many as possible of the numerous legends associated with the *cueva* of the title and the much mythologised but historical figure of the Marqués de Villena (1384-1434).<sup>21</sup> However, Alarcón does not use this catalogue of superstitious tales as the vehicle for a parade of spectacular scenic effects, but rather describes them as allegories, that is, as fictions which may be analysed to reveal truths which are at once more rational and more morally profitable.<sup>22</sup> This is significant because it provides the pattern for Alarcón's treatment of magic throughout this play, in which stage magic provides striking images with a didactic function.

---

<sup>20</sup> See Pavia, *Drama of the Siglo de Oro*, pp.22-3.

<sup>21</sup> See Ysla Campbell, 'Magia y hermetismo', pp.11-24; Julio Caro Baroja, 'La magia en Castilla durante los siglos XV y XVII', in *Algunos mitos españoles y otros ensayos* (Madrid, 1944), p.259; Alva Vernon Ebersole, Jr., 'Supersticiones españolas', 35-48, and his *El ambiente español*, pp.153-76; Benito Jerónimo Feijóo y Montenegro, *Cuevas de Salamanca y Toledo, y mágica de España*, BAE vol.55 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1883), p.378; Luis G.A. Getino (ed.), 'Vida y obras de Fr. Lope de Barrientos', *Anales Salamantinos*, vol.I (Salamanca: Calatrava, 1927); Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, Obras completas, 7 vols (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1951), III, 331-7; Pavia, *Drama of the Siglo de Oro*, pp.140-42; Antonio Torres Alacalá, *Don Enrique de Villena: un mago al dintel del renacimiento* (Madrid: Porrúa Turanzas, 1983); and Samuel Waxman, 'Chapters on Magic in Spanish Literature', *RH*, 38 (1916), 325-463 (pp.404-05). The only incident Alarcón omits is the celebrated burning of the Marqués de Villena's library after his death under the supervision of Lope de Barrientos.

<sup>22</sup> '[Don Diego:] Oid de la cueva, Enrique,/ la relación verdadera./ Retórica la fama, de figura/ alegórica usando, significa/ la verdad de la cueva en la pintura' (II.13.775-79 [= *OC*, I, 411]).

The plot of the play is as follows. Having provoked a bloody confrontation with the watch, in which the *Alguacil Mayor* has been killed and the *Corregidor* wounded, a gentleman student, don Diego de Guzmán y Zúñiga, and his servant Zamudio, take refuge in the tiny windowless cell inhabited by Enrico, an ascetic polymath, who is skilled in the art of magic. Enrico saves them from their pursuers by rendering them invisible, and shelters them until they can obtain protection from the law by obtaining a royal pardon. During their stay, they are visited by don Enrique de Girón, who is a descendant of the legendary Marqués de Villena (and the current holder of that title). Like Enrico, don Enrique is a magician, and has come to Salamanca with the intention of verifying or disproving the legends surrounding the *cueva*, only to discover that his cousin, don García de Girón (who is a companion of the other students), has been arrested and imprisoned as a result of his involvement in the brawl with the watch.<sup>23</sup> Having satisfied his curiosity concerning the *cueva*, don Enrique goes in search of the *Corregidor* with the intention of

---

<sup>23</sup> For Alarcón to include both figures may be seen as yet another example of his wish to include every one of the traditions surrounding the *cueva*. Getino cites Pérez Mesa (who was a student in Salamanca c.1560) as having tried to ascertain the truth of the superstitions already surrounding the *cueva*:

Estudiando yo en Salamanca procuré averiguar la verdad, y hallé que el maestro Francés, gran filósofo y catedrático antiguo de Salamanca, estaba de la opinión de que la invención de esta fábula fue en la manera siguiente: un cetre de la iglesia de San Cipriano sabía mucho de las artes vedadas y prohibidas; enseñábanlas a algunos estudiantes, y entre ellos un hijo del Marqués de Villena, y porque no le hallasen en aquella lectura y pasantía, metíase con los discípulos a enseñarles en una cueva o concavidad grande, que había detrás del altar mayor de dicha iglesia, logró sacar algunos discípulos bien diestros y entre ellos al referido don Enrique de Villena. (*Vida y obras de Fr. Lope de Barrientos*, p.xlv, n.2).

This passage may well share a common source with Alarcón's play, or have served as a source itself: it contains a character who, though not directly implicated in the legend, nevertheless has many of the characteristics of Alarcón's Enrico; it introduces a descendant of the Marqués de Villena rather than the legendary magician himself; and it demonstrates the same concern with arriving at the truth which Alarcón's Enrique cites as his motive for visiting Salamanca, and which is evident in Alarcón's own treatment of his sources.

securing the release of his cousin. He is unsuccessful, however, as the *Corregidor's* injuries are too serious to permit an interview.<sup>24</sup>

Inevitably, the plot also contains a romantic element, but this is not much developed. Both don Diego and don García are in love with the wealthy and aristocratic doña Clara Maldonado. Though she returns Diego's love, he is too proud to marry her - since he is merely a *segundón*, without title or revenues, and so no match for her either in terms of wealth or social status - yet he persists in seeking to seduce her. To this end, don Diego enlists Enrico's help, and gains access to doña Clara's bedroom in a magic cabinet. Once there, however, he is unable to force her against her will, and concludes that he must either marry her or give her up. Conscious of his friend's imprisonment, don Diego then obtains Enrico's assistance to free don García from prison, and in this he is successful.

In Act III, Zamudio is rashly impudent to Enrico and don Enrique, with the result that they use their magic to teach him a cautionary lesson. The fugitives also hear that a *pesquisidor* with powers to adjudicate in the case of don García, and to investigate the supernatural gaolbreak and other superstitious practices, has arrived in Salamanca. Before long, Enrico is summoned to defend the art of magic in a public debate at the University. During this debate, Enrico, who wears the *borla azul* of a Doctor of Philosophy, is so convinced by the arguments put forward by his opponent, a Doctor of Theology, that he admits his error and renounces the art of magic. The *Pesquisidor* then announces that the students have been granted a pardon by the King, and don Diego receives word that he has inherited the title and

---

<sup>24</sup> A third student is also involved in the brawl. His name is don Juan de Mendoza, and he is portrayed as a married man who has all but given up the escapades of youth and who repeatedly counsels his friends to be more moderate in their actions. Though he rejoins don Diego after the brawl and meets the two magicians, don Juan plays no further part in the action, reappearing only in the closing scene to listen to the debate. This character would seem to be another *alter ego* for the author, and as such implies a rational and somewhat detached stance on his part as regards the action of the play.

revenues of his elder brother, the Marqués de Ayamonte, thereby enabling him to marry the chaste doña Clara, and on this note of concord the play ends.

The fortuitous nature of these seemingly *deus ex machina* solutions presents a considerable threat to the verisimilitude of the plot, such as it is. Yet this problem is overcome if one looks for the meaning of the *desenlace* (and of the play as a whole) not at the literal level of the plot, but in terms of the metaphorical significance of its structural symmetries.

The resolution of *La cueva de Salamanca* has a three-part structure which corresponds to the three levels of Church, State and the Family, and which reaffirms their corresponding codes of religion, law and honour: Enrico bows to the authority of the Church and the judgement of the Doctors of the university; the students receive their pardon on condition that they respect the representatives of the King's authority; and don Diego receives his inheritance and gives his hand to doña Clara. In each case, characters who have previously been characterised by heterodox, lawless or irresponsible behaviour conform voluntarily to the values embodied in the institutions of Christian society.

The structure of the *desenlace* shows that the structure of the play as a whole presents a challenge to authority on the same three levels: magic challenges divine authority; misrule challenges royal authority; and seduction challenges paternal authority (expressed in terms of honour). These three challenges are embodied respectively by: 1) Enrico and don Enrique; 2) Enrico and the students; and 3) Enrico and don Diego, the interlinking of the three levels lending structural and thematic unity to the play.

The sequence in which these three plot-strands are resolved in the dénouement of *La cueva de Salamanca* was clearly of some significance to Alarcón,

since he gives precedence to Enrico's acceptance of divine authority as represented by the Theologian, despite the prior arrival of a messenger from the Court bearing news which will enable the subsequent resolution of both the other two plot conflicts. It is unusual for Alarcón to withhold such vital information from the audience, even - as Lope advises dramatists in the *Arte nuevo* - to keep his audience in suspense. I believe that he does so here because he wishes in this manner to imply that the resolution of social conflict (both legal and sexual) is dependent upon the acceptance of divine authority signified by Enrico's renunciation of magic.

It is time to consider the nature of Alarcón's presentation of magic in this play. I will begin with the two magicians. Both claim to have studied magic in Italy under the tutelage of Merlin, whose pedigree and *apellido*, 'hijo del diablo' not only strike an appropriately ghoulish note but also indicate the illicit nature of the black arts.<sup>25</sup> However, following the death of his elder brother and his inheritance of the *mayorazgo*, don Enrique has given up the study of magic which occupied his youth, and devoted himself to the service of the Crown and to the government of his estates. Moreover, he comes to Salamanca as a seeker after rational truth rather than occult knowledge. Thus, aside from his earlier experiences in Italy, and his later use of magic to chastise Zamudio, his conduct is exemplary.

Unlike don Enrique, Enrico has eschewed worldly goods, and seeks only to nourish his intellect through his studies and his teaching at the University. Moreover, despite his admission that he has studied magic for many years, there is little or no evidence of his having practised it prior to his concealment of the fugitives in his cell, and in all other respects he seems the model of the Stoic

---

<sup>25</sup> For the most part, however, the arts which they profess to have studied (and this is especially true in the case of Enrique), are scientific or pseudoscientific rather than supernatural, and in each case, magic is represented as standing at the ultimate reach of knowledge, to be a progression or projection from the known into the half-known, rather than something demonic. See Hartzzenbusch, pp.86a,88a.

philosopher; indeed, it seems possible that Alarcón intended don Enrique and Enrico in some measure to represent the central Stoic virtues of *Prudentia* and *Sapientia* respectively.<sup>26</sup> The evidence for this is worth considering briefly.

In Act I, Enrico gives a brief account of his character, education and experiences in which almost every detail - his modesty, his candour, his condition as a self-made man, his capacity to endure adversity with patience, his abjuration of carnal love, the simple conditions in which he lives, and in his generous attitude towards those who seek knowledge - corresponds to the Stoic ideal of the wise man.<sup>27</sup> Enrico deviates from this ideal, however, in his grandiose claims to have

---

<sup>26</sup> For a summary of the principal features of Renaissance Neo-Stoicism, see Jason Lewis Saunders, *Justus Lipsius: The Philosophy of Renaissance Stoicism* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955), pp.68-70; and Mark Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp.175-77:

*Sapientia* is the virtue of the Stoic *sapiens*, the wise man, and has more specific qualities than those usually associated with the word 'wisdom'. The *sapiens* lives by virtue and reason; he lives according to nature, free from emotions such as anger, fear, and hope. He distinguishes rightly between those things that are 'indifferent' (such as riches, good health, success, and so on) and in the latter group he distinguishes between things that are to be preferred (*proegmena*) and those that are to be rejected. The Stoic *sapiens* accepts the will of God, which is the same as fate, but Lipsius adapts this part of Stoic theory for Christians by distinguishing between God's *providentia* and fate. The *sapiens* meets adversity with constancy, and he is ready to undertake public responsibilities because of his concern for human beings, whose sufferings he views with detachment and yet also with mercy (*misericordia*). Finally, the *sapiens* will use his *otium* well, to pursue the *negotium animi* and progress in philosophy. [...] Turning to the content (*res*) of Seneca's ethical writings, Lipsius defined it as lofty and noble, yet also as useful and wholesome. He found that Seneca looked to God and his providence as the source of good and urged his readers to follow fate willingly. He showed how the Stoic might overcome the emotions (*pathe* or *affectus*) and resist the vices (such as ambition, greed and lust). He inspired his readers to make virtue their goal and showed how this was in the power of the individual to achieve, by denying any validity to Fortune: 'He despises all external things and tramples underfoot the [...] kingdom of Fortune'.

<sup>27</sup> 'En letras y armas la nación famosa/ francesa me dió ser; padres honrados,/ si no de sangre tuve generosa,/ que no jacto valor de mis pasados:/ propia virtud es calidad gloriosa;/ paternas armas, timbres heredados,/ armas son ciertas de su autor primero:/ vana opinión las pasa al heredero./ En la niñez, las artes liberales/ me dieron en París honrosa fama;/ mas en la edad autora de los males/ que en el rostro el sutil vello derrama,/ fueron mis travesuras desiguales,/ nacidas del amor de cierta dama,/ causa de mi inquietud, hasta obligarme/ de Francia mis delitos a ausentarme./ Fuime de mar en mar, de tierra en tierra;/ varias costumbres vi, varias naciones,/ viviendo ya en la paz y ya en la guerra/ según el tiempo hallé y las ocasiones;/ mas aunque mi locura me destierra,/ llevé conmigo mis inclinaciones,/ que en cualquiera región, cualquiera estado,/ aprender siempre más fue mi cuidado./ Al fin topé en Italia un eminente/ en las ciencias varón, Merlín llamado;/ procuré su amistad, y cautamente/ a la estrecha llegué de grado en grado;/ él, que mi inclinación [e] intento siente,/ a mis letras [e] ingenio aficionado,/

power over the elements, since the Stoic *sapiens* recognised that he could have no power over the macrocosm, unless it was through the cultivation of the microcosm - his own intellect and moral conduct - so as to render himself indifferent to the vicissitudes of Fortune. It is only when the character of Enrico is recognised as a version of the Stoic *sapiens*, therefore, that the nature of his error becomes apparent: like Faustus, he has wrongly identified magic as the greatest form of wisdom. What the play's resolution shows is that Enrico should have progressed from philosophy, not to magic, which falsely promises him power over material things, but to theology, which would have led him to recognise the omnipotence of God. However, Enrico's acceptance of the supremacy of the Theologian's arguments, his renunciation of the study of magic, and his recognition of the Church's authority at the close of the play, serve to confirm his *sapientia*, and may even be intended to signal the difference between the Classical Stoicism of pagan antiquity, and the Christian Neo-Stoicism of Golden Age Spain.

The picture of Stoic virtue represented by the two magicians is completed in the figure of don Enrique, who has forsaken the contemplative life followed by Enrico in his pursuit of *sapientia*, in favour of the active life and the prudent exercise of moral virtue in the service of the King and his fellow men. Indeed, for the Stoics, whereas *sapientia* was the chief virtue associated with the contemplative

---

conmigo liberal, del alma rica/ los más altos tesoros comunica./ Aprendí la sutil quiromancia,/ profeta por las líneas de las manos;/ la incierta judicaria 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./ 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 esta aquí oculté vuestras figuras;/ no obró la santidad, obró la ciencia./ Ésta os ofrezco con entrañas puras/ a cualquier peligrosa contingencia,/ ajeno de interés, que bien me sobra/ el que saco de hacer la buena obra./ En este, pues, que veis, albergue chico,/ donde vine a parar por la noticia/ desta Universidad, paso tan rico/ cuan libre de ambición y de codicia;/ aquí mi ciencia a todos comunico;/ que no de lo que sé tengo avaricia./ Esto es y vale Enrico' (I.8.355-417 [= OC, I, 400-01]).

life, *prudentia* was the chief virtue associated with the active life, and the most desirable in those who held the responsibility of government.<sup>28</sup> Don Enrique's Stoic characteristics are less pronounced than Enrico's, but they are nevertheless apparent when, in Act II, he quotes from Seneca's *Letters*, a fundamental Stoic text: 'En una carta leí/ de las que a Lucilo escribe/ el gran Seneca, que vive/ el sabio dentro de sí' (II.2.1129-36 [= *OC*, I, 421]).<sup>29</sup> Since Alarcón has given his magicians such exemplary Stoic credentials, it is worth considering to what extent their Stoic principles have a relation to their use of magic.

It is immediately apparent that Enrico's use of magic in the play is not without moral and social benefits. On the four occasions when he uses magic - to conceal the students; to chastise Zamudio; to infiltrate don Diego into doña Clara's chamber; and to free don García from prison - the the outcome is ultimately beneficial, despite the illegitimate nature of the means employed: the students are maintained at liberty; don García is freed (it is questionable from the start whether the watch had the authority either to attempt the students' arrest, or to imprison don García); and don Diego witnesses the strength of doña Clara's virtue and resolves to obtain her honourably or not at all. However, only one of these instances - Zamudio's punishment - seems particularly Stoic in character.

The *gracioso* is punished for his mocking scepticism about the powers which the magicians claim to possess, and his punishment is designed to demonstrate these powers so as to teach him a lesson in humility. The manner of this punishment,

---

<sup>28</sup> See Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics*, p.142.

<sup>29</sup> Don Enrique's reference to 'la sabia Minerva' in Act I (I.13.662 [= *OC*, I, 408]), may also be indicative of his Stoic outlook, since Minerva commonly symbolised not only the virtue of *sapientia*, but also *prudentia*. See Morford, *Stoics and Neostoics*: '[...] Minerva, exemplifying sapientia, is [...] an appropriate stoic allegory' and later, 'Rubens [...] intended Minerva to be an allegory of prudentia. She was, in his words, *Numen Prudentiae*, and prudence was the fundamental attribute of the Stoic prince' (pp.208-09).

however, suggests that Alarcón also intended to offer his audience a lesson in the Neo-Stoic concept of *desengaño*.

Zamudio's punishment is in two parts. In the first of these, Enrico creates an illusion in which Zamudio believes that doña Clara's maid Lucía has arrived with a picnic for them both to take down to the banks of the Tormes. Zamudio is delighted with this turn of events and settles down with his girl to enjoy the picnic. Yet, as he raises the wineskin to drink, it disappears from his hands into the rock behind him, and when he turns to the picnic basket, the food has been transformed into coal. Suspecting the work of the magicians, he seeks reassurance in the idea that magic has no power over people, and goes to take Lucía in his arms. When he does so, however, she also disappears, to be replaced by a savage lion.<sup>30</sup> As he is recovering from the shock, the two magicians appear, and Zamudio discovers that he has never left Enrico's cell - a trick which foreshadows the central device of *La prueba de las promesas*.

In the second part, Zamudio's fury at having been tricked and frustrated in this way is allayed when Enrique offers to make amends by casting a spell which will ensure Lucía's love for him ('harás/ que ciegue amor sus sentidos' (II.5.1411-12 [= *OC*, I, 429])). However, the spell requires the teeth from the head of a quartered corpse, and Zamudio is reluctant to collect them, since, if caught, he risks execution himself. To encourage him, Enrique gives him a ring which he claims will serve as a talisman, and Zamudio accepts it, if only for its material value. Needless to say, Zamudio's errand proves to be both arduous and unpleasant: he wears himself out

---

<sup>30</sup> The theological basis for this detail is to be found in Aquinas, *ST*, I, qu.114, art.4, ad 2: 'Illae vero transmutationes corporalium rerum quae non possunt virtute naturae fieri, nullo modo operatione daemonum secundum rei veritatem perfici possunt; sicut quod corpus humanum mutetur in corpus bestiale [...]'. The transformation of Lucía which follows is only possible, therefore, because, unbeknown to Zamudio (and to the audience) all the circumstances of the picnic are illusory.

traipsing around the city behind the executioner who is carrying the severed head on a pike, and when at last he touches the head, he is horrified to hear it speak to him. Nevertheless, Zamudio controls his fright ('Ánimo, que lo peor/ es tener miedo a estas cosas,/ que a no ser dificultosas/ ¿Qué hazaña hiciera el valor? (II.7.1524-28 [= OC, I, 433])) but when he returns to his task, the head disappears in a spurt of flame.

These tricks against Zamudio, although broadly comic in tone, not only suggest the transient or illusory nature of material pleasures - eating, drinking and carnal love - but also show how the pursuit of these can lead to the misuse or corruption of even the most admirable moral qualities, as Zamudio demonstrates patience, endurance, courage and rationality in the pursuit of an illicit and worthless enterprise which is suggestive, in a macabre and ironic way, of the nature of a worldly existence untouched by Stoic wisdom.

In the context of the play as a whole, and of the Stoic ideas on which it is based, magic ceases to appear as merely spectacular or entertaining, but takes on a didactic quality appropriate to the play's academic setting. Indeed, this setting, and the symmetries of the play's structure - which suggest parallels between magic, riotous behaviour and carnal love - imply that magic should be seen as complementary to the youthful transgressions or *mocedades* of the students; that is, as a transitional phase on the way to maturity.

In literature, as in life, the University of Salamanca was as renowned for the escapades of its students as it was as a seat of learning.<sup>31</sup> I would argue, however, that Alarcón does not present these as opposites, but rather, that he understands the former (and magic) as a ludic activity, which is justified insofar as it enables those

---

<sup>31</sup> Cf Quevedo's description of student life in *El buscón*.

who participate in it to learn from their experiences. The practice of magic by Enrico and don Enrique ensures that this is the case, and the play's resolution indicates that the protagonists have reached the state of maturity for which their sojourn at the university was designed to prepare them. This maturity is marked by the acceptance of authority at several levels, and is based on a recognition (to which magic has led them) of the true nature of the relationships upon which that authority is based.

Seen in these terms, the play's resolution is not as inconsistent as it at first appears, and the presentation of magic more subtle and complex. Although, ultimately it proves to be both wise and prudent to submit to an acceptance of authority, whether that authority be expressed in terms of religion, loyalty or honour, it is a lesson that has to be learned from experience. I would argue, however, that the experience provided by the University or the magicians is analogous to that provided by that other school of illusion, so often denounced by theologians, the theatre.

In *La cueva de Salamanca*, Alarcón trades on public curiosity about the legends surrounding the *cueva* and the Marqués de Villena, and on the *vulgo's* taste for the illicit and the spectacular, in order to draw an audience. Once this has been done, however, he sets out both systematically to demystify those legends by providing rational explanations, and subtly to persuade his audience to view magic not as a source of personal gratification or as a means of rebelling against authority, or even, in a theatrical context, merely as a source of entertainment, but rather as a form of illusion with a potential for moral instruction. Moreover, he incorporates into the play elements of Stoic thought which provide not only material for moral *sententiae* but also underpin the play's dénouement. Enrico's renunciation of magic,

and the student's renunciation of their wild ways, signal not only the end of the play, but also the end of Alarcón's dramatic illusion. The implication is subtle but clear, and corresponds to one of the principal arguments in defence of the *comedia*: in a well-ordered society there is no need for didactic illusion, whether created by magicians, or by dramatists.

### *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*

Throughout this study I have argued that, in his plays, Alarcón advances the view that, when handled with wisdom and prudence, dissimulation and magical illusion may serve 1) as a means of revealing or confirming the truth about the moral character of others, and 2) as a means by which individuals may learn to value moral virtue above those aspects of life which have a more immediate appeal to the senses and to the imagination - and that they gain a certain kind of legitimacy as a result. I have also argued that this view is in line with, and serves to support, the arguments of those who sought to defend the *comedia* on the grounds that the drama uses fiction as a means of moral instruction, and that it is therefore beneficial to society.

However, *Quien mal anda en mal acaba* differs from the plays already discussed because, within it, magic and dissimulation alike serve not to reveal the truth but to conceal it, creating discord rather than social harmony, and fostering vice rather than virtue. In this play, magic is practised not by models of prudence and wisdom, as it is in *La cueva de Salamanca*, but by an illiterate Morisco in league with the Devil, and, whereas in *La verdad sospechosa* and *Las paredes oyen* the deceptions practised by don García and don Mendo are discreetly exposed by the

prudent dissimulation of others, in *Quien mal anda* there is no one who does not fall victim to the Devil's illusions or the lies told by the play's protagonist, Román Ramírez. This is not because they fail to recognise the value of circumspection, however, but because their desires and fears cloud their judgement.

Considered in terms of the analogy between dramatic and magical illusion, Román's *comedia* appears to confirm the worst fears of the theatre's opponents: it is the work of the devil; it stirs up the passions of its audience - doña Aldonza, and don Juan - to the detriment of reason; and it provokes scandalous and criminal behaviour - as doña Aldonza plans to elope with Román, and don Juan attempts the murder of don Félix and plots the adulterous rape of doña Aldonza on her wedding night. It is appropriate, therefore, that Alarcón supplies a conclusion in accordance with the only solution proposed by those who felt the theatre to be morally dangerous, namely, legal prohibition, with the result that *Quien mal anda* appears, paradoxically, to argue in favour of Inquisitorial censorship. It must be remembered, however, that the *comedia* which is censored is Román's and not Alarcón's. The difference between them is that Román's *comedia* has no didactic purpose, whereas Alarcón's *comedia* stands as a severely cautionary tale about the dangers faced by a society that has put worldly values and desires above moral virtue.

The plot of the play is as follows: In *Quien mal anda*, an aristocratic young lady by the name of doña Aldonza de Meneses is returning from the Court to her home town of Deza following the death of her father. When her coach stops at a wayside inn, she is seen by the *morisco*, Román Ramírez, who at once conceives a powerful desire to possess her. So strong is his desire, and so impossible by any natural means, that he calls on the Devil to help him. No sooner has he finished

speaking than the Devil appears in the guise of a *galán*, and they promptly seal a pact between them and follow doña Aldonza to Deza.

Doña Aldonza is betrothed to a certain don Juan de Torres, whose sister, doña Teodora, is in turn betrothed to don Félix, a close friend of don Juan. Plans for the double wedding are interrupted, however, when doña Aldonza is taken ill. She appears to be suffering from a kind of neurotic confusion, under the influence of which she cannot bear the sight of her fiancé. Going by the sinister alias of 'Demodolo' and posing as a doctor, Román offers his services to don Juan, who introduces him to his patient. As Román examines Aldonza's hand, using chiromancy to diagnose her illness, don Juan looks on jealously. It is not hard for Román to arrive at a diagnosis because the Devil himself is responsible for Aldonza's condition. Deciding to *engañar con la verdad*, Román informs don Juan that Aldonza is the victim of a spell cast by a false friend, and when don Juan presses him to reveal the identity of the guilty party, Román disingenuously claims to be unable to identify him but provides don Juan with a description ('señas') which lead him to suspect don Félix.

Later in the play, don Juan sees a devil disguised as Félix leaving doña Aldonza's house after dark. Believing the vision to be real, he seeks revenge in a duel and, after 'killing' his supposedly treacherous friend, takes refuge in a church. As don Félix is unharmed, don Juan's claims to have killed him cause others to believe that he too has lost his reason. Doña Aldonza, for her part, begins to take an interest in her doctor, impressed by his *ciencia* and his good looks, and her interest in him increases when she is permitted to 'discover' that he is 'really' Don Diego de Guzmán, a young nobleman travelling incognito to avoid an arranged marriage. Having won Aldonza's affections and having alienated her from don Juan,

Román proceeds towards consummating his desire by means of a fraudulent marriage.

In order to avoid any opposition from don Juan, Román stirs up his desire to avenge himself on doña Aldonza for her rejection of him, and suggests 1) that he should begin by denying her to don Felix by arranging for her to marry a stranger (something he has a right to do as Aldonza's betrothed), and 2) that he should then secretly usurp her new husband's place on the night of their wedding, thereby satisfying at a stroke both his lust and his desire for revenge. Román naturally intends that the third party should be none other than 'don Diego de Guzmán', and plans to elope with doña Aldonza at the first opportunity.

Only moments from success, however, Román's scheme is brought to an abrupt end by the sudden arrival of three *familiares* of the Inquisition. Knowing he is powerless against them, the Devil flees, breaking the spell of the illusion, and leaving Román to be arrested and exposed as an *hechicero*. When don Juan and doña Aldonza realise that they have been deceived they are at once reconciled and all four *hidalgos* are able to marry.

Alarcón's purpose this play appears to be twofold: to demonstrate the illusory and deceptive nature of worldly desires; and to indicate that true virtue is based on reason rather than desire. Without a foundation in reason, virtue becomes a sham. Accordingly the central devices in the play are those of substitution and counterfeit, as individuals and objects of real worth are repeatedly replaced by others of a pernicious or worthless nature, and as simulated virtue increasingly predominates over true virtue, and image over substance.

Thus, in the course of the play, don Juan substitutes the false friendship of 'Demodolo' for the true friendship of don Félix, and doña Aldonza substitutes the

bogus aristocrat ‘don Diego de Guzmán’ for the *hidalgo* don Juan (and a scandalous elopement for a respectable marriage). Similarly, the *gracioso* Tristán witnesses the transformation of gold *escudos* into worthless *vellón* currency, of bread and wine into ashes and ink, and of the *criada*, Leonor, into a hideous *figurón* (II.6, III.10 [= *OC*, III, 212-14, 237-39]). Moreover, the Stoic virtues of wisdom and prudence, which are central to the conception of *La cueva de Salamanca*, appear in this play as a false science (*ciencia*) in Román’s pose as the doctor, Demodolo, and as a false prudence (*prudencia*), expressed in his role as counsellor to don Juan, and in his pose as the son of a grandee.

This false prudence is also apparent in the behaviour of the other characters in the play, who repeatedly conceal the truth through equivocation and dissimulation, thereby adding complications to the plot: Don Juan’s suspicion of don Félix leads him to dissimulate regarding the state of his relationship with doña Aldonza (II.3.1149-52 [= *OC*, III, 205]), and his attempt to murder don Felix (II.12.1673-74 [= *OC*, III, 205]). Félix pretends not to be aware of doña Aldonza’s rejection of don Juan (II.12.1689-90 [= *OC*, III, 205]); doña Aldonza pretends to be unaware that ‘Demodolo’ is ‘Don Diego de Guzmán’ (II.xiv, p.222b-c); Román equivocates on the same subject (II.14 [= *OC*, III, 224-28]); and Tristán also dissimulates when don Juan asks him whether he delivered a bag of *escudos* to Demodolo (II.11 [= *OC*, III, 217-19]), and promises don Félix that he will not tell his master that he has seen Félix enter doña Aldonza’s house. In addition, the play contains other strategies normally associated with prudence: don Juan sets Tristán to spy on doña Aldonza (II.9.1495-96 [= *OC*, III, 215]); Lucía eavesdrops on a conversation between Román and the Devil from behind an arras (II.5.1300-04 [= *OC*, III, 210]); don Juan overhears a conversation between doña Aldonza and don Félix from a similar

position (II.12 [= *OC*, III, 219]); and Aldonza writes to Madrid for confirmation of don Diego's circumstances (II.12.1701-08 [= *OC*, III, 205]). Though in this play (as elsewhere in Alarcón's work), the majority of these strategies are employed with the aim of revealing the truth, here they serve only to mislead their authors, whose emotional involvement with the outcome causes them to misinterpret the evidence ('señas') of their eyes and ears. True prudence is dependent upon reason, and reason is a quality which is conspicuously absent from the behaviour of the play's protagonists, Román, don Juan and doña Aldonza, all of whom are unbalanced by passion or proclaim themselves to be mad ('loco', 'sin seso') in the course of the action.<sup>32</sup>

The plot of *Quien mal anda* combines elements from two distinct types of *comedia*, the *comedia de magia* and the *comedia de enredo*, which employ illusion and *industria* respectively as the primary means by which characters seek to attain their ends. Yet, the advice given to Román by the Devil in Act II: 'Usa de la industria en tanto/ que provechosa te fuere;/ y en lo que ella no valiere,/ ocurrirás al encanto' (II.4.1265-68 [= *OC*, III, 209]) suggests that magical illusion and *industria* are closely associated. Thus, as well as the numerous instances of illusion in the play (the distortion of Aldonza's perception of don Juan; the transfiguration of Román; the devil's imposture of don Félix; and the transformation of *escudos* into *vellón*, and of bread and wine, first into a corpse and then into ashes and ink), there are also examples of *industria* worthy of any *comedia de enredo*, such as Román's scheme to marry doña Aldonza (which resembles Persio's scheme to marry Ardenia

---

<sup>32</sup> '[Román:] ¡Perdido estoy! ¡Estoy loco!/[...] pues te sigo, bella Aldonza,/ forzado de mis pasiones' (I.5.133, 49-50 [= *OC*, III, 176]); '[Lionor:] Es tan turbado y confuso [el sentido de Aldonza],/ que por gran rato no entiende,/ y la pasión se suspende/ de las potencias el uso' (1.9.396-99 [= *OC*, III, 183]); '[Doña Aldonza:] Sólo temo ya perder/ con tanta ventura el seso' (III.5.2047-48 [= *OC*, III, 232]); '[Don Juan:] Doctor amigo,/ loco estoy' (III.15.2431 [= *OC*, III, 205]).

in *El desdichado en fingir*, a quintessential Alarconian *comedia de enredo*), and the ‘bed trick’ suggested to don Juan by Román (which also appears in *La industria y la suerte*, another play of a similar type).

The grafting together of two distinct plot types in this play is significant because it indicates that the difference between Román’s behaviour and that of the quartet of *damas* and *galanes* is one of degree rather than kind. As a Moor, and as a man without honour or status, Román is the antitype of the Catholic, Neo-Stoic and aristocratic ideals which are embodied in the exemplary magicians of *La cueva de Salamanca* and to which the Christian *hidalgos* in the play should aspire. Yet, as the play progresses, type and antitype converge, as Román takes on the outward appearance of nobility and virtue whilst the Christians readily succumb to the illusions of desire. Were Román to succeed in his scheme to marry Aldonza, Christian and Moor would become one flesh and the conquest of reason by passion would be complete. In the event, however, Providence intervenes, and the final triumph of passionate error is averted through the intervention of those agents of Divine justice, the *familiares* of the Inquisition.

In *Quien mal anda*, therefore, Alarcón’s combination of elements from the *comedia de magia* with others from the *comedia de enredo* allows him to show that the value of illusion and *industria* is dependent upon the use to which they are put. Moreover, his own use of such devices within the play is justified by the fact that he employs them as a means of exposing the moral weaknesses of his society, and permits him to emphasise their danger in a way that is beyond the normal scope of satirical comedy. The play is only about Román and his pact with the Devil insofar as he serves as a symbol of the insidious nature of passionate desire and the dangers

it presents to the maintenance of the ideals of Christian Spain.<sup>33</sup> The purpose of this play is not to satisfy the curiosity of its audience regarding the celebrated case of the Moorish *curandero*, or to gratify their taste for the spectacular and the scandalous, but rather, to make them recognise the value of Christian morality by showing them the dangers that attend its neglect in the persons of the *hidalgos* of Deza. Thus, the play is designed to challenge rather than to gratify its audience, and dramatic themes and theatrical devices with a strong commercial appeal are made to serve a moral purpose.

### *La prueba de las promesas*

The third of Alarcón's magic plays which I will deal with here, *La prueba de las promesas*, is also fundamentally Neo-Stoic in conception. It presents a magician, don Illán de Toledo, who is both learned and aristocratic, wise and prudent, and who uses his art to test the constancy of his daughter's suitors in both prosperity and adversity, thereby revealing the value of constancy and reason, the illusory nature of passion and the transience of worldly goods.

The consequences of don Illán's illusion are highly desirable and appropriate to the moral function of drama: vice is exposed and punished, virtue is promoted and rewarded, and harmony is restored to a society riven by civil strife. Yet, as Charles E. Perry has observed, all this is achieved by means which don Illán himself admits to be illicit: '[Don Illán:] Don Juan, no os quiero negar/ que sé el arte; que

---

<sup>33</sup> The Devil and the Morisco fulfil almost identical rôles as the 'old enemy', always ready to exploit the weaknesses of Christian Spain. As Ottmar Hegyi observes in his study of the play: 'the 'villain' happens to represent an alien religion, often referred to as a 'diabolical sect' in the theological writings of the age' ('Literary Motifs and Historical Reality in Ruiz de Alarcón's *Quien mal and en mal acaba*', *Renaissance and Reformation/ Renaissance et Reforme*, 6 (1982), 249-63, p.261).

usar della es culpa [...]’ (1.7.569-71 [= *OC*, II, 762]). This is an undeniably important point, but, as I hope to show, it is not sufficient to support Perry’s contention that don Illán’s use of magic invalidates the result of his *prueba*.<sup>34</sup>

*La prueba de las promesas* is based on *Exemplo XII* of the *Libro de Patronio o el Conde Lucanor* (of 1330-1335), by don Juan Manuel (1282-1348). Though don Juan Manuel’s tale of don Illán de Toledo and the Dean of Santiago involves a magical illusion very similar to that contained in Alarcón’s play, in the course of the tale magic is never criticised either by the characters or the narrator, and the most notable aspect of the tale remains its exemplary quality - an aspect which is emphasised by Baltasar Gracián in his *Agudeza y arte de ingenio* of 1648. In this work, Gracián enthusiastically commends the exemplary combination of entertainment and moral instruction to be found in don Juan Manuel’s tales and singles out *Exemplo XII* as a particularly fine example, retelling it in its entirety and almost verbatim.<sup>35</sup> Alarcón’s selection of such an exemplary source as the basis for his own play may help to explain why, in this play more than in any other, he evidently felt able to suggest that the twin goals of moral instruction and the service

---

<sup>34</sup> See Perry, ‘Means and Magic’, p.16b.

<sup>35</sup> See Baltasar Gracián, *Agudeza y arte de ingenio*, edited by Evaristo Correa Calderón, 2 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1969), II, 77-78, 210-12:

Por esta misma sutileza se fingen algunas historias o cuentos donosos, para sacar dellos alguna ejemplar moralidad. Fue eminente en estas históricas ficciones el sabio y prudente príncipe don Juan Manuel en su libro de *El Conde Lucanor*, siempre agradable, aunque siete veces se lea [...] Por cuentos y por chistes han intentado algunos sabios el introducir la moral filosofía y comunicar sus desengaños a la razón; es de gran artificio, porque con la añagaza de la dulzura de la narración, se va entrando la sagacidad y la enseñanza prudente. Fue único en este género el príncipe don Juan Manuel, en su nunca debidamente alabado libro de *El conde Lucanor*, entretejido de varias historias, cuentos, ejemplos, chistes y fábulas, que entretenidamente enseñan. Entre todos es muy sazonado este cuento, en que pondera la ingratitud de los que levantados a gran fortuna se olvidan de sus amigos, y aun corresponden con agravios a los mismos que los ayudaron a subir. [...] Nótese lo primero, la relevante moralidad, la valentía del empeño, y cómo se va enredando la ficción, sobre todo la ingeniosa y pronta salida. Fue sin duda varón de grande entendimiento el Príncipe [...]

of the common good might be sufficient cause to legitimise means otherwise regarded as illicit.

Further confirmation that Alarcón intended don Illán to be seen as an exemplary figure is provided in Act II, when don Enrique compares don Illán's prudence and wisdom to that of Numa (II.1.1139-42 [= *OC*, II, 778]). The comparison is apt, since Numa appears in Alfonso de Palencia's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* (Seville, 1491) as a Stoical and ascetic philosopher king, noted as much for his piety as for his magical powers, who led Rome without bloodshed from a state of warring strife to one of civil peace. Indeed, the similarities between Plutarch's account of Numa's life and Alarcón's portrayal of don Illán are such as to suggest that the former may have played a part in shaping Alarcón's version of Juan Manuel's *Exemplo*.<sup>36</sup>

Alarcón adapted his source in three main ways. Firstly, he replaced the ecclesiastical details of don Juan Manuel's *Exemplo* with secular ones, substituting the Royal Court at Madrid for the Papal Court at Rome, and the young *galán*, don Juan de Ribera, for the Dean of Santiago. This brought his play closer to the experience of his audience and had the added benefit of allowing him to introduce into his plot the romantic *enredos* of which audiences have always been fond. Accordingly, he gave don Illán a daughter, doña Blanca, and provided a rival for don Juan in don Enrique de Vargas. To this familiar pattern, however, he added a broader social context by introducing the historical detail of a feud between the

---

<sup>36</sup> See Alfonso de Palencia, *La primera y segunda parte de Plutarcho. Las vidas [...]*, 2 vols. (Seville: Pedro de Colonia, 1491), I, fols. 38r.a-b., 43r.a-43v.a., 47v.b. In the *Lives*, Plutarch compares the life of Numa to that of the Spartan king Lycurgus, who (as 'Licurgo') is the protagonist of another of Alarcón's comedias, *El dueño de las estrellas*. See Plutarch's *Lives*, ed.cit., I, 204-401.

houses of Toledo and Vargas (influenced, perhaps, by the references to the internal divisions of early Rome in Plutarch's account of the life of Numa).

The plot of Alarcón's play is as follows. Don Illán wishes his daughter to marry don Enrique de Vargas in order to put an end to the feud between their two houses. Doña Blanca, however, is in love with don Juan de Ribera, and is appalled at her father's suggestion that she marry a man she has always regarded as an enemy. She therefore asks her father for time to adjust to the prospect of the marriage, ostensibly for reasons of virginal modesty, but really to give her an opportunity to think of a way of avoiding the match. Don Illán is not deceived, and confirms his suspicion that doña Blanca is in love with don Juan by questioning her maid, Lucía. He then bribes Lucía, not only to assist don Enrique's suit in any way possible (provided it does not endanger his honour), but also falsely to impute to don Juan a number of secret defects, so as to persuade doña Blanca to change her mind.

When don Juan learns from his servant Tristán that don Illán is a skilled magician, he immediately resolves to ask him to instruct him in the art, motivated as much by an eager desire to learn magic as by the opportunity this will give him to see doña Blanca. However, don Illán is reluctant to agree to don Juan's proposition, and warns him that it is illegal to teach magic to others. Don Juan persists, however, claiming that his own character and breeding are such that he will never betray the magician's secret, and promising eternal gratitude if don Illán will only consent to be his tutor. At last, don Illán agrees to the young man's request, but resolves to use his magic to test his promises of secrecy and gratitude. Having consented, however, don Illán proposes that they start immediately, pausing only to examine the qualities of a colt named 'Hijo del fuego' which he intends to send to

the Court. After instructing the groom, Pérez, to saddle the animal, he conducts don Juan to his study and invites him to examine his library, and, while don Juan's attention is divided between his books and his daughter, who is also present, don Illán casts his spell.

The effect of this spell is to bestow on don Juan a series of honours and titles which will see him rise rapidly from his actual status as a poor *segundón* to the position of *privado* to the king. Thus, even before his first lesson in magic can begin, a messenger arrives bearing the news that, following the sudden death of three of his relatives, don Juan has inherited the title of Marqués de Tarifa.

At once, don Juan's manner changes, and, in an affected and imperious tone, he announces his imminent departure for Madrid, where he intends to make his obeisances to the king, and requests that don Illán follow him there with his entire household. Moreover, on hearing the news of his advancement, don Juan also makes a number of domestic appointments, granting the post of *camarero* to the messenger who has brought the news of his inheritance, and making Tristán his *secretario*. Yet when don Illán requests that don Juan appoint his son Melchor - a former student of jurisprudence at Salamanca - to manage his estate, don Juan fobs him off with a glibly flattering excuse, and remarks that he hopes to prove his worth 'en pretensiones más altas'. Despite such assurances, however, and despite his continued 'good fortune', don Juan becomes increasingly unreceptive to don Illán's repeated petitions on behalf of his son. Furthermore, don Juan's elevation in society also affects his relationship with doña Blanca, since he now considers himself too grand to marry her, and she refuses to be merely his mistress. The final proof of don Juan's ingratitude is provided when don Illán announces his intention to abandon his fruitless *pretensiones* at Court and return with Blanca to Toledo, and don Juan

responds by threatening to denounce him to the Inquisition as an *hechicero*. No sooner has don Juan finished speaking, however, than don Illán breaks the spell he has cast, and as he does so, Pérez reappears to announce that ‘Hijo del fuego’ is ready to be ridden, and with this don Juan discovers that he has never left Toledo.<sup>37</sup>

The dishonourable nature of don Juan’s conduct following his advancement contrasts unfavourably with the conduct of don Enrique, who demonstrates patience in adversity, humility when he receives a *hábito* of the Order of Santiago, constancy in his affections and honourable intentions towards doña Blanca, and faith in don Illán’s promise to favour his suit. This contrast is not lost on Blanca herself, and she willingly consents to marry the man she had formerly regarded as her enemy.

There is no question that don Illán practises deception in this play. In addition to his use of illusion and the lies he encourages Lucía to tell about don Juan, he repeatedly dissimulates and equivocates, and behind his formal courtesies there is always the sense of a man biding his time. His subtlety in this regard is apparent, for example, when don Juan asks him for a favour, and he replies, with evident mental reservations: ‘Seguro podéis mandarme’/ (*aparte*: como a Blanca no pidáis)’ (I.7.539-40 [= *OC*, II, 761]).

The concept of ‘mental reservation’ derives from Augustine’s characterisation of the lie as speech that is contrary to what is in the mind (‘*contra mentem*’).<sup>38</sup> This definition was further emphasised by Aquinas, and informed the defence of mental reservation advanced by Martín de Azpilcueta, and subsequently debated by other

---

<sup>37</sup> A similar device to the preparation of the horse is found in *El conde Lucanor*, where a servant enters with a dish of roast partridges which he has been instructed to cook at the beginning of the tale. The substitution is significant, however, since the bridling of horses is a metaphor for the imposition of restraint upon the passions fundamental to Alarcón’s essentially Stoic conception of nobility.

<sup>38</sup> See Augustine, *Contra Mendacium*, ch.x.

Spanish casuists such as Juan Azor, and by Francisco Suárez in his commentary on the *Secunda Secundae* of Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*.<sup>39</sup> The nature and origins of 'mental reservation' are set out in detail by Perez Zagorin in his *Ways of Lying*, but the important point here is that it was a form of falsehood which was justified by its apologists as a means of avoiding the greater evils of outright lying on the one hand, and the actual experience of hurt on the other, and thus, like dramatic fiction, or magic (in Alarcón's plays), represented an ethically controversial means of attaining morally desirable ends.<sup>40</sup>

Don Illán's promise to don Juan is also deceitful, since, as Perry remarks: '[...] contrary to what he leads Juan to believe, the magician has no intention of teaching the young man magic'.<sup>41</sup> However, whilst don Illán certainly deceives don Juan on this point, he does so, not because he makes a promise which he has no intention of fulfilling, but because he misleads don Juan as to the precise nature of his promise to him. Don Illán has two good reasons for deceiving don Juan. The first of these is that, as don Illán himself observes, it would be illegal for him to consent to don Juan's request; and the second is that, by leading don Juan to believe that he has consented, don Illán is able to put the young man's integrity to the test, thereby exposing his hypocrisy and facilitating his own morally and socially beneficial purposes.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> See Aquinas, *ST*, II-IIae, qu. 110, art. 1-3; qu. 111, art. 1.

<sup>40</sup> See Zagorin Perez, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990), pp. 15-37, 153-85.

<sup>41</sup> Perry, 'Means and Magic', p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> As don Illán himself points out, no one has the right to ask another to commit an illegal act: 'Mas puesto que entrambos fueros,/ como sabéis, han vedado/ el enseñarla [= la magia], excusado/ quedaré de obedeceros;/ que al amigo, pienso yo/ que han de pedirse las cosas/ grandes y dificultosas,/ mas las ilícitas no;' (I.7.573-80 [= *OC*, II, 762]).

The true nature of don Illán's promise to don Juan is apparent only on careful consideration of the conversation between the two men. The relevant part of their exchange reads as follows:

Don Juan	No por injustos recelos <i>de enseñarme</i> os excuséis; que <i>si tal merced</i> me hacéis, testigos hago a los cielos desta palabra que os doy, que siempre vuestra ha de ser mi hacienda, vida y poder, cuanto valgo y cuanto soy.
Don Illán	Vencido de vos me veo: forzoso es, don Juan, serviros, <i>y a cualquier precio cumpliros</i> <i>un tan ardiente deseo</i> .

As a lawyer, Alarcón cannot have been unaware of the potential ambiguity of language, and of the need to exclude such ambiguities from formal contracts. It seems significant, therefore, that he does not do so at this crucial moment in the interview between don Illán and don Juan. There are two key points to note here: the first is the absence of any specific reference to instruction *in magic*; and the second is the ambiguity inherent in the phrases 'tal merced' and 'un tan ardiente deseo', since don Illán's use of the latter phrase amounts only to a promise to fulfil *a desire of a comparable intensity*. Also worthy of note here is the fact that the word 'precio' has previously been used in the play only to describe doña Blanca (I.1.12 [= OC, II, 747]). Don Illán's promise is therefore both a lie, in that it is intended to deceive, and not a lie, in that it expresses what is in his mind: don Illán does not intend to break the law by teaching don Juan magic, but does intend to use magic to teach him a lesson by satisfying his desire for power - a desire which proves in

the course of the play to be at least as strong as desire to learn magic or his desire for Blanca - and which will cost him the loss of doña Blanca's love.

Similarly, Lucía's claims that don Juan has false teeth, foul breath and conceals the thinness of his legs by padding out his stockings, are not the outright lies they initially appear to be; rather, they seem to reflect the view expressed by Augustine that 'apparent cases of dissimulation in the scriptures are really prophetic, mystical, or figurative statements conveying a truth if rightly understood: it is not a lie when signs signifying one thing are put for another to serve the understanding of a truth'.<sup>43</sup> Thus, though not literally true, the defects attributed to don Juan by Lucía have a figurative truth, in that they are suggestive of the hypocrisy, vanity, and moral corruption which become apparent only in his subsequent actions.

Indeed, Lucía's slanders conform to a pattern discernible throughout the play, in which statements made in a context of deceit prefigure their subsequent realisation. At the end of Act II, for example, doña Blanca pretends to favour don Enrique in order to make don Juan jealous. Yet, in discussing the causes of love in her conversation with don Enrique, she expresses a direct relationship between constancy in loving, trust and the reciprocation of love which unwittingly reflects her father's design, and which the action of the play will later bear out.<sup>44</sup>

The context of deceit in which they are expressed initially serves to subvert and devalue moral concepts of this type, yet as the audience becomes aware that these concepts are inherent in the action of the play they gain credibility and become

---

<sup>43</sup> Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p.24. The reference to Augustine here is to *De Mendacio*, Ch.v.

<sup>44</sup> '[Doña Blanca:] Don Enrique, un firme amar,/ servir, callar, padecer,/ las fieras sabe amansar,/ y obliga, si no a pagar,/ al menos a agradecer. [...] El pasado disfavor/ no fue porque vuestro amor,/ Enrique, no agradecí,/ sino por tocar así/ su fineza en mi rigor. [...] si cerca de ser pagada/ está la afición creída,/ yo os comienzo ya a pagar,/ pues os llego a confesar/ que agradezco, por creer/ que llegar a agradecer/ es el principio de amar' (II.12.1769-73, 1784-88, 1792-98 [= *OC*, II, 795]).

a means of assessing the conduct of the dramatic characters. Lucía's slanders and don Illán's magic are indeed distasteful and illicit and as such they serve to provoke the audience's sympathy for don Juan; nevertheless, they fit so closely into the moral framework of the play that the audience is eventually obliged (along with Blanca, and, probably, in advance of her), to revise its initial opinion of the two *galanes*, and, in doing so, to re-evaluate the deceptions practised by don Illán.

Though, in the case of don Illán's promise to don Juan, the young man's desire makes him especially vulnerable to be deceived by don Illán's subtleties, it is important to realise that such veiled truths are in any case all but impossible to penetrate: thus, Lucía is instructed to invent 'defetos/ importantes y secretos,/ porque no pueda probar/ lo contrario' (I.2.170-73 [= *OC*, II, 751]), whilst, in the case of don Illán's magic, there is a seamless and imperceptible transition from reality to illusion. Indeed, so subtle is don Illán, that interpretations of the kind set out above must remain conjectural, even in the context of a critical study such as this. The essential point here is that, in a world as deceptive and illusory as the one portrayed in *La prueba de las promesas*, in which appearances almost inevitably deceive, the only defence against moral error lies in an adherence to the principles of Stoic virtue.

As far as this play is concerned, the most important of these is constancy in the face of changing Fortune. This is apparent in the advice don Illán gives to don Enrique at the start of Act II: '[Don Illán:] Aunque tan dura se muestra/ Blanca, no desconfiéis. Porfiad con sufrimiento,/ y obligad con firme fe' (II.1.1111-12 [= *OC*, II, 777]), and in Blanca's words to him at the end of the same act: '[Blanca:] Don Enrique, un firme amar,/ servir, callar, padecer,/ las fieras sabe amansar,/ y obliga, si no a pagar,/ al menos a agradecer' (II.12.1769-73 [= *OC*, II, 795]). Accordingly,

inconstancy or changeability is regarded as a vice, as is evident from Tristán's remarks to don Juan at the beginning of Act III: '[Tristán:] Señor, ¿Qué es esto? ¿Qué desigualdades/ muestras en tus pasiones, siendo indinas/ de un heroico varón las variedades?' (III.1.1859-61 [= *OC*, II, 798]).

Don Illán's illusion simulates the effects of Fortune, and at the same time indicates the insubstantial nature of those effects: the 'riquezas, honras, y oficios' received by don Juan are merely the products of 'encanto y mágicas apariencias'. Don Juan's error is less that he believes them to be real than that he values them more highly than his obligations to don Illán and his daughter, and to moral principles in general. Thus, his concern to insure his newly acquired prosperity in the face of Fortune's changeability determines his decision not to marry Blanca: '[Don Juan:] Como sigue tormento a la bonanza/ en el mar de la vida, y la fortuna/ sólo sabe ser firme en la mudanza;/ quisiera, pues mis pies huellan la luna,/ poner un clavo en la volaria rueda,/ y al frágil edificio una columna,/ emparentando ahora con quien pueda/ prestar a mi defensa un muro fuerte,/ cuando a mi dicha adversidad suceda' (III.1.1906-14 [= *OC*, II, 799]), and his anxiety concerning his *privanza* also leads him to refuse don Illán's request that he bestow a *hábito* on his son Melchor (II.7 [= *OC*, II, 789]).<sup>45</sup>

Whilst don Juan's recognition of the power of Fortune is understandable in view of his rapid (and unearned) advancement, his response to it is misguided, since, in seeking to control Fortune, he neglects both the Stoic view that the only defence against fortune is the self-sufficiency of moral virtue, and the view of the Christian Neo-Stoics, that the vagaries of fortune were a test of one's faith. Moreover, don Juan's vision of life as governed by Fortune, and his consequent decision to live

---

<sup>45</sup> Cf II.8.1623-42 [= *OC*, II, 791].

according to a worldly and somewhat Machiavellian conception of prudence and 'reason of state', imply that existence is not governed by any higher intelligence, and suggest an essentially non-Christian or atheistic world-view.<sup>46</sup> In this play, however, such an intelligence does indeed exist in the persona of don Illán, whose magical powers enable him to simulate prosperity and adversity at will so as to test the moral character of don Juan and don Enrique (not to mention doña Blanca and Tristán); in this sense don Illán functions, within this largely secular play, as substitute for God, and should therefore be regarded as an agent of divine rather than demonic powers despite early appearances to the contrary (as is the case with another of Alarcón's magicians, Amet of *La manganilla de Melilla*).<sup>47</sup>

By contrast with don Juan, whose behaviour is characterised by *mudanzas*, a preoccupation with the effects of Fortune, and a growing tendency to outbursts of amorous passion, jealousy and anger, don Enrique comes increasingly to serve as a model of Stoic virtue, as he successively overcomes the passionate and jealous tendencies in his own nature, shows himself to be capable of acting according to reason, and demonstrates both constancy and faith.

Nowhere are these qualities more apparent than in the opening scene of Act II, in which don Enrique meets don Illán at Court for the first time. In this scene,

---

<sup>46</sup> The phrase 'razón de estado' is twice used by Tristán to describe his master's behaviour: 'Ya estás del todo mudado;/ que no sufren, señor,/ las sinrazones de amor/ con las razones de estado' (II.8.1643-46 [= OC, II, 791]), 'Alta razón de estado!' (III.1.1915 [= OC, II, 799]). As I will show in Chapter 6, it was commonly used in a pejorative sense and associated with a 'false prudence' or cunning (*astucia*).

In *The Prince*, Machiavelli, makes the point that it is harder for those who have acquired their state by Fortune to preserve it, because they lack both the experience of government and the inherent qualities which are required in a governor. However, Machiavelli also regards Fortune as playing a very significant role in the affairs of men, and advises that princes should adapt their policy in accordance with the times. See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, translated by George Bull, Penguin Classics (London: Penguin, 1981), Chapter 7, 'New principalities acquired by fortune', and Chapter 25, 'How far human affairs are governed by Fortune and how Fortune can be opposed' (pp.53-61, 130-33).

<sup>47</sup> '[Vanegas: ...] De que el morabito Amet/ fuese ángel hubo sospechas,/ como las causas y efetos/ que habéis visto lo comprueban;' (III.13.2873-76 [= OC, II, 270]).

don Enrique's expressions of his constant love for doña Blanca also indicate that he conceives of the world as being governed by a God who acts as a First Cause, or Prime Mover, providentially guiding events towards good ends:

Don Enrique	[...] ¿cómo puedo dejar de seguir mi norte? Si Blanca vino a la corte, ¿Yo, qué he de hacer en Toledo? La causa hermosa a quien Dios hizo en mí tan eficaz, que por ella en dulce paz me reconcilié con vos, ¿no será eficaz también para que deje por ella mi patria? Patria es aquélla donde tiene amor su bien. Dadme que a los elementos sus centros se les mudaran, que al punto desampararan sus conocidos asientos. Blanca es el centro ¡Ay de mi en quien vivo y por quien muero, y el cielo móvil primero que me lleva tras de sí. <sup>48</sup>
-------------	--

Later in the scene, don Enrique questions don Illán's assertion that he is on don Enrique's side in the matter of his daughter's marriage on the grounds that don Illán's actions indicate that he now favours don Juan. In reply, don Illán reminds him of his reputation in Toledo as a man of honour, wisdom and prudence, and cautions him not to judge by his actions but rather by their consequences: 'Jamás acuséis la acción/ hasta ver della el efeto' (II.1.1157-58 [= *OC*, II, 778]). Once don Illán has taken his leave of him, don Enrique asks himself whether the magician can

---

<sup>48</sup> II.1.1083-98 [= *OC*, II, 776-77]. This is not the only passage with Christian overtones. For example, don Illán's opening speech invites a parallel between his intentions for his daughter, and God's plan to redeem the world through Christ's sacrifice: 'De las desventuras largas/ [...] quiere el cielo soberano/ que alegre fin se vea,/ querida Blanca, y que sea/ el medio de paz tu mano./ [...] estas bodas serán/ remedio de tantas muertes' (I.1.1-8, 59-60 [= *OC*, II, 747]).

influence his daughter's opinion by means of magic, and comes to the commendably orthodox conclusion that, whilst don Illán cannot use his magic to oblige others to obey him, he can use it to persuade them by the creation of illusory appearances.<sup>49</sup> This statement is significant because it contradicts Perry's view that the play's protagonists have no choice as to how they act, and that don Illán's *prueba*, and, by extension, the argument of Alarcón's play, is therefore invalid.<sup>50</sup> However, this conclusion does not settle don Enrique's doubts concerning the nature of don Illán's motives.

Don Enrique has good reason to suspect don Illán of playing him false: there is a history of enmity between their two families (I.1.1-4 [= *OC*, II, 747]); he has seen don Illán agree to follow don Juan to Madrid with his daughter (I.13.1013 [= *OC*, II, 774]); he knows that don Illán has visited him there (II.1 [= *OC*, II, 776]); and he has heard him ask favours of don Juan. What is more, when don Enrique confronts don Illán with his suspicions, rather than explain his behaviour, Blanca's father twice replies with the enigmatic phrase 'yo me entiendo' (II.1.1130 [= *OC*, II, 776], III.17.2616 [= *OC*, II, 821]). So it is that don Enrique has to make a choice, either to trust don Illán not to break his word or to suspect him of behaving dishonourably.<sup>51</sup> It cannot be easy for Don Enrique to decide to trust don Illán and

---

<sup>49</sup> '[Don Enrique:] Dicen que es mágico, bien./ ¿En la magia hay potestad/ de obligar la voluntad,/ y hacer favor el desdén?/ No, mas puede en las criaturas / fingir varios accidentes,/ puede imitar los ausentes/ con fantásticas figuras./ Puedenos representar/ en un hora muchos años,/ y que vé pueblos extraños,/ él que se está en un lugar./ Y así pues el albedrío/ la causa extrínseca mueve/ para que elija o reprueve;/ que podrá poner confío/ con engaño o con verdad/ don Illán en los sujetos/ tales gracias y defetos/ que muevan la voluntad' (II.2.1179-98 [= *OC*, II, 779]). As I have observed previously, don Enrique's conclusions are wholly in accordance with the teaching of the Church on this matter.

<sup>50</sup> See Perry, 'Means and Magic', pp.14, 17.

<sup>51</sup> '[Don Enrique: ...] Él, ¿no me dijo:/ "Don Enrique, yo me entiendo:/ o mis libros quemaré,/ o alcanzaréis vuestro intento"?/ ¿No es noble? Pues, pensamiento,/ ceda la duda a la fe./ Guardar sus ordenes quiero,/ y creer que cumplirá/ la palabra que me da,/ como tan gran caballero./ Él sabe el modo importante:/ no examine - que es error -/ ni el criado a su señor,/ ni al que sabe el ignorante' (II.2.1209-18 [= *OC*, II, 780]).

yet he does so. His trust, however, is not founded upon a belief in the power of magic; rather it represents an act of faith in the inherent nobility of don Illán's character, and one which indicates don Enrique's own virtue.

The two *galanes* thus come to present a contrast between arrogance and humility, suspicion and trust, superficial posturing and genuine nobility of character. Both are ignorant of the whole truth but make their decisions based upon the different conceptions they have of the world. In choosing between them, doña Blanca also makes a moral choice and her position is analogous with that of the audience: Blanca is free to choose but is subject to the persuasive influence of her father in the form of magic, just as the audience is subject to the persuasive techniques of the dramatist.

Initially, Blanca is blinded by her passion for don Juan, and deaf to the rational arguments of her father. For its part, an audience would be quick to identify don Juan as the 'romantic lead'. When don Juan is first introduced to the audience, he is shown to be both passionate and inventive, ideal qualities for the rôle of *galán* in what has the appearance of being a *comedia de enredo*. In this context, he shows remarkable bravado in openly entering his beloved's house in pursuit of an interview with her father (and in doing so he establishes a favourable contrast with Enrique who enters secretly, behaves rashly and is then forced into humiliating concealment), and, by the end of act one, don Juan appears to have turned the tables on don Illán, obliging the magus to follow him to Madrid with his daughter.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> His romantic rôle is further supported in Act I by the nature of his language when he addresses doña Blanca. He makes two elegant speeches in the language of Courtly Love, the first at I.4.475 [= *OC*, II, 759] and the second (a brief but graceful compliment) at I.5.787-90 [= *OC*, II, 768]. By Act III, however, such language has become the preserve of don Enrique. See III.8.2214-21 - a charming passage of Gongoristic hyperbole, unusual for Alarcón - and III.17.2591-98 [= *OC*, II, 809, 821]. This is just one sign of the substitution which is taking place as don Enrique comes to occupy the place in Blanca's favours previously occupied by don Juan. This linguistic substitution is accompanied by a physical substitution as Blanca addresses don Enrique from her balcony, believing him to be don Juan, and accepts

Although Lucía's claim that don Juan suffers from a number of physical defects causes Blanca to question the accuracy of her perceptions and tempers her love with suspicion, such suspicions are insufficient to overcome her emotional attachment to him, and the fact that these suspicions are grounded on lies makes it hard for the audience wholly to disapprove.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, at this point, the faults she suspects in don Juan are all physical (false teeth, bad breath, and padded calves), and as such, and especially in view of Alarcón's treatment of physical defects in *Las paredes oyen*, they are of a sort which it does Blanca no credit to resent.<sup>54</sup> More reprehensible however, is the fact that even when Blanca comes to realise that don Juan's failings are not physical but moral, she is still unable to act as reason dictates and reject him.<sup>55</sup> When Blanca finally rejects don Juan for don Enrique, however,

---

his offer of marriage (III.14 [= *OC*, II, 815-16]).

<sup>53</sup> In Act II Blanca explains that: '[...] por mucho que digo/ al alma los defetos que padece/ tanta conformidad tiene conmigo,/ que al punto que a la vista se me ofrece,/ con el ímpetu violento/ me abrasa y arrebatata el pensamiento' (II.4.1313-18 [= *OC*, II, 783]).

<sup>54</sup> The self-centred and superficial nature of Blanca's vision at this point is revealed in a pompously rhetorical speech of complaint addressed to Lucía, in which she inappropriately employs the conventionally Stoic motifs of the shipwrecked vessel and the ugliness of the peacock's feet to bemoan her own misfortune at having a lover who is physically flawed: '[Doña Blanca:] ¡Ay Lucía!/ ¡Qué diestro supo la fortuna mía/ a tan feliz suceso/ oponer el infausto contrapeso!/ ¿Qué importa que en sereno y claro día/ el leño alado y leve/ amigo viento en mar tranquilo lleve/ si en la noche vecina,/ que envuelta en sombras de terror camina,/ Neptuno embravecido/ y airado Bóreas con feroz bramido/ amenazan su náufraga rüina?/ ¿Qué importa que el pavón, desvanecido/ con los matices de luciente pluma,/ arrogante presume,/ si entre la pompa vana/ de las deformes faltas que imagino/ las basas de la máquina liviana,/ que en forma inelegante, a los ojos se ofrecen,/ ruedas deshacen, pompas desvanecen?/ ¿Qué importa que me anime/ el aplauso sublime/ del trono ya vecino,/ si en medio destas glorias,/ importunas memorias/ de las deformes faltas que imagino/ en mi esposo esperado/ mezclan acíbar al mejor bocado?' (II.4.1275-1303 [= *OC*, II, 782]). The speech does more than provide a moment of comic irony, however, since it also reminds the audience of the Stoic themes of the inconstancy of fortune and the vanity of worldly beauty which underpin this play.

<sup>55</sup> Thus, when in Act III Lucía contrasts don Enrique's response to good fortune favourably with that of don Juan, Blanca replies: 'Conozco lo mejor, y aunque lo apruebo,/ elijo lo peor; que en daño mio/ huye la inclinación del albedrío' (III.10.2263-65 [= *OC*, II, 810]) It is interesting to note that the terms Blanca uses here, 'inclinación' and 'albedrío' are central to the issue of the influence of magic on the play's protagonists.

she does so in terms which signal a victory for reason over passion: '[...] trocar/ un amante verdadero/ a un desvanecido ingrato/ fuera estar falta de seso'.<sup>56</sup>

This resolution is wholly in accord with Lucía's (admittedly biased) advice to doña Blanca in Act I: '[Doña Blanca:] Amor es niño y no tiene/ sufrimiento en sus antojos./ [Lucía:] Di que como está sin ojos,/ no ve lo que le conviene;/ que yo sé que si un momento/ te deja abrir la pasión/ los ojos de la razón,/ has de mudar pensamiento'.<sup>57</sup> Thus, if the audience's knowledge that Lucía is acting out of self-interest inclines it to devalue such statements at the time they are made, the play's conclusion restores their validity.

One of the most significant features of this play is that moral advice remains sound in whatever context it is given. As Tristán says in act I: 'mudanzas de estado/ no mudan naturaleza' (1.7.899-900 [= OC, II, 809]).<sup>58</sup> The 'estados' referred to by Tristán are dependent upon Fortune, whereas 'naturaleza' refers to the essential nature, substance, or moral character of an individual. According to this principle, don Juan's social advancement and his move to Madrid should have no effect on his sense of morality. This is why it matters little that the process of persuading Blanca and the audience of the moral importance of a rational outlook is both begun and continued by illicit and deceitful means (Lucía's slanders against don Juan, the magical *ilusión* created by don Illán), since don Juan, don Enrique, doña Blanca and Tristán all retain their free will, and remain morally responsible for their actions.

---

<sup>56</sup> III.19.2705-08 [= OC, II, 824], my emphasis.

<sup>57</sup> I.5.363-66 [= OC, II, 756], my emphasis.

<sup>58</sup> Cf Martir Rizo, *Norte de Príncipes*, p.119: 'Tratar con disimulación lo que conviene a las causas públicas es lícito, respeto de las tiempos y ocasiones, que, si engaños y traiciones destruyen la república, con destreza se ha de vivir para conservarla, porque la mudanza del estado hace mudar la fe a los hombres' (my emphasis). Martir Rizo's justification of *disimulación* as a defence against the inconstancy of others, and as a means of conserving the state may also serve as a justification of don Illán's use of dissimulation and illusion in this play.

Don Illán's magical illusion is only a more striking form of the world of illusion in which these characters are already living as a result of the domination of reason by desire, and the preoccupation with the world of the senses rather than with the life of the soul. The central paradox of the play is that don Illán's illusion is both an *engaño* which emphasises the errors inherent in this way of living, and a process of *desengaño* by which these errors are revealed.

The play admits that the practice of magic is illicit, but although the means may be suspect, the ends are wholly laudable; vice is punished and virtue promoted. Thus don Juan is chastised for his illicit desire to study the occult, for his ambition and carnality, and for his hypocrisy and ingratitude, whilst, at the same time, doña Blanca is turned from her impulsive and passionate love for him to a more reasoned and considered affection for don Enrique, whom she had formerly regarded as an enemy. This process is subtly executed and exemplary, but hardly novel. What makes this play interesting, however, is that in doña Blanca it presents a character who learns to make careful, rational judgements about the nature of reality in an atmosphere of illusion and mutability, and which appears actively to contribute to her moral education. As such, she provides a model for the audience, since both are persuaded, by the magician and the playwright respectively, to revise their original moral and emotional position so as to arrive at a point of comic accord.

In *La prueba de las promesas* Alarcón adapts a literary source of an explicitly exemplary nature in order to present a critical portrait of contemporary Court society from a markedly Neo-Stoic perspective. Nevertheless, though this perspective undoubtedly inclined him to present that society as living in a world of illusory riches and honours, he was evidently not prepared to portray illusion in a wholly negative light, and chose instead to present it as the work of a wise, prudent and

humane magician, whose purposes, whilst always good, were largely concealed from the understanding of others. In this way, don Illán's illusion is analogous both to Divine Providence, and to the dramatist's own design. These relationships remain implicit however, since for Alarcón to do otherwise would threaten the orthodoxy of his play, and expose him to charges of impertinence or blasphemy.

\* \* \*

Throughout his 'magic plays', therefore, Alarcón uses the popular taste for occult elements in the theatre to his own ends, while protecting himself as far as possible against criticism, and seeking to demonstrate that the appetite of his audience for such elements is analogous with the other pervasive ills of his society, ambition, carnality, avarice, ills which may be seen to affect even the highest levels of that society. All his plays are closely and carefully wrought - extended metaphors which are designed at once to conceal and to convey moral truths - and it is impossible in a study such as this to reveal all their subtleties. Nevertheless, close study of these plays suggests that both Alarcón's critical attitude to the society which they portray and the manner in which he portrays that society were founded on a serious and informed interest in the philosophical and theological beliefs of his age with regard to the relationship between truth and illusion.

## Chapter 5

### Prudent Dissimulation and Military Virtue in

#### *La manganilla de Melilla*

In previous chapters I have argued that Alarcón is particularly sensitive to the issue of the relationship between honour-virtue and fiction or dissimulation, and that this is an issue which he explores repeatedly throughout his works within a variety of different contexts. As regards honour, it has been shown that Alarcón's plays present a society which offered its members a variety of means by which to enhance their reputations and publicly confirm the nobility of their nature: through the acquisition and practice of learning (*La cueva de Salamanca*); through courtship and marriage (*Las paredes oyen*, *La prueba de las promesas*); through submission to the protracted procedures by which membership of any of the three great military orders was conferred (*La verdad sospechosa*); and, as we shall see in the following chapter, through *privanza* and the service of princes. There is nevertheless at least one other major area in which honour might be won, and that is the profession of arms. I have also argued that although Alarcón frequently set the concept of nobility and the practice of deception against one another, his arguments customarily conclude in a compromise which combines elements of both and suggests a moral context within which certain limited forms of deception are necessary, permissible, and even desirable.

In *La manganilla de Melilla* I shall argue that, in the persona of the Christian commander Pedro Vanegas, Alarcón presents to his audience a protagonist who owes his fame and military success as much to his use of deception as to the nobility of his nature; that, within the context of military affairs, prudence and fortitude are virtues

of equal value; and that these are seen in this *comedia* to play equally important rôles in preserving the integrity of both Spanish sovereignty and the Catholic Faith.<sup>1</sup>

Although clearly subject to the processes of fiction and the interests of its author, *La manganilla de Melilla* is based upon actual historical events which took place between 21 April and 19 June in the year 1564 and for which there are a number of historical sources.<sup>2</sup> Whilst it has not been possible to consult all of these and so to draw a firm conclusion as to which of them the playwright is most likely to have used, both as regards its date and in matters of detail, *La manganilla de Melilla* comes closest to the account given by Luis Cabrera de Córdoba in his *Historia de Felipe Segundo* of 1619, a work which promises to be Alarcón's most immediate source for the play.

In 1564, the then Governor of the garrison town of Melilla, Pedro Venegas de Córdoba, received word from his intelligence sources that a Moorish force was massing for an attack on the Spanish enclave. The enemy were led by a *Morabito*, or Moorish

---

<sup>1</sup> In *La manganilla de Melilla*, Alarcón calls Venegas 'Vanegas' throughout. When referring to Venegas as a character in the *comedia*, I shall do likewise.

<sup>2</sup> The following works contain accounts of the engagements in the Plaza de Hornabeque which provide the basis for Alarcón's play: 1) 'Sucesos de Melilla, 23 de Junio 1564', [this is Venegas' own report to the Duke of Medina Sidonia], in Chantal de La Véronne (ed.), *Les sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, Première série, (Paris, 1961), vol.1, Angleterre, pp.61-65; Moreta and Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, pp.49-69; and Henry de Castris, *Les sources de l'histoire du Maroc* (Paris, 1918); 2) 'Relation de l'attaque de Melilla par un marabout', La Véronne, *Les sources*, vol.3, Espagne, pp.51-58 [previously published in *Mauritania*, 173 (1942), 104-05 ('Relación de la defensa que hizo de Melilla su Alcaide Pedro Venegas de Córdoba (1564)'); 3) Baltasar de Collazos, *Comentarios a la fundación, conquista y toma del Peñón de la Gomera [...] desde el año de 1562 hasta el de 64*, (Valencia: Juan Mey, 1566), fols 107v-109v; 4) Luis del Mármol Carvajal, *Descripción general de África*, 2 vols (Granada: René Rabut, 1573) II, 145v; 5) Luis Cabrera de Córdoba, *Historia de Felipe Segundo, Rey de España*, (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1619), pp.373a-77a [= Book VI, Chapter '26 bis']; 6) Lorenzo Vander Hammen y León, *Don Felipe el Prudente, segundo deste nombre, rey de las Españas y Nuevo-Mundo [...]* (Madrid: Alonso Martín, 1632), fols 99r-100r; 7) Juan de Mariana, *Historia general de España, compuesta, enmendada y añadida por el Padre Mariana, con la continuación de Miniana*, 2 vols (Madrid: Gaspar y Roig, 1852) II, 434-35.

Salafranca Ortega's study of the historical background to Alarcón's play is welcome as much for its clarity as for the wealth of accurate detail it contains. However, Salafranca's suggestion (p.239, n.31, p.253, n.34 and p.254, n.36) that Alarcón's play must have been based on Venegas' manuscript report because of what appears to be a series of exclusive similarities cannot be upheld in view of the fact that all the details mentioned by Salafranca as being specific to Venegas' account also appear in Cabrera de Córdoba, pp.374b-75a. The probability that Cabrera's account was the source for Alarcón's play is strengthened, in my view, by the presence in it of other details which suggest that this, or a version very similar to it, also prompted or shaped Alarcón's *El anticristo* (1623).

holy man, who had promised to take the town for them by magic.<sup>3</sup> Learning of this claim, Venegas gave orders that his artillery should be concealed and that his arquebusiers should load their weapons with powder only and without shot. Encouraged by the apparent ineffectiveness of the Spanish fire during their advance and the observation that the gates of the town had not been closed against them, the Moors poured into the *plaza de armas* (called the Plaza del Hornabeque) between the curtain wall and the citadel, where the trap was sprung. The portcullis was dropped and the guns brought into action loaded with grapeshot, whilst at the same time the previously harmless arquebusiers and other non-specialist troops rained blows and small-arms fire upon the enemy. The ambush was not completely closed, however, and, despite the fact that both his son and his standard were taken, and that he was shot through the arm, the *morabito* and some of his followers were able to escape and rejoin their reserves on the high ground overlooking the town.

Following this attack, Venegas apparently convinced a number of Jewish traders that his men had indeed been paralysed by the *morabito*'s sorcery and had only come to their senses at the last moment by turning their eyes to God. These traders then retailed the news among the Moors, with the effect that the *morabito*'s tarnished reputation was sufficiently restored for him again to lead his followers against the Spaniards in the city. Venegas conducted a very similar defence of his position, yet on this occasion he had placed both cavalry and infantry in reserve outside the town to attack the survivors as they fled. The Moors suffered heavy losses and some four hundred were taken prisoner. None of the accounts indicates that there were any

---

<sup>3</sup> The *morabito*, called 'Amet Bichalín' by Alarcón, appears in the historical sources previously cited as 'Adi Mahamete Bu Balac' and under a variety of (more or less) similar names. See Moreta and Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, pp.52-53.

fatalities among the Spaniards. Some versions state that Venegas not only gave the Moors the opportunity to surrender but also invited them to convert to Christianity.

In Alarcón's dramatisation of these events, the action begins before dawn in the no-man's land between the Christian stronghold of Melilla and the Moorish town of Búcar.<sup>4</sup> The first characters to be introduced are Pimienta, a Spanish sergeant who is disguised as a Moor, and Alima, a Moorish girl whom he has taken prisoner and is leading back to Melilla. As dawn breaks, Pimienta becomes aware of Alima's beauty and tries to overcome her virtue, first by flattery, then by bribery and ultimately by force. Fortunately for her, Alima is saved by the timely intervention of Pedro Vanegas who rescues her from Pimienta by paying the price of her ransom.

Alima reveals that she is a native of Fez, where her father, Abenyúfar, is a man of influence. She explains that she had been kidnapped from her father's house by Acén, the Alcaide of Búcar, who had imprisoned her in the hope of seducing her, that she had managed to escape while out hunting, and that she had been trying to return to Fez when she was captured by Pimienta.

When Acén learns that Alima is a captive in Melilla, he sets out with an army to ransom or recapture her. Before reaching Melilla, he is intercepted by Abenyúfar and the King of Fez who have themselves come with an army to free Alima from Búcar. When they find out that Alima is in Melilla they join forces with Acén and take up positions overlooking Melilla. Under threat of attack if he refuses, Vanegas is invited to return Alima to the Moors. Despite the fact that he has fallen in love with her, Vanegas is prepared to surrender her until she claims that she wishes to become a

---

<sup>4</sup> 'Búcar' is identified by Serge Denis as the Islamic shrine of Bucaria (Serge Denis, *Lexique du théâtre de J.R. de Alarcón* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1943), p.149), but in the historical sources 'Búcar' is simply the name of the *alcaide* himself. The settlement referred to as 'Búcar' by Alarcón is probably Kábila de Beni Bugafar, which lies a short distance to the west of Melilla. See Moreta and Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, pp.95-96, 145, n.4.

Christian. Once Vanegas is convinced of the sincerity of her conversion, he refuses to give her up. The breakdown in negotiations which results provokes Acén into taking direct military action.

In command of his army is Amet Bichalín, a magician and former Moorish fifth columnist in Spain. Amet promises Acén that he will be able to take Melilla by magic and without loss of life if the Moorish troops will only follow his instructions. Amet tells them that they must renounce Mohammed and worship only Allah as the one, true God, and that they must go unarmed into the Spanish citadel. Acén agrees to Amet's plan when, as a sign of Amet's power, a red banner emblazoned with a crescent moon is dropped from the heavens by a *tramoya*. However, despite this apparently favourable omen, Acén prefers to put his trust in cold steel rather than enchantments, contravening Amet's instructions by telling his men to conceal their weapons beneath their white robes.

Despite the fact that many of Pimienta's earlier activities have been marked by mendacity, avarice and lust, he and his comrade in arms, Alférez Arellano, do succeed in providing Vanegas with advance warning of Acén's advance on Melilla and Amet's plan for capturing the town. Vanegas then makes good use of another spy, Salomón, a Jew whom he knows to be a double-agent. Vanegas pretends to be terrified at the prospect of the Moorish attack and entreats Salomón to attempt to persuade Acén to attack elsewhere. When he goes to speak with Acén, however, Salomón tells him that Vanegas is terrified and encourages him to attack. Meanwhile, Vanegas briefs his men to unbolt the gates, load their cannon with blank charges and pretend to be spellbound until he gives the signal to attack.

With Amet and Acén at their head, and encouraged by the apparent impotence of the garrison's artillery, the Moors advance boldly into the town bearing their crimson

standard. Once they are inside the gates, however, Vanegas gives a signal, the church bell is rung, the portcullis is dropped and Acén, Amet and their followers are trapped. Vanegas then appears on the battlements bearing a crucifix and promises to spare the lives of all those who will surrender and accept Christ. Some of the Moors, including Acén, choose to fight, however, and are slain. Acén himself is cut down by Alima. Amet neither surrenders nor dies but escapes by magic over the walls, his magical powers and his apparent betrayal of the Moors leading some to suppose that he may have been an angel in disguise. For his part, Pimienta, determined to demonstrate his courage, captures the Moorish standard.

From the above it can be seen that, whilst in one sense Alarcón simplifies the story in adapting it to the stage - compressing the two assaults on the garrison into one so as to avoid the repetition of a double climax, he also adds breadth and complexity by inventing secondary plots of an amatory character as well as a burlesque sub-plot involving the play's two *graciosos*, Salomón and Pimienta.<sup>5</sup> Alarcón also incorporates the elements of magic present in the historical accounts into his play.<sup>6</sup> All these plots, as one would expect of Alarcón, are interwoven to a high degree, especially on the

---

<sup>5</sup> Although this is not apparent from the previous summary, this sub-plot also involves a number of semi-emblematic scenes on the theme of redemption. Rodrigo, a Christian prisoner, returning home after three years in captivity in North Africa, comes across Salomón, who has been caught stealing by Sergeant Pimienta and left tied to a tree. Finally persuaded by Salomón's pious cries and promises of conversion, Rodrigo sets him free (II.8 [= *OC*, II, 236]). Later, Salomón betrays Pimienta and his companion alférez Arellano to the Moors (III.5.2240-43 [= *OC*, II, 251]) Their lives are saved by the magician, Amet, who turns Arellano into a tree and preserves Pimienta from death when a group of Moorish soldiers throw him into a ravine by causing him to appear moments later on a high mountain (III.5. [= *OC*, II, 252-53]). The presence of emblematic details - in this case, the tree, the chasm and the summit, which symbolize the cross, death and resurrection respectively - is typical of Alarcón's use of staging in his comic sub-plots.

<sup>6</sup> As I have already dealt with Alarcón's treatment of magic in Chapter 4, I shall not discuss it again here. The 'magic plot' of this play, however cohesive in its overall pattern, is also ambiguous and flawed in detail. Suffice it to say here that in *La manganilla de Melilla*, as elsewhere in Alarcón's work, magic serves to introduce the theme of illusion in a metaphysical context and does not simply provide a source of spectacular stage effects or a way of resolving problems of plot, though Augusta Espantoso-Foley argues to the contrary in her book, *Occult Arts and Doctrine*, p.44.

levels of theme and imagery, as the major characters move towards victories of a moral and spiritual as well as a military kind.

The overall movement of the play repeatedly traces a path from Islam to Christianity, darkness to light, captivity to freedom, error to truth, vice to virtue, and weakness to strength. This movement is evident even in the opening scene, during which night gives way to dawn and the sun rises on the captive Alima as she is being led away from the Islamic shrine of Búcar towards the Christian enclave of Melilla. Later in the play, two other characters, Muley and Daraja, are also brought from the dungeons of Búcar to captivity in Melilla. All three ultimately receive baptism and undergo sincere conversions. By the end of the play, even the passionate, tyrannical and blasphemous Alcaide of Búcar has received baptism in his last moments and Sergeant Pimienta, the lascivious and devious *gracioso*, is transformed by his capture of the Moorish standard into a valiant captain.

Each of the plots in *La manganilla de Melilla* is brought to a satisfactory conclusion not just by fortitude and courage but also by disguise, feigning, dissimulation and even magic. As I have already dealt with the role of magic in Alarcón's drama in Chapter 4, and with dissimulation as a means of discovering the truth of another's feelings in Chapters 2 and 3, I shall concentrate here on the role of deceit in the context in which this play is unique among Alarcón's works, that of military action. The military context is of immediate importance in two respects: firstly, military service is a recognised source of personal honour; and secondly, the legitimacy of practising deception in warfare was widely acknowledged.

The predominant view of honour in the Golden Age was that it was dependent upon personal virtue. Present in the works of Seneca, this view is clearly expressed by Alarcón in *La verdad sospechosa*: 'Sólo consiste en obrar/ como caballero el serlo./

¿Quién dió principio a las casas/ nobles? Los ilustres hechos/ de sus primeros autores' (II.9.1402-06 [= *OC*, II, 420-21]), as well as in innumerable contemporary works by other authors. These include the Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra, who (following Sallust) cites Juvenal's assertion that 'Nobilitas sola est atque unica virtus', and Alonso de Herrera, who writes that 'la nobleza verdadera en las obras macizas de virtud se muestra y funda'.<sup>7</sup>

However, such statements of principle are most commonly illustrated by means of military examples. As Maurice Keen points out, it is on the field of battle that 'human qualities are tested as severely as in any place'.<sup>8</sup> In the passages cited above, Herrera speaks of 'muy claros y hazañosos hechos en armas', and Ribadeneyra illustrates his remarks by reference to the life of Caius Marius, whom he describes a 'el pilar y amparo de [Roma] [...] en las grandes y peligrosas guerras'. In Ribadeneyra's account, Caius Marius concedes his lack of noble forebears but asserts that 'podré hacerla [ostentación] de las armas y de las banderas que he tomado de los enemigos en las guerras [...] y mostrar las heridas que he recibido peleando cara a cara con ellos [...] ésta es mi nobleza [...]', and even the remark of Juvenal cited by Ribadeneyra is set within the context of the Trojan war.

In his article on *hidalguía* in early modern Castile, I.A.A. Thompson confirms both the emphasis on virtue and the predominance of military associations when he writes: 'The essence of the *hidalgo*'s service was selflessness and sacrifice [...] These sacrifices were almost always associated with military services of one kind or another

---

<sup>7</sup> Seneca: 'Quis est generosus [= 'well-born']? Ad virtutem bene a natura compositus.', *Seneca ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, 3 vols, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1925), I, 288 [= Ep.xliv]; Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano*, pp.449-589 (pp.529-30) [= Book II, Chapter 7]; Alonso de Herrera, *Agricultura general [...]*, (Madrid: 1620), fol.4r.

<sup>8</sup> Maurice H. Keen, *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p.257.

in defence of the Crown and the Faith. The military ideal remained paramount. [...] The ideal *hidalgo* of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries remained the *defensor*, serving at his own expense, in person, with arms and horses, and capable of acts of signal valour and *hazañas memorables*'.<sup>9</sup>

Pedro Venegas de Córdoba, Governor of Melilla from 1561 to 1568, and Alarcón's protagonist in *La manganilla de Melilla* (1623), exemplifies this connection between honour and the profession of arms. In Melilla, Vanegas is the official representative of the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Faith, and has a duty to both: 'el honor y el castillo [...] / en mis hombros puso / el católico Filipo' (III.12.2666-68 [= *OC*, II, 263]).

The importance of military virtue is emphasised by the play's setting. Melilla is a location closely associated with advancement in the service of the Crown and the recognition of personal reputation. In his article on life in the Spanish garrison towns of North Africa, Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra describes the significance of such strongholds:

En la teoría el mando de una plaza de frontera en África representaba uno de los mayores servicios a la Corona y una de las mejores maneras de ganar honra y honor. [...] Allí es donde la nación española sigue manteniendo la guerra contra el infiel, una de las acciones más memorables que puede ejecutar un caballero cristiano, sobre todo si pertenece al estamento nobiliario. Esta lucha, además de una guerra justa y loable, confiere dones y carácter a los hombres que lo ejecutan.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> I.A.A. Thompson, 'Neo-Noble Nobility: Concepts of *Hidalguía* in Early-Modern Castile', in his *War and Society in Habsburg Spain*, (Great Yarmouth: Variorum, 1992), pp.379-406 (p.383). So pervasive was this military ideal, it appears, that, as Thompson also states, even non-military services were expressed in military terms wherever possible. See also his '*Hidalgo* and *Pebrero*: The Language of 'Estates' and 'Classes' in Early-Modern Castile', *ibid.*, pp.53-78 (p.65).

<sup>10</sup> Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra, 'La vida en los presidios del Norte de África', in *Relaciones de la península ibérica con el Magreb: siglos XIII-XVI, Actas del coloquio de Madrid, 17-18 diciembre 1987*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and María J. Viguera (Madrid: CSIC, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1988), pp.561-91 (pp.568-70).

Yet, if we are to regard martial prowess as fundamental to the contemporary conception of nobility, and have until now tended to see the practice of deception as a potentially dishonourable activity (don García's mendacity in *La verdad sospechosa*, if a dramatic virtue, is undeniably a social vice), the title which Alarcón gives to his account of a Spanish military victory, *La manganilla de Melilla*, poses a question, for a *manganilla* is defined by Covarrubias as 'una manera de engaño artificioso y pronto [...]', and therefore is explicitly associated with deception and trickery.<sup>11</sup>

Other playwrights dealt with military engagements, both offensive and defensive - Lope's *El asalto de Mástrique* and Calderón's *El sitio de Breda* are but two examples - but Alarcón's choice of title and the event to which it refers both demonstrate that he has typically chosen in this play to consider military virtue, not in general, but within the particular context of strategic deception.<sup>12</sup> In this context Alarcón picks up and emphasises a number of factors repeatedly alluded to in the source material: the importance of intelligence-gathering and the use of spies, the use of artillery and small-arms within the deception plan; and, most importantly, the personal qualities of the commander, Pedro Venegas. It is in the interests of our argument to establish just how lawful or admirable each of these factors might have appeared at the time and also to examine contemporary arguments for the continuance of hostilities against Islamic states in sixteenth and seventeenth-century Europe, an era when debate over the question of what constituted a just war was intense.

In Diego García de Palacio y Arce's *Diálogos militares* (1583), the author refers specifically to the capture of Melilla and other Spanish and Portuguese possessions in

---

<sup>11</sup> Covarrubias, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana*, p.785a.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, p.92: 'La simulación, el disfraz, la mentira, el fingimiento (se finge dormir, llorar, ser lo que no se es...) son claves en el desenvolvimiento de la trama y en el diseño de personajes como Pimienta. La palabra *manganilla* del título es reveladora'.

North Africa as being justified because ‘los Moros [...] viven en las tierras que fueron sujetas al Imperio Romano, y que fueron de Cristianos, cuales son las tierras de África [...]’, and concludes that ‘a estos cualquiera príncipe Cristiano les puede hacer guerra, así por ser enemigos comunes, como porque matan, y roban los Cristianos dondequiera que se pueden aprovechar de ellos; porque nos tienen, injustamente y con injuria, ocupadas nuestras tierras, sin querer ni tratar de restituírnoslas’.<sup>13</sup>

However inadequate we may find such arguments, it is significant that they rest upon principles of defence and restoration rather than expansion and offensive action. In his *Della ragion di stato*, Giovanni Botero leaves no doubt as to the importance of the defensive principle in the context of the just war: ‘Defensive warfare has such absolute justification that offensive warfare is only justified by defence, and in no circumstances can offensive action be lawful except for purposes of defence’.<sup>14</sup> Lethal though it may be, the stratagem that provides the basis of *La manganilla de Melilla* is a defensive rather than an offensive one and is executed within the context of what was considered to be a ‘just war’.

The *manganilla* of the title is not the only example of strategic deception within the play. On a number of occasions, the protagonist of the burlesque sub-plot, Sergeant Pimienta, is specifically ordered to venture in disguise into Moorish territory and to

---

<sup>13</sup> Diego García de Palacio y Arce, *Diálogos militares* (Mexico: Pedro de Ocharte, 1583; repr. Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1944), fol. 16r.

<sup>14</sup> Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of State* (Venice, 1589), translated by P.J. and D.P. Waley, edited by Dr. R.W. Stark, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p.220 [=Book X, Chapter 9]. Botero also states that it is ‘universally lawful [...] to combat infidels’, and adds: ‘We have the Turks at our gates and on our flanks: could there be juster or more honourable argument for war?’ (ibid., pp.220-22). Botero’s *Della ragion di stato* exists in a Spanish translation by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas entitled *Los diez libros de la razón de estado [...]*, (Madrid, 1593).

report on the plans and movements of the enemy. As Alarcón makes clear, his role is that of a spy.<sup>15</sup>

Even in modern warfare, the activities of spies and special forces used for long-range reconaissance are often presented as contrary to the laws of war, particularly by those whose own task is one of counter-espionage and counter-infiltration. Furthermore Sergeant Pimienta is hardly presented by Alarcón as a model of military virtue: he is both lascivious and avaricious and prides himself on his skill as a liar.<sup>16</sup>

Attitudes of this period to espionage, however, indicate no such reservations about the character or activities of those involved in spying or long-range reconaissance. In his *Libellus de belli iustitia iniustitiaque* of 1533, Francisco Arias de Valderas states categorically that 'los beligerantes tienen derecho del espionaje', while Bernardino de Escalante, in his *Diálogos del arte militar* of 1583, takes the matter further, advising a commander to be:

muy cuidadoso y diligente en todas las facciones que se hubiesen de ejecutar, y particularmente en saber la calidad del capitán enemigo [...], qué consejeros y oficiales tiene y de qué determinación, si su ejército es de gente nueva [...], qué intentos tiene y a qué fin aspira, y en considerar sus fuerzas con las del adversario, valiéndose para todo esto de buenos espías, astutos y fieles, y bien pagados, que *suelen ser saludable medicina contra el veneno de los enemigos, como lo han hecho los más prudentes capitanes que ha habido en el mundo*, y

---

<sup>15</sup> '[Pimienta:] 'A la fontera [...] / a Búcar fui por espía. / [...] por orden vuestra' (I.2.118-19 [= OC, II, 189]); '[Vanegas:] Por la guerra que amenaza / el moro Acén a esta plaza. / Sargento, será forzoso / que al punto por Búcar partáis / a vuestro oficio de espía. / y que de allí cada día / avisos me remitáis' (III.2.2093-09 [= OC, II, 247]).

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, p.271: 'El tema de la mentira, tan presente en toda la producción de Alarcón, recae aquí [I.693] sobre un personaje cuya pasión por la disfraz y la mentira va mucho más allá de su oficio (espía): Pimienta mentirá a todos, y para él la prontitud en fingir y trazar ardidés será una nota de orgullo e inteligencia'. Pimienta's skill as a liar is clearly useful to Vanegas and contributes directly to the defeat of the Moors, but his virtue only becomes apparent when he displays valour as well as cunning.

Chastity was also considered to be a desirable military virtue - as Palacio y Arce states: 'Es también necesario que los soldados sean castos y templados' (*Diálogos militares*, fol.46r), and accordingly it also proves to be a major theme in Alarcón's play.

particularmente nuestro Emperador don Carlos en la guerra que tuvo con los rebeldes de Alemania, que jamás intentaron cosa en que no le hallasen muy prevenido, alcanzando a saber todos sus conceptos, y así los pudo necesitar a que se desbaratasen, y deshiciesen sus fuerzas sin venir a jornada rompida, con sólo *arte y prudencia militar*.<sup>17</sup>

Escalante makes it clear in this passage that, far from being an underhand practice, the employment of spies is both a important defence against 'el veneno de los enemigos', and an example of 'arte y prudencia militar'. Indeed, whatever his faults, Pimienta is undeniably both astute and faithful to his commander, who in turn rewards him generously for the risks he runs. In this and in many other respects Vanegas is a textbook general.<sup>18</sup>

The Spanish justification of war against the Islamic rulers of North Africa on the grounds that Spain is merely seeking to restore to Christendom territories which belong to it by ancient right; the fact that both sides are already engaged in a form of 'cold-war'; and the assertion made by Spanish military theorists that espionage is an example of prudence, might together seem more than sufficient justification for the use of stratagems. However, if we look for further justifications of deception in warfare, we find that the action of *La manganilla de Melilla* more than fulfils any additional criteria.

---

<sup>17</sup> Francisco Arias de Valderas, *Libellus de belli iustitia iniustitiave* (Rome, 1533), p.154; Bernardino de Escalante, *Diálogos del arte militar* (Seville: Andrea Pescioni, 1583; repr. Laredo: Universidad de Cantabria, 1992), p.151; my italics.

<sup>18</sup> It may be argued that, in making use of Pimienta before a state of open hostility exists between the garrison at Melilla and his Moorish neighbours, Vanegas is guilty of prejudice in assuming the existence of malicious designs on the part of his Moorish counterparts ('el veneno de los enemigos'). However, Pimienta is not the only spy in the play. The Alcaide de Búcar also has at least one important agent in Spain: 'Sirve Amet Bichalín de cauta espía/ en medio del imperio castellano,/ y cuando los avisos que te envía,/ del español fabrican el estrago,/ y dan fuerza y defensa a Berbería [...]' (I.10.808-12 [= OC, II, 209]), while the Jew, Salomón, acts as a 'double-agent', serving either side as the opportunity for profit or revenge presents itself.

Palacio y Arce introduces the principle of levelling out an enemy's advantage of numbers:

[...] para con pocos soldados hacer algún buen efecto contra mayor número de enemigos [...] se debe buscar ardides, y buenos puestos, como en muchos lugares de la Divina Escritura lo advertía y mandaba Dios a su pueblo en casos semejantes, ordenando que usasen de mañas y ardides, huidas, emboscadas, y otra cautelas necesarísimas para vencer, y pues el Dios justo las mandó y ordenó para que sus queridos venciesen, *necesarias y buenas son, y justo es que se hagan y usen*.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, the key element in this quotation from Palacio is not the question of numbers but his mention of 'cautelas necesarísimas'. The principle of necessity is also cited by Arias de Valderas: 'Es lícito, en guerra justa, el empleo de artificios de engaño si la necesidad lo exige, como enseña Santo Tomás [...]'.<sup>20</sup> Valderas' reference to Aquinas here seems to refer to a point in the *Summa Theologiae* where Aquinas allows a resort to *insidiae* as a means of deceiving the enemy against whom one is fighting. Here, *insidiae* appears to signify acts of artifice or cunning, generally with a view to hiding one's own intentions - a definition which corresponds to Alarcón's presentation of 'arte y prudencia militar' in *La manganilla de Melilla*. This is, of course, within the constraints of the conditions Aquinas lays down for the 'just war'. Furthermore, whilst at various points in the *Summa Theologiae* Aquinas does speak of 'extreme necessity' as something that can be allowed to over-ride normal moral principles, he does not do so at this point.

---

<sup>19</sup> Palacio y Arce, *Diálogos militares*, fol.74r; my italics.

<sup>20</sup> Arias de Valderas, p.154; Aquinas, *ST*, IIaIIae, qu.40, art.3 [= 'Utrum sit licitum in bellis uti insidiis'].

Palacio also cites a parable from Plutarch about Hercules, to the effect that ‘donde no alcánzase la piel del León, se debe añadir la de la Raposa, significando que lo que no se podía hacer por fuerza, se debía hacer por maña y engaño’.<sup>21</sup> The example of Hercules cited here is frequently encountered in the debate about the legitimacy of deception and it is applied, as we shall see in the following chapter, not only to military affairs but also to *razón de estado* and matters of a political and diplomatic nature.<sup>22</sup>

In *La manganilla de Melilla*, we find that Vanegas is both outnumbered and compelled by necessity. Vanegas is obliged to fight, because the Spaniards in Melilla are, as Bunes Ibarra puts it, ‘atrapados entre el mar y los musulmanes’, and also because he has a duty to his King and to his faith: ‘el honor y el castillo [...] / en mis hombros puso / el católico Filipo’; he is compelled to fight by guile because the Moorish force is estimated by Pimienta to be some 12,000 strong.<sup>23</sup>

What is most striking about this discussion of warfare, however, is that military deception is not to be thought of simply in terms of necessity or utility, but that it is widely regarded as deserving of praise. As Palacio goes on to make clear, victories won by cunning are generally considered to be more worthy of renown than those won by

---

<sup>21</sup> Palacio y Arce, *Diálogos militares*, fol.74r; Plutarch’s *Lives*, ed.cit. vol.IV [*Lysander and Sulla*], 251.

<sup>22</sup> It should be remembered that Machiavelli also compares the methods of the lion and the fox in Chapter XVIII of *Il principe*. See Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed.cit., p.99. Given the widespread view that Machiavelli’s writings were wholly rejected in Spain on moral grounds, it is perhaps surprising to find many of the concepts with which he was associated circulating in works which deal with the nature of military virtue. The reason for this is that both *Il principe* and the military treatises of Golden-Age Spain share a common concern with the question of how one was to relate moral and religious principles to the mesh of circumstances in which one had to act.

<sup>23</sup> Bunes Ibarra, ‘La vida en los presidios’, p.571; *La manganilla de Melilla*, III.12.2787-88 [= OC, II, 267]. The historical sources vary widely in their estimation of the Moorish force, but it seems that as many as 2,000 may have been trapped in the Plaza del Hornabeque. See Moreta and Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, p.66, n.25. Whilst Alarcón does not mention the strength of the garrison in the play, in 1566 it amounted to some 400 men. The precise strength of the garrison at this time is given by Salafranca, *ibid.*, pp.16-17. There can be little doubt therefore that Venegas succeeded in defeating a Moorish force of considerably superior numbers to his own.

force alone: ‘Y así la reputación humana en tanto estima la victoria y triunfo, habido por cautela y ardid como si se hiciese con fuerza y armas, y aún parece que se debe estimar en más, como conseguida y alcanzada sin efusión de propia sangre, y menos trabajo y pérdida’.<sup>24</sup> Very similar arguments are presented in Jerónimo Ximénez de Urrea’s *Diálogo de la verdadera honra militar* of 1566. Urrea’s praise of cunning rests on the fact that it is this ability which sets man apart from the animals. This leads him to argue that true valour rests not in feats of physical courage but in mental or spiritual fortitude:

Vegecio [dice] en su arte militar, [que] es más loado el capitán que vence con industria que el que destruye al enemigo por fuerza, porque en la industria gana honra el ánimo por medio del buen entendimiento y vence con lo que debe el hombre vencer, que es con la fuerza del ánimo y no con la del cuerpo como [...] otras torpes bestias, y queda con más fuerza para otras cosas. [...] La fuerza del alma es más fuerte que el del cuerpo. [...] El hombre no es hombre por la fuerza que tiene corporal sino por la razón con que la ejercita. [...] La fortaleza del ánimo [...] es la que vale más que todas los ardidés del mundo porque es virtud más principal, y con ella se han alcanzado infinitas y gloriosas victorias [...].<sup>25</sup>

Before going on further to consider the moral qualities expected of the military commander by contemporary theorists, I would like to deal with another kind of artifice

---

<sup>24</sup> Palacio y Arce, *Diálogos militares*, fol.74r

<sup>25</sup> Jerónimo Ximénez de Urrea, *Diálogo de la verdadera honra militar, que trata cómo se ha de conformar la honra con la consciencia* (Zaragoza: Diego Dormer, 1642), fols 22v-27r [the first edition was brought out by Joan Grifo at Venice in 1566]. In his *Le capitaine-poète Aragonais Jerónimo de Urrea [...]* (Paris: Ediciones Hispanoamericanas, 1978), Pierre Geneste registers some surprise that a treatise on military honour should contain a eulogy of deception:

Le thème [...] des stratagèmes de guerre a parfois quelque peine à s’accorder avec la ligne mélodique d l’honneur - la ruse s’identifie plus facilement à une trahison qu’à une loyauté chevalresque - et cependant le capitaine Urrea traite volontiers le sujet. Et tant que soldat-lecteur de Végèce, il sait que les ruses guerrières ont toujours été non seulement approuvées mais cataloguées, recommandées, enseignées, qu’elles sont considérées comme parties intégrantes de l’art militaire, et il admet avec la tradition que, lorsque la guerre est déclarée, il appartient à chacun de se garder, qu’une bonne duperie vaut mieux à tout prendre qu’un beau carnage (p.423).

in warfare - the use of artillery, for it plays a key rôle in Venegas' defence of Melilla. In his introduction to a recent collection of studies on the history of Melilla's fortifications, José Luis Fernández de la Torre identifies a change in attitudes to warfare which took place in the sixteenth century, and presents Machiavelli as the first writer of his time to comment explicitly on this process. Fernández regards Machiavelli's *Arte della guerra*, as a pragmatic approach to the problems of warfare derived from Roman treatises on military matters. In place of a chivalresque ethic, Machiavelli proposes that soldiers should be schooled in the new advances in military technology; properly speaking, the new *arte de la guerra* is a science. What is more, it is a science based upon the use of artillery, a weapon which was rapidly growing in prominence in sixteenth-century Spain. Fernández attributes to artillery an importance equivalent to that of the printing press or the nautical compass.<sup>26</sup> Its particular importance in Spain's North African campaigns is underlined by Bunes Ibarra, who attributes the ease with which the Spaniards and Portuguese made incursions into the continent of Africa to their technical and technological superiority over the Moors, both on at sea and on land. He concludes: 'El combatiente deja la lanza y el escudo por el arcabuz y para aprender a disparar una pieza de artillería'.<sup>27</sup>

Even though artillery had been in military use since the late Middle Ages, voices were still being raised in its condemnation in the seventeenth century, well after it had become almost universally accepted. The contrast between the chivalric ethic and the use of artillery is famously evident in Don Quixote's discussion of the relative merits

---

<sup>26</sup> See José Luis Fernández de la Torre, *Melilla en la historia: sus fortificaciones. Seminario celebrado en Melilla los días 16,17 y 18 de mayo de 1988*, 2 vols (Madrid: Instituto de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales, 1991), I, 7-12 (p.8).

<sup>27</sup> Bunes Ibarra, 'La vida en los presidios', p.575.

of arms and letters.<sup>28</sup> Quevedo decries its use in similar terms in a satirical poem entitled, 'Execración contra el inventor de la artillería'.<sup>29</sup> Pedro Barbosa Homem is eloquent in his indignation:

Consistiendo el propio honor y palma de la bélica virtud en el exceso de esfuerzo, con que un fuerte es vencido por otro mas fuerte: este tan hermoso lustre de la guerra también se fue acabando, pues se ve que, no estando la materialidad del vencer y matar de hoy más que en dar fuego a un tiro (cosa que el más vil, más cobarde, y aún una mujer y un niño puede hacer), es a cada paso derribado y muerto en las hodiernas facciones todo el esfuerzo de Aquiles por el vil mano de cualquier cobarde Tersites. Llegando las cosas a términos que en cierta manera se puede decir que hoy, al revés de lo antiguo, los viles son más útiles en las batallas que los generosos, pues aquellos ya de un tiro derriban uno, o dos, o más enemigos, y esotros, de ordinario, para matar o vencer a uno sólo le son necesarios unos golpes.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, pp.468-69 (= I.38).

<sup>29</sup> See Francisco de Quevedo, *Obras completas*, edited by Felicidad Buendía, 2 vols (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), I, p.499b:

De hierro fue el primero  
que violentó la llama  
en cóncavo metal, máquina inmensa:  
fue más que todos fiero;  
indigno de las voces de la fama.  
Éste burló a los muros su defensa;  
éste a la muerte negra, lisonjera,  
la gloria del valiente dió a certero;  
quitó el precio a la diestra y a la espada,  
y a la vista seguro dió la gloria,  
que antes ganó la sangre aventurada;  
la pólvora se alzó con la victoria.

<sup>30</sup> Pedro Barbosa Homem, *Discursos de la jurídica y verdadera razón de estado, formados sobre la vida y acciones del rey don Juan el II, de buena memoria, Rey de Portugal, llamado vulgarmente el Príncipe Perfecto. Contra Maquiavelo y Bodino y los demás políticos de nuestros tiempos y sus secuaces* (Coimbra: Nicolás Carvallo, 1629), pp.92-3.

For Fernández, likewise, the introduction of firearms represents a policy of quantity over quality and of democracy over aristocracy, creating a new situation which leaves what he calls 'la religión de la espada' both marginalised and outmoded.<sup>31</sup>

Whilst other Golden Age writers may present the use of artillery as contrary to the concept of individual valour associated with the ideal of military honour, Alarcón does not portray Vanegas' use of it in this way. Rather, by incorporating it within a context of prudent deception, he ensures that it enhances Vanegas' reputation rather than detracting from it. Nevertheless, within the *comedia* firearms are used only for deception and not for killing the enemy, so that, whilst *La manganilla de Melilla* corresponds to the majority of the historical accounts I have previously cited in mentioning the use of artillery and other firearms in the deception plan, Alarcón's play takes a different course when it comes to portraying the way in which the trap is sprung.<sup>32</sup> Thus, whereas Cabrera and others state that the engagement was begun on both occasions by a general volley of fire, Alarcón has his garrison set upon the Moors with the sword.<sup>33</sup> Although this change may be the result of practical constraints - the danger of fire in the theatre, or the probability that the stage would be lost behind a veil

---

<sup>31</sup> Fernández de la Torre, *Melilla en la historia*, p.10. A very similar line is taken by Thompson in his article, 'Aspects of Spanish Military and Naval Organization during the Ministry of Olivares', in *War and Society*, pp.1-26 (p.13).

<sup>32</sup> 'Soltaron en la ciudad polvorines falsos en todas las piezas, para darles a entender que la artillería estaba encantada.' (La Véronne, p.55); 'A mil pasos de Melilla vieron el fuego que los artilleros aplicaban artificiosamente, y con cautela a los fogones de los cañones, y como no disparaban.' (Vander Hammen, fol.99v); 'fingió que no tenía fuerzas, y mandó tapar las bocas de los cañones y que disparasen pólvora los soldados que estaban repartidos por el muro, aparentando en todo mucha flojedad.' (Mariana-Miniana, p.434. This detail also forms part of Alarcón's dramatic account: '[...] ha[n] de estar [...] / cebadas en el cañón/ las piezas, porque encendido/ el polvorín, no disparen.' (III.10.2719, 2723-25 [= OC, II, 265]).

<sup>33</sup> Compare Mariana-Miniana, *Historia general*, pp.434-5, and Vander Hammen, *Don Felipe el prudente*, fols 99v-100r, with Alarcón's *acotaciones*: 'Bajan de lo alto los cristianos y acuchillan a los moros', and '[...] Alima con espada embiste a Acén.' (III.12 [= OC, II, 267-68]); my italics.

of smoke - it seems likely that Alarcón was seeking to re-assert an element of traditional military valour, exemplified by the use of the sword.

The contrast between the use of artillery and such close-quarter fighting and between the *industria* and *valor* with which each is associated is evident in Vander Hammen's account: 'dispararon [...] la artillería [...] y arrojaron muchos fuegos artificiales, con que los de dentro quedaron muertos y cautivos, y los de fuera en huida, aunque hicieron mucho estrago en ellos los infantes y caballo[s] que salieron de la parte de la mar. [...] *Tales victorias sin sangre alcanza la industria y el valor cuando andan juntas*'.<sup>34</sup> This remark, which marks the end of Vander Hammen's account, seems to echo the words used by Alarcón's Sergeant Pimienta in his own assessment of Vanegas' plan: 'Tu ingenio y valor divino/ con emulación se ayudan', and suggests that Vander Hammen and Alarcón may have held similar views about *arte y prudencia militar* (III.10.2714-15 [= *OC*, II, 265]). This may be because both draw on an understanding of the relationship between prudence and valour close to that expounded by Giovanni Botero:

We now come to the chief of those qualities which win admiration for a prince: prudence and valour. These are the twin pillars upon which all government must be founded. Prudence is the eye of the ruler, valour is his arm; without the one he would be blind, without the other, powerless. Prudence provides good counsel and valour strength; prudence gives the commands which valour executes; prudence describes the difficulties of an undertaking, valour overcomes them; one draws up plans, the other gives them reality. Prudence sharpens the judgement of great men, valour fortifies their hearts.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> Vander Hammen, *Don Felipe el prudente*, fol.100r (my emphasis). Cf. II.1.1091-93 [= *OC*, II, 217]: '[Pimienta:] El ingenio me ha valido,/ que al fin sin él nunca ha sido/ perfeta la valentía'.

<sup>35</sup> Botero, *The Reason of State*, p.34.

Alarcón's *comedia* also shows that the elements of prudence and valour evident in the conception and execution of Vanegas' battle plans are not simply part and parcel of his military training, 'conforme a la disciplina militar', to use Miniana's phrase (p.434), but are also present in the conduct of his private life - his prudence appearing as dissimulation (I.8.742-44, III.1, III.7.2508-12 [= *OC*, II, 207, 243-46, 259]), and his valour as self-sacrifice and self-mastery when he overcomes his passion for his beautiful Moorish captive, Alima (II.10.1909-12, III.7.2495-2512 [= *OC*, II, 241, 258-59]).

In fact, Alarcón so interweaves his plots that the dividing line between personal, religious and military virtue is hard to determine. In another important move away from his sources, Alarcón presents the Moorish attack on Melilla primarily as an attempt on the part of Acén to recapture Alima, relegating any desire to advance the cause of Islam or to expel the Spanish from Africa to a position of secondary importance. This adaptation inextricably links the public and private actions of the individuals concerned - Vanegas, Alima and Acén - and draws together the amatory and military plots in a closely-linked chain of causality.

The character of Alima and the romantic plot which focuses upon her serve as more than a source of what we might today call 'love-interest'. In creating the character of Alima, Alarcón provides the means to demonstrate the difference between three kinds of love, as represented by carnal desire, marriage and religious devotion. In *La manganilla de Melilla*, love, and the response of each individual towards it, create a series of exemplary contrasts. Acén's readiness to go to war in order to possess a woman who has rejected him demonstrates the obsessive and tyrannical nature of his passion for Alima. His determination to take Alima by force in turn obliges Vanegas to decide between his own love for Alima and his duty to his King and his faith - he

must either surrender her or fight and thereby risk the souls, lives and property of others, so it is doubly important that he makes the right choice, since Alima's soul as well as her virtue is also at stake. Vanegas consequently tests the authenticity of her conversion by dissimulation, and, having proved her sincerity, demonstrates his own valour in defending her.

It has already been observed that Vanegas' use of Pimienta and Arellano as spies is a mark of his prudent use of deception, but Vanegas himself also dissimulates for a variety of worthwhile ends, of a moral and religious as well as a military character. He conceals or leaves implicit his knowledge of Pimienta's lechery in order to preserve military discipline and protect the reputation of his female captives, Alima and Daraja (I.2, I.8.742-44, III.1 [= *OC*, II, 190-96, 207, 243-46]). He first conceals and subsequently denies his love for Alima for the sake of his own integrity and the safety of the garrison (I.8.756-58, 772-73; II.10.1909-31 [= *OC*, II, 207-08, 241-42]). He conceals himself in order to verify the authenticity of Alima's conversion to Christianity (III.7.2508-12 [= *OC*, II, 259]). Finally, he feigns cowardice in front of the double-agent, Salomón, in order to deceive the enemy into underestimating his strength (III.10.2655-59 [= *OC*, II, 263]). In every case, Vanegas' decision to dissimulate demonstrates prudence and fortitude, intelligence and self-restraint, and contributes either to the the final military victory or to the moral victories and spiritual conversions which mark the end of the play.

The idea that military success derives from personal virtue which is evident both in this play and in Urrea's treatise is one which is also to be found in Palacio. He remarks that the art of deception is not one which can properly be tabulated in theoretical terms but one which depends upon the personal qualities of the commander: 'Y aunque algunos han querido dar leyes, y regular lo que en esto se ha de hacer, no

parece se puede comprender en escritura cierta, mas que necesariamente se remite a la diligencia e ingenio del caudillo y capitán'.<sup>36</sup> In the same work he outlines the key virtues of the good officer, thereby all but providing a description of Alarcón's Vanegas:

[...] dos virtudes morales [...] son el ornato más necesarios del buen Capitán, que son Prudencia, y Fortaleza, sin las cuales dos no conseguirá la deseada victoria en los casos de la guerra, ni buen suceso en los demás que se pueden ofrecer. [...] El capitán para ser prudente en la guerra, ha de hallar los medios, y juzgar bien de ellos, y elegir y escoger los mejores, y tener valor para ejecutarlos, dando la parte proporcional a todas, según sus calidades.<sup>37</sup>

The numerous conversions to Christianity towards the end of *La manganilla de Melilla* represent a victory for the Catholic Faith, whilst the preservation of the garrison, and the defeat of its enemies contribute to the conservation of the dominions of the King of Spain. Both the nature of these victories and the fact that they are founded on the virtuous actions of individuals are characteristic of Alarcón's dramatic writing, and here, as elsewhere, the virtues concerned are not only those of courage and self-sacrifice but include prudence, presented in terms of dissimulation, deception and artifice. Each must temper the other, however, and in the character of Pedro Vanegas they are seen to do just that. It is typical of Alarcón that the argument of this *comedia* should centre upon questions of honour and deceit and be resolved in a compromise between pragmatism and idealism.

---

<sup>36</sup> Palacio, *Diálogos*, fols 73r-74r. Here, Palacio would seem to be referring to such widely read Classical works as Vegetius' *Epitome rei militaris*, Fontinus' *Stratagemata*, Aelian's *Tacticus* and 'Modestus' *Libellus de vocabulis rei militaris ad Tacitum Augustum*.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, fols 24r,25r.

Although *La manganilla de Melilla* clearly corresponds in many respects to contemporary historical accounts, and Alarcón claims that it is an ‘historia verdadera’, the work of historians such as Polo and Thompson shows the degree to which the accounts offered not only by Alarcón but also by the sixteenth and seventeenth-century historians cited above represent highly selective presentations of the state of affairs in the Spanish garrison towns of North Africa. Polo makes it clear in her previously mentioned article that a true account of the situation in Melilla in the 1560’s would have had to present a corrupt governor (though later rehabilitated, Venegas was relieved of his command in 1570 as the result of financial irregularities, and fined 2,500 *ducados*), and an undisciplined and unpaid soldiery, given over to whoring, gambling and banditry, who were more likely to go over to the Moors than to convert them *en masse* to Christianity. These observations are supported by Thompson who indicates that conditions were no better in the early 1630’s when all the North African garrisons were reported to be starving and were suffering from a desperate shortage of manpower.<sup>38</sup>

How is one to explain such a disparity between fact and fiction with regard to a play which purports to be a true story? The partisan nature of the distortion raises suspicions that *La manganilla de Melilla* may be an exercise in Catholic and military propaganda. Such suspicions are increased by Thompson’s assertion that Olivares’ ministry was particularly attentive to perennial concerns regarding Spain’s apparent or actual military decline. Thompson writes:

At the core of the criticism levelled by the new ministry in 1621 against the previous reign was a sense of shame and outrage at the loss of international respect for the reputation of Spanish arms. ‘Le lastima

---

<sup>38</sup> Polo, ‘La vida cotidiana’, p.11; Thompson, ‘Spanish Military Organization’, p.10. See also Martin Hume, *The Court of Philip IV: Spain in Decadence* (London: Eveleigh Nash and Grayson, 1907), p.242. Cf. Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, p.249, n.33: ‘[...] desde fechas tempranas se enviaran a [las] plazas “homicianos o desterrados”’.

mucho ver el descaecimiento a que ha venido en lo militar nación tan valerosa y belicosa como la española.' The entire reform programme of Zúñiga and Olivares was, in effect, a blueprint for the restoration of Spain's military power. [...] For Olivares, what was necessary was nothing less than the remilitarization of Spain. The aim was to restore honour and respect for the military in order to animate vassals to serve their king.<sup>39</sup>

Whether or not this was the purpose of the play, an article by John Hale, 'War and Public Opinion in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', indicates that Olivares' views were also those of his age. Presenting a wider view, Hale states that 'the tendency to despise the soldier, which grew throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was met by a vigorous reaction, a deliberate re-inflation of the military virtues and splendours, which amounted to a positive cult of war'. In addition, Hale indicates that one would be mistaken to view the military virtues as essentially distinct from those which formed the basis of a more general concept of nobility: 'The military virtues - courage, faithfulness, obedience, temperance, endurance and the rest - were lauded, and prose portraits of the ideal soldier were assayed that were hardly distinguishable from images of the Ideal Man'.<sup>40</sup>

Whilst, on the one hand, the presentation of military virtue within this play is of an undeniably idealistic and heroic kind - Vanegas wins victories for his God and his King, whilst preserving his own moral integrity - on the other, the means by which he

---

<sup>39</sup> Thompson, 'Military and Naval Organization', pp.1-2. The quotation in this passage is taken from J.H. Elliott and J.F. de la Peña, *Memoriales y cartas del Conde Duque de Olivares*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1978-81), II, 66 (1 Aug. 1634).

<sup>40</sup> John Hale, 'War and Public Opinion in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries', *Past and Present*, 22(1962), 18-35, (p.23). In his article, 'The Conquistadores and the 16th-Century Spanish Concept of the Ideal Soldier', August J. Aguila uses a similar list of virtues to describe the 'perfect captain': 'their characters are largely determined by the same composite of inner qualities or virtues (e.g., courage, faithfulness, obedience to the king, temperance, endurance, clemency, religion, magnanimity, justice, etc.)'. See *From Dante to García Márquez: Studies in Romance Literatures and Linguistics presented to Anson C. Piper*, edited by Gene H. Bell-Villada, Antonio Giménez and George Pistorius (Williamstown MA: Williams College, 1987), pp.24-34 (p.27).

achieves these ends are characterised by the use of deception, feigning and dissimulation. Conversely, despite his cunning and his expertise in the use of modern weapons and tactics, Vanegas is not simply a 'machivavel', a practitioner of the new 'art of war' or even a single-minded student of Classical *stratagemata*. Rather, he is a character whose virtue and nobility expresses itself not only in military prudence but also in magnanimity, generosity, fortitude, and self-restraint - as the invention of a romantic plot bound up with the defence of Melilla allows Alarcón to demonstrate. The implication to be drawn from the play's argument, therefore, is that prudent dissimulation is at least as great a proof of virtue and nobility as overt valour, when the aims to which it is dedicated are those of Church and State.

A great part of this chapter has been concerned with presenting ideas which were, for the most part, commonplaces of contemporary thought regarding the nature of honour and the use of deception in warfare. Few of Alarcón's contemporaries would have found anything particularly novel about the idea that victories won by *arte y prudencia militar* enhance the reputation of the victors. But it is precisely this consensus that would seem to make *La manganilla de Melilla* an important play within Alarcón's work as a whole, because in this play, deceit is more firmly seated within contexts of personal, national and religious virtue than ever before. Whilst in other earlier plays, such as *El semejante a sí mismo* and *El desdichado en fingir*, Alarcón created a more or less explicit moral contrast between the intrigues of the *galanes* and *damas* whose impostures he staged, and the exploits of a number of exemplary historical figures whose activities he never dramatised - the Viceroy of New Spain defending his capital city from the elements; the admiral of the treasure fleet mastering the seas to enrich Spain; and the King of Bohemia waging a crusade against the Turks in Hungary - in *La*

*manganilla de Melilla*, he allows an heroic figure of this type to take centre stage.<sup>41</sup> And, whilst the endeavours of the three historical figures previously mentioned are all marked by prudence and courage, only Vanegas serves as a model for the virtuous exercise of deception. Thus, although (with perhaps unnecessary circumspection) Alarcón has clearly taken pains to introduce numerous mitigating factors in order to dispel any criticism which might attach itself to Vanegas' stratagems, his presentation of Vanegas in *La manganilla de Melilla* indicates an increasingly assertive expression of the view that the practice of deception and illusion is not necessarily incompatible with honour-virtue since, rightly applied, it is a form of prudence.

Thus, whilst it is entirely possible that *La manganilla de Melilla* was designed to promote a politically expedient military ethic in the Spain of Olivares, it also constitutes an assertion that honour and deceit need not be mutually exclusive. Moreover, this kind of argument may also be more than an indication of a general sixteenth- or seventeenth-century concern with the question of how far, in real life, absolute and abstract principles can be adhered to, since, for Alarcón himself, it suggests a means of harmonizing his claims to nobility with his activities as a writer of dramatic fictions. Whatever the reason, the dénouements of Alarcón's plays continually reward those forms of deceit which favour the common good, the State and the Catholic Faith as well as responding to the needs of the hour. His *comedia* of *La manganilla de Melilla* appears to be just such a fiction. When in the epilogue to the play Alarcón has Vanegas claim that it is simply an 'historia verdadera', he is undoubtedly being disingenuous, since in the profession of letters, no less than in that of arms, he demonstrates the virtue of prudent deception or feigning.

---

<sup>41</sup> See Jules Whicker, 'La ausencia del Nuevo Mundo en *El semejante a sí mismo* de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Actas del I Congreso Anglo-hispano, Huelva, 1992*, edited by Richard Hitchcock & Ralph Penny, 3 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1994), vol.III, *History*, pp.127-39.

## Chapter 6

### Deceit in Politics and Alarcón's *Privado Plays*

The purpose of this chapter is to compare Alarcón's presentation of a variety of forms of political deception with the principles set out by contemporary political philosophers. The writings of these theorists and commentators constitute the most notable body of writing on the subject of deception in Golden Age Spain and are therefore of particular interest with regard to the present study. I shall present analyses of two plays by Alarcón, *Ganar amigos* and *La amistad castigada*, in the context of the views of these writers on issue of the practice of deception by princes. These two plays have been chosen from among a number of works which deal with political themes because they offer sharply contrasting presentations of the behaviour of rulers and their ministers or *privados*, which, when taken together, nevertheless indicate that Alarcón had arrived at specific conclusions with regard to the question of whether (and how) princes might legitimately employ strategies of deceit. It will also be shown that these conclusions are in close accord with the middle ground of contemporary political theory as well as with the presentation of deceit elsewhere in Alarcón's dramatic works.

#### Deceit in Political Theory

The theme of deceit in politics in the Golden Age is closely associated with two texts: Chapter 18 of Machiavelli's *Il principe*, 'In what way princes should keep faith', and the *Annals* of Tacitus. The latter text had been made available by the Dutch scholar Justus Lipsius in his edition of 1574. Both Machiavelli and Tacitus present political life

in pragmatic rather than idealised terms - as they in fact saw it rather than as it ought to have been - with the result that successful government is presented as inseparable from a degree of deceit.<sup>1</sup>

Although the stated aim of the majority of writers on political theory in Golden Age Spain was to refute such doctrines, whether derived from Machiavelli, Tacitus, or elsewhere, and to offer advice in accordance with Christian morality, the once apparently firm lines of their Christian moral principles become decidedly blurred when they get down to considering specific examples. For example, Pedro de Ribadeneyra's introduction to his *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano* [...], of 1595, constitutes a strong statement against Machiavelli, Tacitus, Bodin and other writers of that stamp, yet in the body of the text, Ribadeneyra frequently qualifies his initial statements to such an extent that he puts himself in danger of writing them out of existence.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> See Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, pp.6-7: 'The theme of dissimulation has [...] figured largely in the literature of politics and statecraft. Here it is related to the well-known theory of 'reason of state' as an aspect of the problem of preserving and increasing the state's or ruler's power, without regard to morality if necessary. Machiavelli's famous chapter 18 of *The Prince*, 'In what way princes should keep faith', has been rightly regarded as a classic endorsement of deception for reasons of state. The ruler is to imitate the *astuzia* or cunning of the fox and to violate his promise whenever it suits his interests. Because most men are bad and do not observe faith, the Prince is not obliged to keep faith with them. But the prince must know how to disguise his faithlessness and should therefore learn to be a 'great feigner and dissembler' ('gran simulatore e dissimulatore') [...] Machiavellianism was by no means the only conception of politics in which the theme of dissimulation became a commonplace. In his *Annals* of imperial Rome, the historian Tacitus bitinglly presented dissimulation as the emperor Tiberius' foremost trait [...] In the later sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, following [...] Lipsius' 1574 edition of Tacitus' works, the Roman historian was used no less than Machiavelli as a guide to 'reason of state'. In cold-eyed scrutiny or in despairing judgement of the ambition of princes, Tacitism's distinguished adherents commented on the rôle of dissimulation in the government of states. Thus, in Spain in the seventeenth century numerous political theorists drew on both Tacitus and Machiavelli to weigh the legitimacy of rulers' use of 'dissimulation' and 'simulation'. See also José Antonio Fernández Santamaría, *Reason of State and Statecraft in Spanish Political Thought, 1595-1640*, (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1983); C.J. Davis, 'Tacitus in Spain'; and Melveena McKendrick, 'Calderón and the Politics of Honour', *BHS*, 70 (1993), 135-46.

<sup>2</sup> See Pedro de Ribadeneyra, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano*, pp.525 (and elsewhere).

None of the political philosophers of the Spanish Golden Age succeeds in presenting a credible theory of government which excludes deceit of any kind. All of them are therefore obliged to arrive at a compromise between Christian virtue and the practical necessities involved in the conservation of the state. The exact nature of this compromise varies according to the idealistic or pragmatic character of each author, but there is one fact about which they are all in agreement: the task is not an easy one. Juan Márquez writes in his *Gobernador cristiano*, of 1612 that:

Siempre ha parecido la mayor dificultad del gobierno Cristiano el encuentro de los medios humanos con la ley de Dios, porque si se echase mano de todos se aventuraría la conciencia, y si de ninguno peligrarían los fines en detrimento del bien común. Esta consideración ha tenido en cruz a cuantos desearon ejecutar escrúpulos sin remitir de las obligaciones del cargo; [...].<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, there are writers in whose work the ability to dissimulate is presented as a virtue. In his *El embajador*, Juan Antonio de Vera y Zúñiga expresses the view that the virtue of a good man can be presented in two ways:

En dos maneras se puede entender ser hombre de bien: una absoluta, y éste no puede ser parte de la república ni ministro del rey, sino cuando se hallase o rey perfecto, o perfecta república; la otra manera es respectiva, que amará la cosas absolutamente justas, pero en la operación de ellas se acomodará a las órdenes del príncipe, y leyes de la patria, interpretando uno y otro en el mejor sentido que pueda. Este tal será buen ciudadano y buen ministro [...].<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Juan Márquez, *El gobernador cristiano. Deducido de las vidas de Moisés y Josué, príncipes del pueblo de Dios* (Salamanca: Francisco de Cea Tesa, 1612), sig. ¶ 4v.

<sup>4</sup> Juan Antonio de Vera y Zúñiga, *El embajador* (Seville: Francisco de Lira, 1620), fol.74v. In this context it may be appropriate to recall Alarcón's aspiration, expressed in the prologue to the reader of the *Segunda parte*, to be regarded as a 'buen ministro' (p.xlviii).

Public men, concludes Vera, cannot be absolutely good. And anyone who wishes to be must withdraw into the solitude of contemplation since 'Esos príncipes y esos repúblicas [que no salgan con sus diseños de los justos términos de la razón] se hallarán, a mi ver, cuando los filósofos reinaren o los reyes filosofaren'.<sup>5</sup>

The conflict between idealism and pragmatism was evidently an intellectually thorny and niggling issue for contemporary theorists, the majority of whom appear genuinely to wish to keep in existence some kind of moral mental universe, and yet at the same time have a real sensitivity to the tangled nature of actual circumstances.

Many of those involved in trying to trace a way out of this moral labyrinth were members of the Jesuit Order. The practice of casuistry that they especially developed stands as a testament to their pragmatism, as does the fact that many princes chose Jesuits to advise them. Perez Zagorin defines casuistry as a 'science [which] consists in application of the general rules of morality to concrete situations in which the particular circumstances involve conflicting duties and create doubt or confusion as to what is right or licit to do. Inescapable in moral life, situations of this sort give rise to cases of conscience which it is the casuist's function to resolve'.<sup>6</sup>

The greatest developments in casuistry took place in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Zagorin remarks that during this period, works of casuistry proliferated with ever-denser growth of argument, distinctions and hypothetical cases and that, as a result, the casuists' elaboration of cases 'enclosed the entire moral life of Catholics in a network of solutions'.<sup>7</sup> It appears that educated men of the time, whether members of the Society of Jesus or not, took an intellectual pleasure in

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., fol.75r.

<sup>6</sup> Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p.153.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p.159.

thinking up sets of tangled circumstances as a challenge to the skill of their peers in the art of casuistry. Zagorin suggests that ‘for keen and subtle minds, the more difficult, bizarre and extreme were the cases they analyzed, the greater their satisfaction, since the better they could exercise their ingenuity’.<sup>8</sup> It takes little effort to imagine the appeal of such an approach for the a dramatist, and one has only to look at the plays of the Jesuit-trained Calderón to receive the impression of witnessing such casuistry in action. I would argue, however, that in this context what can be said of Calderón can also be said of Alarcón, particularly in plays such as *La amistad castigada*, *Ganar amigos*, *El dueño de las estrellas* and *Los favores del mundo*, which present highly complex moral and political problems requiring solutions involving a subtle combination of truth and falsehood.<sup>9</sup>

As one might expect, there is no reliable or exact vocabulary for the discussion of deceit. The terms used for various forms or degrees of deception vary from author to author. Juan Márquez, nevertheless, uses many of the more commonly occurring terms as he outlines those forms of deceit which he considers ‘licit’ and ‘illicit’. It will be apparent that his list contains many of the form of deception which I have already identified as playing a central role in the arguments of Alarcón’s *comedias*:

Puede el ministro Cristiano callar, encubrir, no darse por entendido de las cosas y disimular con astucia lo que entendiere de ellas todo el tiempo que pareciere necesario el secreto para la buena conclusión de lo que tratare.<sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., pp. 159-60.

<sup>9</sup> It may be of relevance to note here that, like Calderón, Alarcón was also educated in a Jesuit institution, although, unlike Calderón in his later years, he was never in the position of being a confessor. See King, *Alarcón: letrado y dramaturgo*, pp. 61-62.

<sup>10</sup> Juan Márquez, *El gobernador*, p. 74a-b.

But active *fraude* and *simulación* are never justified, regardless of the condition of the man against whom they are directed:

[El ministro cristiano] no por eso podrá fingir, engañar, mentir, simular, o dar a entender con el dicho o con el hecho lo que no tuviere en el corazón. De manera que tendrá libertad para recatarse y usar de disimulaciones todo el tiempo que no llegare a pretender engañar con ellas, pero no podrá pasar de allí.<sup>11</sup>

Without wishing to underplay the complexity of the issues involved in legitimising deceit, I believe that it is helpful to identify two general categories as a basis for discussion, and to this end I would extract two terms from Márquez's list: *simulación* and *disimulación*. Most of the writers in this field use these two terms and condemn the former whilst they approve of the latter (although always with some reservation or qualification). Zagorin also recognises the usefulness of distinguishing between *simulación* and *disimulación* whilst admitting that such a distinction remains somewhat artificial:

Although the term *disimulación* occurs somewhat more commonly in the literature than *simulación*, the two are simply different sides of the same coin. In the Latin from which they derive, both have virtually identical meanings. *Dissimulatio* signified dissembling, feigning, or keeping secret. *Simulatio* also meant feigning or a falsely assumed appearance, deceit, hypocrisy, pretence or insincerity. The two words might therefore be used interchangeably, each denoting deception with the further possible connotation of lying. For precision's sake, however, we can say that in a strict sense dissimulation is pretending not to be what one actually is, whereas simulation is pretending to be what one actually is not.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 74b. What Márquez has to say here corresponds to Augustine's two principal definitions of the lie, namely, the speech 'contra mentem' and the intention to deceive.

<sup>12</sup> Pérez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying*, p.3. See also Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, p.119 [= ch.21, 'De la disimulación']: La disimulación [...] y la simulación difieren en que la disimulación es no manifestar lo que uno ha sabido o sospechado y la simulación es decir o prometer una cosa y pensar hacer otra, que

In other words, *disimulación* is usually defined as the act of concealing information or hiding one's immediate reactions, whilst *simulación* involves the active creation of falsehoods and includes outright lies. *disimulación* frequently appears as a defensive, almost as a passive strategy, as when Márquez suggests that it is often the dishonest intentions of those who are taken in by the *disimulación* of the prince which causes them to be deceived, whilst *simulación* is commonly presented as an offensive strategy, maliciously conceived.<sup>13</sup>

One of the primary arguments for the legitimization of deceit is that it constitutes a necessary defence against the malice of others. Justus Lipsius argues that those who oppose the use of deceit in politics seem unaware of the nature of the world in which they live:

[Los] oigo de buena gana en otra parte: pero aquí, ¿cómo es posible que se lo haga? Parecen ignorantes deste siglo y de las condiciones de los hombres dél, pronunciando su voto y parecer, como si se hallasen en la república de Platón, y no en las heces de la de Rómulo. Porque, ¿entre quién vivimos? es a saber entre agudos y maliciosos, y que parecen estar enteramente compuestos de fraudes, mentiras y engaños.<sup>14</sup>

---

es engañar’.

<sup>13</sup> Márquez, *ibid.*, p.235b: ‘No importa que el rey [...] salga engañado, porque ese daño debe imputársele a sí y a su demasiada curiosidad y no al embajador que ni pretendió enganarle ni le tuvo obligación de desengañar’.

<sup>14</sup> Justus Lipsius, *Los seis libros de las políticas o doctrina civil de Iusto Lipsio*, translated by Bernardino de Mendoza (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1604), pp.144-5. Márquez also comments on the impracticality of Utopian principles: ‘Y habiendo de dar su parecer en la hez de Rómulo, le da en la policia de Platón, o en la Utopía de Tomás Moro teniendo por tan fácil obrar con la mano como trazar la pluma’ (*El gobernador cristiano*, p.231b). Mártir Rizo also presents dissimulation as a necessary defence in a dangerous and untrustworthy world: ‘Tratar con disimulación lo que conviene a las causas públicas es lícito, respeto de las tiempos y ocasiones, que, si engaños y traiciones destruyen la república, con destreza se ha de vivir para conservarla, porque la mudanza del estado hace mudar la fe a los hombres’, *Norte de Príncipes*, p.119.

However, excessive use of deceit is opposed by many of these writers on practical as well as idealistic grounds. Such deceit is presented not only as worthy of condemnation but also as dangerous to those who practise it. Ribadeneyra compares deceit to the antidote which extracted from the viper is the cure for the viper's bite:

[...] esta simulación y ficción artificiosa se debe usar solamente cuando pide la necesidad: y que sea poca la cantidad, y con su dosis y tasa, y conficionada con las leyes de Cristiandad y prudencia, porque así aprovechará y tendrá fuerza y virtud contra los príncipes hipócritas, que como víboras pretendiesen inficionar y matar. Pero si algún Príncipe quiere mantenerse de carne de víboras, y sustentarse con ponzoña de su enemigo, tomaría la muerte por sus manos, y por matar a su enemigo se mataría primero a sí.<sup>15</sup>

Fernando Alvia de Castro, in his *Verdadera razón de estado*, of 1616, also makes it plain that the effects of *simulación* are invariably disastrous.<sup>16</sup> Because of this, deception, which might at first appear to be the supreme tool of the political pragmatist, proves to be inimical to the conservation of the state because the prince who is a 'pathological and indiscriminate liar finds it impossible to govern, be it in what pertains

---

<sup>15</sup> Ribadeneyra, *Tratado del príncipe cristiano*, p.526a. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, the metaphor of the antidote produced from the serpent's venom also appears as a justification for the use of espionage in warfare. See Bernardino de Escalante, *Diálogos del arte militar*, p.151. This is just one of numerous instances in which similar justifications of deceit are transferred from a military to a political context.

<sup>16</sup> Fernando Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado* (Lisbon: Pedro Craesbeeck, 1616), fols 46v.-50v, [= ch.9, 'Qué sea simulación y sus malos efectos']. Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, in his *Idea de un príncipe cristiano* of 1640, also provides example of the disastrous consequences of seeking to preserve a state by deceit: 'Sobre estos fundamentos falsos quise edificar su fortuna el duque Valentín; pero antes de verla levantada, cayó tan deshecha sobre él, que ni aun fragmentos o ruinas quedaron della. ¿Qué puede durar lo que se funda sobre el engaño y la mentira? ¿Cómo puede subsistir lo violento? ¿Qué firmeza habrá en los contratos si el príncipe que ha de ser la seguridad dellos, falta a la fe pública? ¿Quién se fiará dél? ¿Cómo durará el imperio en quién o no cree que hay Providencia divina, o fía más de sus artes que de ella?' (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958-60) II, 164 [= Empresa XLIII]. As I have observed previously, remarkably similar images are used to describe the intrigues of Alarcón's Persio in *El desdichado en fingir*: '[Tristán:] recelo/ cuando alzas torres al viento,/ como no es firme el cimiento,/ verlas todo en el suelo;/ que de tu parte en engaño se fundan, pues descubierto/ quien eres, mira si es cierto/ que fabricas por tu daño [...Persio:] Todo puede prevenillo/ buen ingenio y buen cuidado' (p.147c).

to internal matters or simply in his relations with other rulers. In short, to rule within a broad Christian framework is not a question of ethics, but a matter of practical politics'.<sup>17</sup>

Ultimately, whilst all contemporary writers on the question of political deceit accept that some degree of deceit is probably necessary for the preservation of the state, they also propose that deceit should be employed as sparingly as possible and with the utmost reluctance. In every case, however, it is the political theorists' opinion that whatever deceptions are practised must be founded upon good intentions, and that if they are not, they become examples of the malicious *astucia* associated with the political philosophy of Machiavelli. Alvia de Castro emphasises states the view that the legitimacy of deception, and even its success, depends on the use to which it is put:

La disimulación usada bien es justa, prudente y necesaria, pero advierto y pido con particular afecto; se advierta y entienda que si el príncipe disimulare contra la religión y virtudes, injusto será, mucho se arrimará a impío y tirano: y así en ellos hallará su daño y castigo: Dios le enviará. Y entre otros medios que usará para ellos, se valdrá de la mano, armas y poder de sus propios enemigos.<sup>18</sup>

As will have become apparent, there is another issue inherent in the debate about the legitimacy of deceit, and that is the question of necessity or utility. Márquez, as we have seen, presents the common well-being as a factor in the debate. The principles of utility and necessity also play an important part in Ribadeneyra's thinking, as can be seen in his explanation of the difference between the two arts of simulation and dissimulation:

---

<sup>17</sup> Fernández Santamaría, *Reason of State*, pp.112-13.

<sup>18</sup> Alvia de Castro, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol.50r. Also of note here is Alvia de Castro's description of dissimulation as just and prudent; terms which are repeatedly applied by Alarcón to his heroes and heroines.

[...] hay dos artes de simular y disimular: la una de los que sin causa ni provecho mienten y fingen lo que no hay, o que no hay lo que hay; la otra de los que, sin mal engaño y sin mentira, dan a entender una cosa por otra con prudencia cuando lo pide la necesidad o utilidad.<sup>19</sup>

Other writers make this point more strongly. In his thesis on sixteenth-century political theory, R.W. Truman observes in Ribadeneyra a 'tendency to make the well-being of society the final test of the permissibility of an action' and concludes from a wide range of evidence that there was in many of the political philosophers of the age 'a marked tendency to sacrifice the inviolability of the laws to the demands of common utility'.<sup>20</sup> The argument for the legitimation of deception on grounds of necessity produces statements which, as Truman remarks, are more striking still since they suggest 'that there are circumstances in which legal and moral principles cease altogether to apply'. Truman continues:

It is necessity rather than utility which is chiefly regarded by certain of these writers as justifying the complete abandonment of moral principles. Ribadeneyra himself, later in his treatise, says that 'la necesidad es un arma tan fuerte y poderosa, que no se le puede resistir, y que excusa lo que sin ella no se podría excusar'.<sup>21</sup>

Truman also cites the Jesuit Juan de Torres as an apologist for the principle of necessity, and whilst he notes that it is not always clear whether Torres is speaking of this matter 'as one observing rather than as one approving' he also comments that nowhere does Torres say that he disapproves:

---

<sup>19</sup> Ribadeneyra, *Tratado del príncipe*, p.565a-b.

<sup>20</sup> R.W.Truman, 'The Idea of the Prince in the Latin and Vernacular Writings of Sixteenth-century Spanish Theorists', p.399.

<sup>21</sup> Ribadeneyra, *Tratado del príncipe*, p.565a-b, cited in Truman, pp.393-94.

Con la necesidad todo se hace lícito, ninguna cosa pone empacho, ni se guarda decoro de personas, ni autoridad de estados, ni ley de naturaleza, ni privilegios sagrados, sola ella prevalece, sola manda, sola gobierna, y sin gobierno hace cuánto quiere, en poblado y en el campo, y lo que ella no curare, nadie lo remediará.<sup>22</sup>

Despite the fact that all of the aforementioned political theorists are principally concerned with the conduct of princes rather than with that of private individuals, in the work of at least one writer the question is approached in terms which are applicable to all men. Diego Saavedra Fajardo considers the question of political deceit in his *Idea de un príncipe cristiano* at the level of the individual who controls his *afectos* and his passions by the use of reason.<sup>23</sup> The Machiavellian ruler as presented by Saavedra Fajardo knows no such self-restraint and follows the maxim, 'lo que no pudiere alcanzar con la razón, alcance con fuerza y engaño'.<sup>24</sup> Fernández Santamaría summarises Saavedra Fajardo's approach in the following manner:

Saavedra places what the age undoubtedly understood to be the Machiavellian message in the broadest possible setting: the very nature of man. Man is a combination of good and bad qualities endlessly battling for supremacy. A reasonable working balance can only be given by reason. The compelling nature of this balance is demonstrated in the actions and life of every single human being; but nowhere is the implicit sense of urgency better exemplified than in the ruler, the man whose actions ought to be guided not by his *afectos* but by *razón de estado*. Reason, in short, becomes in politics reason of state. [...] Saavedra, however, does not demand of the ruler that he totally ban the *afectos*

---

<sup>22</sup> Juan de Torres, *Primera parte (y segunda) de la filosofía moral de príncipes para su buena crianza y gobierno, y para personas de todos estados* (Barcelona: Sebastián de Cormellas, 1596), p.324a-b. See Truman, 'The Idea of the Prince', p.393.

<sup>23</sup> Covarrubias' *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* defines an *afecto* as 'Pasión del ánimo', p.46a, whilst the *Diccionario de autoridades* gives it as a 'pasión del alma, en fuerza de la cual se excita un interior movimiento, con que nos inclinamos a amar, o aborrecer, a tener compasión y misericordia, a la ira, a la venganza, a la tristeza y otros afectos y efectos propios del hombre', p.102b.

<sup>24</sup> Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe cristiano*, II, 164.

from his personality; only that he allow them no influence in his political travail.<sup>25</sup>

Although Saavedra Fajardo's work was published more than a decade after Alarcón gave up the stage, the political ideas it expounds and those of other earlier political theorists of the Golden Age correspond closely to what we have already deduced about Alarcón's attitude to deception: that it must be used sparingly; that it must be dictated by necessity and embarked upon reluctantly; that it must be directed towards legitimate ends; and that it must be subordinate to reason.

Alarcón does not repeatedly differentiate between *disimulación* and *simulación* (in fact, he never once uses the latter term); instead he uses the terms *engaño/engañar*, *fingimiento/fingir*, and *mentira/mentir* to express the same idea. In this he in fact differs little from the theorists. Furthermore, *disimulación* does not always appear as a mark of virtue: Alarcón prefers *recato/recatarse*, *discreción*, and the ability to *callarse*, all of which appear in his works as aspects of prudence.

Alarcón's heroes and heroines only initiate deceptions of their own in response to the aggression, deceit and double-dealing of others. His villains, on the other hand (or as some commentators have considered them, his 'anti-heroes') involve themselves energetically and enthusiastically in lies and acts of deception. *La verdad sospechosa*, *Las paredes oyen*, *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, and *La amistad castigada* all present examples of such characters, as do other plays of Alarcón which there has not been space to consider here, such as *La industria y la suerte*, *El desdichado en fingir*, *El semejante a sí mismo*, and *El anticristo*.

---

<sup>25</sup> Fernández Santamaría, p.116. Santamaría is referring in this passage to Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipe cristiano*, I, 72-3.

Saavedra Fajardo's observation that those who practise to deceive 'no cree[n] que hay Providencia divina, o fía[n] más de sus artes que de ella', also applies to Alarcón's intriguers who trust to their own *industria* or *ingenio* rather than to divine Providence, and if they invoke any supernatural power, call on pagan Fortune or the Devil for assistance.

Such are the outlines of Alarcón's presentation of the morality of deceit as they are drawn up in his plays of magic, intrigue and social satire. Yet, as I stated at the outset, the purpose of this chapter is to consider his treatment of deceit in the context of those plays which present royal characters and which, as a result, one would expect to follow the principles expounded by contemporary political theorists even more closely, as both they and Alarcón are concerned with the conduct of princes.

In these plays - *Los favores del mundo*, *El desdichado en fingir*, *Los pechos privilegiados*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, *Ganar amigos*, *La crueldad por el honor*, and *La amistad castigada* - Alarcón's dramatic writing closely mirrors the image of contemporary political life which one receives from the theorists, condemning outright deceit (*simulación*), but accepting (with limitations) the principles of necessity and utility, and so effectively allowing for the legitimation of *disimulación* in certain circumstances.

In the final analysis, however, Alarcón appears to be more concerned with certain basic moral principles than with the intricacies of political theory. Unlike the dramatists of Jacobean England who revelled in the creation of unmistakably Machiavellian princes and courtiers, in Alarcón's political dramas there is little overt reference to established modes of political thought. Although commonly used in the theoretical debate, the word *político*, either as an adjective or as a noun referring to

actions or individuals characterised by an amoral political pragmatism, is absent from Alarcón's plays.

The concept of necessity, expressed explicitly as *necesidad*, scarcely appears, and where it is implicit, as in such phrases as 'es preciso', 'es fuerza', it is not applied to justify an otherwise unacceptable action but rather to mark the point at which resistance to one's obligations becomes untenable, as in the case of don García's famous line at the end of *La verdad sospechosa*: 'La mano doy, pues es fuerza' (III.14.3107 [= *OC*, II, 470]).

Apart from the terms used by Alarcón to describe different types of *simulación* and *disimulación* which I have noted above, the only term closely associated with Machiavelli and the work of Golden Age political theorists to appear in Alarcón's comedias is *razón de estado*. This term is probably an unconscious translation of the Latin phrase 'ratio reipublicae'. It first appears in Francesco Guicciardini's *Dialogo del reggimento di Firenze* (1515-c.1521), and is associated in particular with the discussion of statecraft on Machiavellian or non-ethical lines.<sup>26</sup> The Spanish political philosophers of the Golden Age frequently dismiss the set of political maxims associated with Machiavelli as a *falsa razón de estado*, and, as in the cases of Ribadeneyra and Alvia de Castro, identify their own work as a *verdadera razón de estado*.

There are nine references to *razón de estado* in Alarcón's two *Partes*.<sup>27</sup> Only

---

<sup>26</sup> See Giovanni Botero, *The Reason of State*, ed.cit., p.ix.

<sup>27</sup> *Razón de estado* is mentioned in *La amistad castigada*, where it is used by Dión to express the necessity which compels him reluctantly to involve himself in political deceit, 'al fin la razón de estado/ ha de vencer, que es forzoso, a todo' (I.4.285-87 [= *OC*, II, 109]); in *Ganar amigos*, when don Fadrique advises the King that 'bien mirado/ alguna vez el rigor/ de la justicia, Señor,/ cede a la razón de estado' (III.3.1930-32 [= *OC*, II, 334]); in *La prueba de las promesas*, where Tristán approves his master's decision to put politics before love affairs, and tells him that 'no se sufren [...]/ las sinrazones de amor/ con las razones de estado' (II.8.1644-46 [= *OC*, II, 791]); in *El dueño de las estrellas*, where Diana tells the King of Crete who has refused to marry her because he has consented to marry a foreign princess for political ends, 'Pues si a tu razón de estado/ atiendes tú, no te espantes/ de que yo atienda a la mía' (I.16.812-14 [= *OC*, II, 38]); in *La industria y la suerte*, where the passionate doña Sol insists that her 'tan ciego estado de amor/ no mira razón de estado' (I.4.119-20 [= *OC*, I, 115]); twice in *Los favores*

in *La amistad castigada* is the phrase associated with the use of deception and linked with the concept of necessity, and here the deception involved is presented as a means of protecting the state from sedition. In *Ganar amigos*, it is linked to the moderation of the rigour of the law for reasons of utility. In every other case, Alarcón's use of the phrase provides support for Fernández Santamaría's contention, cited earlier, that 'reason [...] becomes in politics reason of state', as opposed to the *sinrazón* of actions governed by passion. In these instances, however, it should be recognised that Alarcón is applying a term from political philosophy to conflicts which are defined in terms of personal morality as between passion on one hand and obligation or decency on the other.<sup>28</sup>

### The *Privado* Plays

I have sought to demonstrate in the preceding chapters that Alarcón's most persistent dramatic concern is with the moral implications of different forms of deceit. I have discussed the literary nature of don García's lies and don Mendo's slanders, and the prudent deception of doña Jacinta, doña Ana and don Juan de Mendoza in *La verdad sospechosa* and *Las paredes oyen*; the illusions produced by both black and white magic in *La cueva de Salamanca*, *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*, and *La prueba*

---

*del mundo*, where the deceitful Julia twice comments on the difference between marrying for love and marrying for social advancement, '[...] sólo en tomar estado/ es tirano fuero injusto/ dar a la razón de estado/ jurisdicción sobre el gusto' (II.12.1726 [= OC, I, 63]), and 'a ser tema viene ahora/ lo que fue razón de estado' (III.15.2808-09 [= OC, I, 95]); in *La manganilla de Melilla*, where Acén tells Daraja that, as a woman, it is not her place to advise him in political matters, '[...] jamás a las mujeres/ tocó la razón de estado' (I.4.539-40 [= OC, II, 201]); and in *Los pechos privilegiados*, where Leonor unjustly reproaches her lover, Rodrigo de Villagómez, for allowing placing his duty to the King before his love for her: 'un amante tan considerado/ que entre la pretensión de los favores/ atento vive a la razón de estado,/ pisar merece abrojos, no flores' (II.17.1648-51 [= OC, II, 708-09]).

<sup>28</sup> Cf Denis: 'Ce que [les amoureux] appellent leur raison d'Etat, c'est toujours la faculté de raison mise au service de leur passion' (*La langue de J.R. de Alarcón*, p.313).

*de las promesas*; and the use of deception as a valid military strategy in *La manganilla de Melilla*. Now that I have also sketched out the main lines of contemporary theory regarding deceit in politics and its affinities with Alarcón's plays, I shall examine his treatment of political deceit in those which deal, not as the others do, with private individuals, but with characters at the highest level of society: kings, princes, and their *privados*, and especially with two such plays, *La amistad castigada* and *Ganar amigos*.

Most of Alarcón's political dramas, or '*privado* plays' (as I shall term them) appear to have been composed towards the end of his career as a dramatist. Of the eight plays in the *Primera parte*, approved for publication in 1622, only two contain royal characters (*Los favores del mundo* and *El desdichado en fingir*), and both these characters are princes rather than reigning monarchs. By way of contrast, five of the twelve plays in the *Segunda parte* - *Los pechos privilegiados*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, *Ganar amigos*, *La crueldad por el honor*, and *La amistad castigada* - include kings in the *dramatis personae*.<sup>29</sup> The earliest of these plays probably dates from 1618 and the latest from 1626, a period which encompasses the end of Philip III's reign and the beginning of that of Philip IV. Each of Alarcón's royal characters is accompanied by at least one *privado* whose presence reflects the historical reality of an age of royal favourites: Lerma, Rodrigo Calderón, Uceda, Zúñiga and the greatest of them all, Olivares - although only in the case of Olivares can any fictional character be even tentatively identified with a specific individual.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Alarcón's increasing

---

<sup>29</sup> Six, if one counts the Tetrarch of Jerusalem, or the Antichrist himself, in *El anticristo*.

<sup>30</sup> The connection between the olive tree suggested by the oracle in the opening scene of *El dueño de las estrellas* (I.1.49-56 [= *OC*, II, 14-15]) and Licurgus, who comes to be the *privado* to the King of Crete, has been taken as an allusion to Olivares. See King, *Alarcón: letrado y dramaturgo*, p.153: 'Olivares [...] a quien elogia claramente Alarcón en la escena inicial de *El dueño de las estrellas*, metaforizándolo en la oliva, símbolo de la paz lograda mediante la justicia'. In a poem by Gaspar Gravaerts, written to accompany an allegorical portrait of Olivares by Rubens (1625-6) the triumphant olive also spreads its peace-bringing leaves across the world. Such suggestions are interesting, yet it matters little if they are missed, I believe, because Alarcón is seeking to provide moral examples of wider

tendency towards the latter part of his dramatic career to write about such characters undoubtedly reflects not only his own involvement in writing for the court theatre under Philip IV but also the broader interest of the contemporary audience in the whole question of government and reform.<sup>31</sup>

Alarcón's political plays are unlike the famous 'peasant honour' plays of Lope in that they do not present the society of a nation as a cohesive and harmonious whole comprising high and low alike and dependent for its harmony and cohesion upon the right actions of all its members under the aegis of the king. Rather, Alarcón concentrates upon the moral dilemmas faced by those at the highest level and implies that the well-being of the nation is directly dependent upon the nature of their conduct.<sup>32</sup> As a result, political tyranny on the part of Alarcón's rulers is commonly the product of the tyranny of passion over reason within their own natures, and for this reason the argument of these plays remains primarily a moral rather than a political one.

The high status of the protagonists in these plays means that their actions have more wide-ranging social consequences than those of the private citizens in his *comedias de enredo*, but this strikes one more as a means of emphasising the

---

relevance.

<sup>31</sup> The writings of the *arbitristas* are reflected in two of these plays, *La crueldad por el honor* (III.3.2039-2114 [= *OC*, II, 889-91]), and *El dueño de las estrellas* (III.8.2034-2114 [= *OC*, II, 72-75]). In 1618, Alarcón himself contributed dedicatory verses to the *Proverbios morales* of Cristóbal Pérez de Herrera (1556-1620), personal physician to Philip III and founder of the Hospital General y Real. Of Pérez King writes: 'Es indudablemente, junto con Saavedra Fajardo, Álamos de Barrientos y Sancho de Moncada, una de las principales voces que se alzaron para pedir la revitalización del reino y propusieron dar estímulos al comercio, la agricultura y la industria, dignificar el trabajo manual, apoyar la burguesía comercial y profesional, y atraer inmigrantes para ocupar y volver productivas las tierras y poblados rurales que habían sufrido un alarmante descenso demográfico. A tales planes respondieron Felipe III y Lerma con el silencio y la inacción, pero los optimistas esperaban de Felipe IV otra conducta' (*Alarcón: Letrado y dramaturgo*, pp.163-4). Whilst the proposals for new legislation made in *La crueldad por el honor* and *El dueño de las estrellas* are not drawn directly from Pérez de Herrera, both authors express very similar social and political concerns.

<sup>32</sup> This is the case in *El desdichado en fingir*, a play in which the deception central to the plot is provoked by the libidinous and tyrannical behaviour of the Prince Regent.

fundamental nature of Alarcón's moral distinctions for a court audience than as the expression of a deliberate political manifesto. This does not mean that Alarcón could ignore, or would have wished to ignore, the political arguments of his day, but simply that he chose to address these arguments in terms of their moral components as he saw them.

In these plays, therefore, political issues are presented as secondary effects and the 'first cause' of the action is shown to be a question of amorous desire. In four of these plays, *La amistad castigada*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, *Los favores del mundo*, and *Los pechos privilegiados*, Alarcón situates the principal dramatic conflict in the relationship between the king and his *privado* by causing both men to love the same woman. What is more, in *La amistad castigada*, *El dueño de las estrellas*, and *Los pechos privilegiados*, he further complicates the relationship between the monarch and his subjects by causing the woman in question to be the daughter of the young king's own protector and childhood mentor. The conflict between passion and obligation which creates the dramatic interest in these plays is evident in Alarcón's arrangement of their three central figures: the king, the young *privado* and the old mentor. There is little internal conflict in either the young kings or the old mentors, since in the former reason is almost always wholly overcome by desire, and in the latter it is unchallenged by passion. As a result, the conflict between passion and obligation is most evident in the character and actions of the *privado*, and it is the *privado* who becomes the true dramatic protagonist.

### ***La amistad castigada* and *Ganar amigos***

In these two plays, Alarcón depicts two strongly contrasting approaches to the art of government and two strikingly different *privados*. *La amistad castigada* presents a tyrannical king, obsessed by passion, who is advised by a *privado* who is amoral, self-interested and a virtuoso in the art of deceit. By contrast, *Ganar amigos* presents a king who is scrupulously concerned with the enactment of the law in all its rigour, and a *privado* who repeatedly demonstrates his honesty and rationality. It will be seen, however, that, despite the differences between the two plays, Alarcón's attitude towards the legitimisation of certain forms of deceit remains remarkably consistent.

### *La amistad castigada*

*La amistad castigada* is set in Classical Sicily and the characters are derived from Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>33</sup> King Dionisio has recently received the crown from his childhood protector, Dión, but the kingdom remains at risk, both from malcontents at home and the threat of invasion from Carthage. The latter danger has been allayed by Dionisio's betrothal to a Carthaginian princess, but the threat of treason from within remains with the suspicion that there is a faction at court which seeks to have Dionisio proclaimed a tyrant and deposed. Dionisio is less preoccupied with matters of state, however, than with his obsessive passion for Dión's daughter, Aurora. Unable to marry her because of his treaty with the Carthaginians, he wishes to make her his mistress, regardless of the dishonour this will bring to Dión, to whom he is obliged by ties of blood as well as gratitude and political necessity.

In his *Della ragion di stato*, Botero alludes to the downfall of the Younger Dionysius as an example of how licentiousness may cause the ruin of states: 'Dionysius

---

<sup>33</sup> Plutarch's *Lives*, ed.cit., VOL.VI (*Dion and Brutus, Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus*), pp.1-124.

the Elder, when he heard that his son had consorted with the wife of an honoured citizen, rebuked him severely, asking whether he had ever known his father to behave in such a way. The young man answered: 'If you did not, it was because you were not the son of a king'. And you will not be the father of a king', he replied, 'if you do not mend your ways' [...].<sup>34</sup>

It is possible that Alarcón had Botero's *Della ragion di stato* in mind when he wrote *La amistad castigada*. Certainly, Alarcón's presentation of a Sicily which is under threat from both foreign enemies abroad and potential traitors at home, undermined by the lascivious passion of its ruler and riven by jealousy and ambition at court, is very close to Botero's analysis of the reasons why states are ruined. Botero writes:

The works of nature fail through two kinds of cause, intrinsic and extrinsic. We call intrinsic causes excess and corruption of the essential qualities, extrinsic causes fire, the sword, and other forms of violence. In the same way states come to ruin through internal or external causes: the incapacity of the ruler is an internal cause [...] Licentiousness, which dishonours all men and in particular the noble and generous, also bring[s] ruin upon the state; for licentiousness [...] introduced the Moors into Spain [...] Other internal causes of the ruin of states are envy, rivalry, discord, and ambition among the great, fickleness, inconstancy and passion in the people, and the inclination of both to favour a different rule. [...] The stratagems and power of enemies are external causes. [...] But which are the most pernicious causes? Without doubt, internal causes; for it rarely happens that external causes bring about the downfall of a state which has not already been corrupted by internal ones.<sup>35</sup>

When Botero refers to internal causes here, he is not simply speaking about treason. In writing of 'excess and corruption of the essential qualities', and citing specific vices

---

<sup>34</sup> *The Reason of State*, p.4.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

such as lust, he is making a point about the moral basis of good government which accords with the emphasis Alarcón places on moral concerns of a personal kind within his political dramas.

To solve the immediate problem of how he is to see Aurora without Dión's knowledge, Dionisio summons his *privado*, Filipo, who has recently returned from exile. Filipo's *ingenio* is immediately evident as he proposes a scheme which should grant Dionisio unlimited access to Aurora at the same time as it identifies and roots out the dissenters at court. Filipo tells Dionisio that he must instruct Dión to pretend that he has fallen from the king's favour and to make it widely known, so that all those who seek support for their seditious views will make themselves known to him. The subtlety of the plan rests in the fact that, if asked on what grounds he has lost the king's favour, Dión is to reply that he had discovered Dionisio making dishonourable advances to his daughter. Filipo's plan follows the maxim that one should always *engañar con la verdad*, as it shamelessly inverts intention and pretext in the interests of the king's illicit passion for Aurora.

When Dionisio instructs Dión as to the rôle he is to play, he is insistent that Dión should do nothing to encourage dissent, but should limit himself to identifying such seditious elements at court as already exist. Dión agrees to the plan and then asks the king to give his consent to the marriage of his daughter to Policiano, a courtier whom Aurora has already accepted as a husband out of respect for her father's wishes. Dionisio naturally refuses to give his consent, thereby obliging Dión to break his word to Policiano and causing the furiously disappointed suitor to speak treacherously of taking revenge against the king. It is immediately apparent, therefore, that Dionisio's passion for Aurora has already provoked one of the dangers he had sought as a ruler

to avoid, providing an early indication that *simulación* is incompatible with reason-of-state of the moral kind.

Filipo, the *privado*, is sent to Aurora as a go-between and at once falls in love with her. When, on his second visit, he discovers that she is also in love with him, he resolves to use his *ingenio* to remove all obstacles to their marriage. Policiano is no longer a threat, and a second suitor, the somewhat reticent Ricardo, is swiftly deterred by the rumour that King Dionisio is in love with Aurora. Thus, only the king remains as a serious impediment. Filippo, therefore, decides to remove him from power by encouraging Dión to depose him. To this end, he advises Dionisio to send Dión to Carthage to collect his bride and to make use of Dión's absence to seduce Aurora, taking her by force if necessary. However, Filippo also alerts Dión to the true nature of the king's desires and in return for this information obtains from Dión the promise of Aurora's hand.

It is evident that Filippo's second plan is the counterpart of the first. In this case, however, it has as its pretext the avoidance of an external threat rather than an internal one. What is more, there is now genuine sedition at court, and its practitioners are not just incidental characters like Policiano but such men of trust and power as Filippo and Dión.

Dión does not take ship for Carthage but enlists the support of both Policiano and Ricardo with whom he remains concealed at home. When Dionisio arrives and enters Aurora's bedchamber, she defends herself against his advances. Hearing her cries, Dión and his companions step forward with lamps to illuminate the scene. In this confrontation, Aurora and Ricardo surprisingly both side with Dionisio (who is the rival of one and the potential rapist of the other), whilst Policiano and Dión oppose him. For

his part, Filippo does not intervene until it is clear that Dionisio will be deposed, at which point he steps in on the side of Dión.

In the final scene of the play, Dión sentences each of the characters to his fate. Dionisio is deposed and exiled as expected. When Filippo comes forward to claim Aurora, Dión exiles him also. Ricardo, who has opposed Dión out of loyalty to Dionisio, is given the hand of Aurora, whereas Policiano, who supported Dión but was treacherous toward the king, is required to keep his promise to marry Diana. Dión's servant Turpín, though he betrayed his master in admitting Dionisio to the house, is similarly rewarded for having obeyed the king. It seems likely that this outcome is as shocking for the audience, which has been following Filippo's fortunes, as it is for Filippo himself.

Dión justifies breaking his word to Filippo on the grounds that a promise made by him as a private citizen need not be binding on him now that he is king, especially when Filippo's betrayal of Dionisio calls for punishment (III.18.2786-2803 [= *OC*, II, 180]). So it is that Alarcón paradoxically acknowledges Dión's right to depose Dionisio for tyranny whilst asserting that disloyalty to the king is in all circumstances a crime, though loyalty is a virtue, a resolution which appears to prefigure the treatment of the rebel soldier in *La vida es sueño*.

If the outcome is contradictory on a political level, however, it is nevertheless clear that Alarcón rewards or punishes his characters according to the degree to which they have placed their obligations before their appetites. Thus, Dionisio, Filippo and Policiano have all subordinated duty to desire and are punished for it, and Ricardo,

Aurora and Turpín have all supported the king regardless of their own immediate interests and now receive their reward.<sup>36</sup>

The respective attitudes of Dionisio and Dión towards deceit are also noteworthy. They can be seen in terms of *simulación* and *disimulación*, if these are understood as active and passive or offensive and defensive forms of deceit respectively. Whilst Dionisio employs Filipo to invent deceitful schemes on his behalf, Dión eventually ensnares Dionisio simply by concealing the extent of his own knowledge. In terms of the 'offensive/defensive' argument, Dionisio errs by using deceit (*simulación*) against a loyal servant, Dión, whereas Dión's use of concealment (*disimulación*) is a response to Dionisio's own corrupt practices. This leaves Filipo's use of deceit against Dionisio. Filipo knows what kind of man he is dealing with - a fact that would seem to justify his methods - and yet the play's *desenlace* sees him punished.

The answer to the puzzle seems to lie in the principle of utility, where utility involves the common good. Both Filipo's schemes involve placing the peace and stability of the nation in jeopardy. This is also a feature of his betrayal of Dionisio to Dión and his failure to support the king in the final scene.

In political terms *La amistad castigada* clearly has anti-Machiavellian implications, demonstrating that deceit may prove actively counterproductive as a strategy for government. However, the play's resolution depends upon actions and attitudes which are not without an element of dissimulation and casuistry themselves: Dión makes use of concealment to ensnare the tyrannical Dionisio and insists that his former identity as a private citizen is entirely separate from his new identity as King

---

<sup>36</sup> Turpín just qualifies for exemption from punishment because he admits the king to Dión's house without insisting on a bribe, thereby placing his duty to the king above his self-interest.

in order to break his promise to Filipo. Despite unsettling subtleties of this kind, however, the moral argument, which identifies Dionisio and Filipo's Machiavellian schemes as a by-product of the failure to control passion with reason, nevertheless offers clearer and less ambiguous conclusions and it is these which are most apparent to the audience or reader.

### *Ganar amigos*

Having implicitly attacked the arguments of those Machiavellian political theorists or *políticos* who would employ deceit without scruple in *La amistad castigada*, in *Ganar amigos* Alarcón questions the appropriateness of rejecting dissimulation altogether. If Dionisio becomes a tyrant by flouting the bonds of friendship, honour and duty, his counterpart in *Ganar amigos* risks becoming a tyrant by enforcing his own laws with excessive rigour. Appropriately enough, *Ganar amigos* is set in Seville during the reign of Pedro I, known either as *el Cruel* or as *el Justiciero*, and later portrayed by Calderón in his *El médico de su honra*.

As John W. Gilmour points out in his well-reasoned article on Alarcón's treatment of 'the King Peter theme', King Pedro appears in a large number of Golden Age plays in a variety of rôles and has emerged in recent studies as a monarch with an extremely controversial reputation.<sup>37</sup> Gilmour also finds 'strong disagreement' as to the character of King Pedro in the case of Alarcón's *Ganar amigos* and quotes Antonio

---

<sup>37</sup> John W. Gilmour, 'Ruiz de Alarcón's treatment of the King Peter theme', *RJ*, 24 (1973), 294-302. Gilmour cites a number of important studies in notes to this article, among them, J.R. Lomba y Pedraja, 'El rey don Pedro en el teatro', in *Homenaje a Menéndez y Pelayo*, 2 vols, (Madrid: Suárez, 1899) II, pp.257-339, which provides a list of plays and authors concerned with the King Peter theme; A.I. Watson, 'Peter the Cruel or Peter the Just?: A Re-appraisal of the Rôle Played by King Peter in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*', *RJ*, 14 (1963), 322-46; and Donald W. Cruickshank, 'Calderón's King Pedro: Just or Unjust?', *Spanische Forschungen der Gorresgesellschaft*, Series I, 25 (1970), 113-32.

Castro Leal's description of Pedro as 'simplista y violento', contrasting it with Claydon's claim that Pedro is a just and virtuous king.<sup>38</sup> Gilmour makes the point that Alarcón's portrayal of Pedro I is exclusively political, and that, as a result, it differs not only from the way in which Pedro was presented by other dramatists, but also from Alarcón's own tendency to present the rulers in his comedies as *reyes enamorados*. He remarks that, 'it is strange how Alarcón, for all his preoccupations with *reyes enamorados*, makes no mention of Peter's amorous activities, as these appear in a number of plays by other dramatists of the period dealing with the historical recreation of King Peter'.<sup>39</sup>

It is apparent from such observations that in *Ganar amigos* Alarcón was seeking to portray a ruler of a quite different kind. Despite their obvious differences in age and preoccupations, however, both Dionisio and Pedro are characterised by an obsessive quality. Whilst Dionisio is libidinous and Pedro is rigorous in upholding the law, both men are similarly ruthless. Gilmour himself remarks on two principal aspects of Pedro's character as portrayed here: his rigour and his generosity, both equally extreme.

Nevertheless, Gilmour's most important observation in the context of discussion of deceit in these plays is that Pedro attempts 'to control affairs merely by applying his rigid, punitive concept of justice which lack[s] any political *craft*' (my emphasis), and that the harmonious resolution of the plot is made possible only when Pedro learns not only mercy, but an ingenious prudence: 'He is now careful, patient, and *ingenious*'.<sup>40</sup>

Gilmour rightly, I believe, attributes the change that has taken place in King Pedro's behaviour to his relationship with his *privado*, the Marqués don Fadrique, a

---

<sup>38</sup> Castro Leal, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón*, p.147; Claydon, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Baroque Dramatist*, p.165. See also Brenes, *El sentimiento democrático*, p.206.

<sup>39</sup> Gilmour, 'The King Peter Theme', p.295.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.297-98 (my emphasis).

character who appears not to represent any actual historical figure but rather to be Alarcón's own invention. For Gilmour this fact is significant because he believes that in this group of plays Alarcón is interested in defining the character of the perfect *privado* and the rôle of *privanza* itself in Golden Age Spain. I can see no reason to disagree with this view, and yet I feel that Gilmour's concern with royal and aristocratic virtue causes him to pay insufficient attention to the part played by dissimulation in the establishment of the moral credentials which he and other critics attribute to these characters.

The leading characteristic of don Fadrique's rôle as *privado* is to persuade the king to temper his justice with mercy. On two occasions, don Fadrique asks King Pedro to show clemency, and each time, he makes his plea on the grounds of public benefit (or, in that sense, 'utility'). As Gilmour states: 'on both occasions, the concept of mercy is understood in terms of how *useful* the spared party may be for the good of the kingdom: rather than punish him and [...] incur his loss, he must be put into loyal service for the crown [in this case, sent to fight the Turk or the Moors]'.<sup>41</sup>

There is a difference between these two instances, however. On the first occasion, the offence has been committed against don Fadrique's brother, who has been killed in a duel. Having himself forgiven his brother's killer, Fadrique is in a position to ask the king to do so also, and the plea of utility will suffice. On the second occasion, however, the offence is more severe and involves a breach of the law governing conduct within the royal palace. The offence is punishable by death and don Fadrique is appointed by King Pedro secretly to assassinate the offending party. In this case, Fadrique is not in a position to persuade the king to pardon the offender and can only seek to defer his punishment by advising that King Pedro put him in charge of the

---

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p.289 (my emphasis).

army he has sent against the Moors in Granada.<sup>42</sup> King Pedro agrees to this suggestion only because there is no one else available to command his forces, since his original general has been killed and all others of suitable rank are either superannuated, infirm or employed elsewhere. Alarcón devotes an entire scene to making the point that don Pedro is the only candidate.<sup>43</sup> In this case, therefore, it is not merely utility, but necessity which serves as the basis for mitigating the rigour of the law.

Don Fadrique's arguments in these cases are similar to those put forward by Ribadeneyra, who also commonly judges the legitimacy of an action in terms of the well-being of society, as is seen when he writes:

Es bien verdad que el príncipe debe mirar mucho qué delitos perdona, y a quién y cómo los perdona; porque, como el perdonar y el castigar han de tener siempre por blanco y fin el bien de la república, lo uno y lo otro con este fin se debe regular; castigando cuando conviene castigar, y perdonando cuando conviene a la misma república que se perdone.<sup>44</sup>

Ribadeneyra's opinion that it is useful to leave the punishment of those who have done wrong until an appropriate moment and meanwhile to dissimulate is also wholly in accord with the advice given to King Pedro by don Fadrique:

Don Fadrique

¿Dónde podrá la razón

---

<sup>42</sup> The offending party, don Pedro de Luna, has broken a royal edict by carrying on an affair with doña Inés de Castro within the palace precincts. Fadrique's plan to prevent a repetition of the offence and to allow don Pedro to atone for it in combat with the Moors is appropriate not only because of its immediate utility but because of the symbolic value of the Moors as representative of lustful passion, (part of their significance in *La manganilla de Melilla*). In overcoming the Moors, don Pedro may also be understood to have overcome his lusts. It is also appropriate, therefore, that on his return, he is rewarded for his victory with the hand of doña Inés. A similar situation may be observed in the case of the Duke of Ferrara in Lope's *El castigo sin venganza*, although in Lope's play the consequences are entirely different.

<sup>43</sup> II.15 [= *OC*, II, 328-31].

<sup>44</sup> Ribadeneyra, *Tratado del príncipe*, p.563b.

derogar la ejecución  
de la ley mejor que aquí?  
Con justa causa lo infiero,  
porque no es más conveniente  
castigar un delincuente  
que ganar un reino entero.  
Demás de que no os priváis  
así de cumplir con todo;  
que el castigo de este modo  
diferís, no perdonáis;  
y pues que con ausentalle  
el delinquir cesará,  
allá aprovecha, y acá  
no daña el no castigalle.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, in his *Espejo de príncipes*, Martín de Carvallo Villas Boas argues that Princes are in a unique position to mitigate the rigour of the law, and may impose reduced sentences if, for example, the person concerned is a ‘persona cuyos servicios en la guerra [...] fuesen de utilidad a la república’ and an ‘astuto general y valeroso’.<sup>46</sup> If don Fadrique gives such advice on the specific grounds of utility (in the first case) and even of necessity (in the second), he refers it to a general principle of *razón de estado* which is not necessarily congruous with the letter of the law: ‘alguna vez el rigor/ de la justicia, señor,/ cede a la razón de estado’ (III.3.1930-32 [= *OC*, II, 334]).

When don Fadrique is falsely accused of rape by doña Ana, a lady of the court who has been tricked by a plot to discredit him, King Pedro has his *privado* imprisoned immediately. This at first appears to be yet another example of impulsive behaviour on the part of the king, and we fear for don Fadrique’s safety because

---

<sup>45</sup> II.3.1934-48 [= *OC*, II, 334]). This point of view is supported by Alvia de Castro: ‘Si el príncipe tuviere justo sentimiento de algún ministro o vasallo: porque merezca castigo, pero por justas causas no convenga darle luego, buen puede disimularlo, y alargarlo a otro tiempo: prudencia será ésta’, *Verdadera razón de estado*, fol. 52v.

<sup>46</sup> Martín de Carvallo Villas Boas, *Volumen primero del espejo de príncipes y ministros*, (Milan, 1598), pp.217-18; cited by Truman, ‘The Idea of the Prince’, p.392.

there appears to be no one to intervene for him in the way that he has done for others. However, King Pedro soon admits that his harsh attitude is nothing more than a pretence to elicit the truth: 'Para aclarar la verdad/ conviene tanto rigor,' (III.12.2377-78 [= *OC*, II, 348]). The king in fact dissimulates, concealing his faith in his *privado*'s innocence behind a facade which resembles his former cruelty. The effectiveness of this policy of dissimulation is confirmed when it becomes clear, as it does in the third act, that his subjects' belief in his cruelty plays a major part in persuading the real offenders to come forward. King Pedro's behaviour accords with what Juan Pablo Mártir Rizo says in his *Norte de príncipes*, of 1626: 'Si tal vez [el príncipe] quisiere hacer demostración de su severidad, no conviene que sea en los pueblos y personas inferiores; contra las grandes cabezas ha de emplear su indignación, si son culpadas'.<sup>47</sup> This is a pragmatic as well as a just strategy: 'Porque los grandes no presumen cuando ven que a los del pueblo se les hace algún castigo, que éste se hizo para ellos, ni toman ejemplo ni escarmiento en él; mas cuando los del pueblo ven castigar a los poderosos, temen, se acobardan y viven contentos amando a su príncipe, porque ven que es igual la justicia, pues con un mismo peso y medida mensura las acciones buenas o malas de los grandes y pequeños'.<sup>48</sup> But more often than not it will be possible for the skilful prince to be feared without actually being fearsome - if he is both prudent and judicious. Because then his subjects will be uncertain, and, suspecting his dissimulation, will tread carefully for fear of their unpredictable ruler.<sup>49</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, p.58.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> Fernández Santamaría, *Reason of State*, p.301.

In order further to emphasise King Pedro's prudence and ingenuity in the last act of the play, Alarcón has him conceal himself in a secret chamber from which he can observe and overhear don Fadrique's conversations with those who come to visit him in his prison cell (III.16 [= *OC*, II, 353]). This strategy not only enables King Pedro to ascertain the truth, it also makes it possible for him to intercede in person, resolving the confusion and pronouncing judgement. The speech given to Pedro by Alarcón for his 'summing-up' and sentencing demonstrates that the king is now proceeding in accordance with the principle of utility and the royal prerogative to mitigate the rigour of the law:

El Rey	Caballeros valerosos, de España gloria y honor, en cuyos heroicos pechos cuatro espejos mira el sol, de justiciero me precio; no he de serlo menos hoy: justicia tengo de hacer, y premiar vuestro valor. Al que es único en un arte útil a las gentes, dió la ley de cualquier delito por una vez remisión; que el derecho prevenido más conveniente juzgó conservar el bien de muchos que castigar un error'. <sup>50</sup>
--------	--

Like that of the King, the character of the city of Seville, in literature at least, is one of strong contrasts. On the one hand it is a city of secret passions, double-dealing and half-truths. As an indication of this atmosphere of double-dealing

---

<sup>50</sup> III.22.2817-32 [= *OC*, II, 361].

and mercenary contracts, Alarcón has the play open outside a shop.<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, it is a city whose inhabitants have a pronounced sense of personal honour and the inviolability of promises. Indeed, it is a promise of secrecy concerning a forbidden affair that provides one of the main strands of the plot, and it can be said that these three themes, the promise (the law, reason), secrecy (concealment, dissimulation), and illicit desire (passion) together constitute the argument (*asunto*) of the play.

Although it might be expected that honouring promises and a strict observance of the law might guarantee social harmony, *Ganar amigos* clearly illustrates that this is not the case. The happy ending of this play is only possible because the king allows don Fadrique to escape the full rigour of the law, and because one of the characters in the sub-plot, doña Flor, is prepared to release her former lover from his vow of secrecy. The fact that King Pedro's final judgement bends the law for the sake of justice provides further proof of this.

If *La amistad castigada* provides an example of the excessive and improper use of deceit in political life, then *Ganar amigos* stands as its opposite, arguing with Ribadeneyra, Márquez, Vera y Zúñiga, and others that a flexible attitude to the truth is not only useful, and even necessary in a fallen world, but that it is positively desirable and entirely compatible with the undisputed virtues of loyalty and clemency, and even that dissimulation may be an essential component of prudence. That Alarcón should suggest such a relationship between dissimulation and prudence here need not surprise us, since it has been apparent throughout his work, and is explicitly identified by Mártir Rizo: 'La prudencia y la disimulación están tan unidas

---

<sup>51</sup> The only other shop scene in Alarcón's plays is that in *La verdad sospechosa*, Act I, scene iii, which contains the first of don García's lies in that play.

que el que sabe bien disimular es prudente, y la prudencia no es otra cosa sino conducir las acciones a su fin con disimulación, hasta que llegue tiempo de ejecutar bien lo que se disimula [...]'.<sup>52</sup>

This analysis of *Ganar amigos* has necessarily been brief and consequently remains incomplete. I have considered the connection between dissimulation and prudence, but I have said nothing of the link between mercy and don Fadrique's most remarkable characteristic, his self-control. During the course of the play, Don Fadrique shows that he is prepared to remain unmarried in order not to deprive his brother of his inheritance; prepared to forgive his brother's killer even though he has reason to suspect that the man is his rival in love; prepared to give up his beloved for the sake of her brother's honour; and prepared to remain in gaol and suffer death rather than allow another to die in his place. Despite his arguments appealing to the public good on behalf of others elsewhere in the play, don Fadrique refuses to break the law, allow a substitution, or confess to a crime he did not commit, even to save his own life. If the resolution of the play is facilitated by other factors such as dissimulation, it is the generosity that results from don Fadrique's self-restraint that makes it possible. In this play Alarcón makes it clear that he considers nothing of greater importance in the creation of social harmony than the self-restraint practised by those who have learned to master passion with reason, particularly when they stand at the highest level of society. Such self-restraint and self-sacrifice is a mark of spiritual fortitude or valour, and, as we have seen in relation to *La manganilla de Melilla*, valour is as indispensable as prudence if victory is to be won. If don Fadrique provides King Pedro with a model for prudent dissimulation which enhances his role as the source of justice, he also provides his peers with a model

---

<sup>52</sup> Mártir Rizo, *Norte de príncipes*, pp.119-20.

of valour which they emulate in offering their freedom or their lives in return for his.

Ultimately, therefore, Alarcón's *razón de estado* is based upon the moral behaviour of the ruler or minister as an individual and traced to the level of his most intimate *afectos* rather than confined to manoeuvres of a purely political nature. In this way Alarcón avoids affirming the 'Machiavellian' theme of the prince's dual rôle or identity - as a man and as a ruler - and presents private behaviour and public conduct as inseparably interlinked.

From the two plays discussed here it is possible to say that the political views expressed or implicit in these *privado* plays are conventional in nature and accord with the consensus of informed opinion in contemporary Spain. They aim to refute the amoral pragmatism associated with the works of Machiavelli and with those theorists, termed *políticos*, who followed him, and to find a practical compromise by which the prince may 'preserve his state' whilst acting within the bounds of Christian ethics. Nevertheless, even in *Ganar amigos*, which critics have frequently held to present an idealised picture of the perfect relationship between the king and his *privado*, and in which the major pattern is one of an honest and noble character (don Fadrique) holding fast to his principles in the face of adverse fortune compounded by enmity and the practice of deceit, there yet remains a substantial component of dissimulation, even in the behaviour of the most virtuous characters.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the virtues of courage, loyalty and self-sacrifice present in this play are not compromised by the inclusion of elements of dissimulation but complemented by them.

---

<sup>53</sup> On the first of these points, see, for example, Claydon, *Ruiz de Alarcón: Baroque Dramatist*, p.165.

Gilmour observes that Alarcón shows the customary disregard of the Golden-Age author for historical accuracy in allowing the conquest of Granada to take place in the reign of King Pedro, and suggests that Alarcón himself distorts the truth in this case to indicate the potential benefits of good government.<sup>54</sup> I would add that it is no accident that Alarcón should inform his audience that the Moors of Granada were defeated by a stratagem (III.13.2384-96 [= *OC*, II, 348]), thereby forging a conceptual link between dissimulation and a great Spanish national and religious victory (as in *La manganilla de Melilla*) since, in the *privado* plays, it becomes increasingly clear that Alarcón believes a degree of deceit to be prudent, some forms of dissimulation to be virtuous, and that prudent and virtuous dissimulation is essential in arresting the decline of Spain and contributing to future triumphs. In Alarcón's *privado* plays, dissimulation is justified as an integral part of a *verdadera razón de estado* which has as its aim the *conservación y aumento* of the state.

Because Alarcón is a dramatist, however, his approach differs from that of the political theorists in that such political principles as appear in his plays are further reducible to moral arguments at the level of the individual's choice of reason over passion (or vice versa). The reason for this may be that he recognised that, whatever his success as a court dramatist (and this remains to be determined), only a tiny minority of his audience had a part in the government of states, but all would have to exercise control over themselves. In his political plays, the kinds of illusion and falsehood which are associated with unrestrained passion (*simulación*) are linked with tyranny, and those varieties of deception associated with rational self-restraint (*disimulación*) are presented as leading to political and social harmony and the building of personal relationships based on trust.

---

<sup>54</sup> Gilmour, 'The King Peter Theme', p.266.

If this resumé of Alarcón's dramatic practices appears familiar from what has been said in earlier chapters, then that need not surprise us: politics and political theory are used in these plays in the same way that magic and theology are employed in his 'magic plays' - their inclusion increases the attractiveness and dramatic intensity of the action whilst serving as a vehicle for the presentation of moral examples. In neither group of plays is Alarcón primarily concerned with science, be it political or metaphysical. In both, however, he is concerned with morality, and particularly with the relationship between truth and falsehood, reality and illusion, as achieved through reason or created as the result of passion.

Alarcón's *privado* plays suggest that for some years Alarcón took an active interest in the contemporary debate about the rôle of the *privado* in particular and about political morality in general. Whilst Alarcón is an advocate of many uncontroversial virtues, such as courage, loyalty and self-sacrifice, he would temper these with prudence, and in particular, with that aspect of prudence which one may identify as dissimulation. In Alarcón's political plays, and elsewhere in his work, dissimulation is a virtue when it is allied to virtue, and a vice when allied to vice: the indispensable companion of the one and the pernicious familiar of the other.

## Conclusion

In the analyses of Alarcón's plays contained in this study I have made extensive reference to a considerable number of non-fictional works by Alarcón's contemporaries and predecessors. My reading of these works in relation to Alarcón's plays has revealed numerous instances where Alarcón appears to be directly indebted for the tenor (if not also for the vehicle) of his thoughts to the philosophers, historians, poets and satirists of Classical antiquity on one hand, and to the Fathers of the Church on the other, as well as to the authors of a variety of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works on statecraft, the art of war, the nature of magic, the history of Spain, and other issues of a moral and political character. The profusion of literary influences of this kind may of course represent no more than the intellectual furniture of any comparably well-educated man of his time, yet the presence of such influences in Alarcón's work does not give the impression of being unconsidered. On the contrary, Alarcón's grasp of the concepts with which he is working seems so firm and his overall method of argument so systematic as to render it unlikely that he wrote these plays merely, or even mainly, to entertain his audience.<sup>1</sup> Rather, I believe that they are designed to argue in favour

---

<sup>1</sup> This does not of course mean that Alarcón's use of the medium of theatre to advance arguments of a morally and intellectually serious nature was such as to damage the appeal of his plays as entertainment, as E.M. Wilson and D. Moir have suggested, or that Alarcón was a failure as a commercial dramatist as a result. See Wilson & Moir, *A Literary History of Spain*, vol.III, *The Golden Age: Drama 1492-1700* (London: Benn, 1971), p.80: 'His plays clearly were intended to rouse dormant consciences, but they sometimes fail to please, [...] They can be pedantic, and hence fail to *deleitar aprovechando*'. By contrast, Willard King believes that, towards the end of his career as a dramatist (= 1623-1626), Alarcón's commercial and popular success rivalled that of Lope, and, indeed, that this success provided much of the motivation for the many satirical attacks directed at him by those who were his *de facto* competitors in the theatrical world of Madrid in the 1620s: 'El dulce aroma del éxito compensaba tantos pinchazos y tantas burlas. [...] Hay pruebas muy serias de que hacia 1623, en respuesta al gusto de la gente, los empresarios teatrales estaban comprando comedias de autores 'nuevos' como Tirso y Alarcón con preferencia a las de Lope' (King, *Alarcón: letrado y dramaturgo*, p.181).

It is noteworthy that the literary allusions in Alarcón's work show a marked bias against poetic fiction: he alludes rarely to authors of fiction or lyric poetry, and when he does cite such authors - Ovid, Góngora or Lope, for example - he does so in contexts characterised by irony and implicit

of the moral and social benefits of adopting a practical scheme of predominantly neo-Stoic virtues, and that they do so in as cogent and deliberate a manner as King suggests in her valuable biographical study of Alarcón, where she compares his technique to:

una forma de proceso judicial en que se van presentando alegatos en pro y en contra de una tesis o de un personaje, hasta que el peso de las sucesivas pruebas jurídicas destruye la falsa opinión y establece la inocencia o la culpa, la verdad o la falsedad. 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.<sup>2</sup>

The cumulative impression made by Alarcón's erudite but discreet literary allusions, allied to the fact that he appears to have taken some pains to ensure the appearance of his work in print, strongly suggests that, far from being hurriedly-written examples of theatrical ephemera from the pen of a jobbing hack, Alarcón's plays have a studied complexity and an intellectual seriousness which is designed to repay close scrutiny.<sup>3</sup> The would-be critic of his works must therefore give due weight to the provenance of the concepts they express or illustrate, and to the significance these may have held for Alarcón and for other men of his time, if he is to make an accurate assessment of Alarcón's achievement as a dramatist.

---

criticism. The only such figure to escape his implied criticism is Cervantes, whose *novela*, *El curioso impertinente*, is recognised as the inspiration for Alarcón's *El semejante a sí mismo*, and whose most famous creation, don Quixote, is perhaps obliquely referred to by Hernando, the *gracioso* of *Las favores del mundo* (I.1.38-44 [= *OC*, I, 14]). In the first of these instances, both Cervantes and Alarcón portray characters who are dominated by an irrational obsession (jealousy) and are punished for it. Cervantes' conclusion is bleaker than Alarcón's but the situations are substantially similar. In the second instance, Alarcón's reference to chivalric romance seems designed to point out the conflict between idealism and practical necessity that is so much a part of that work.

<sup>2</sup> King, *Alarcón: letrado y dramaturgo*, p.79. Though there has not been space to devote more attention to them here, I regard the neo-Stoic aspects of Alarcón's work to be so substantial and so important to the overall character of his moral vision as to merit further study in their own right.

<sup>3</sup> See King, *ibid.*, pp.188-89.

With some honourable exceptions, all too few of the existing studies of Alarcón's work deal with the question of the intellectual background to his plays in any detail, so that even scholars such as James A. Parr, who more than once touches on Alarcón's neo-Stoicism, and Ellen Claydon, who explicitly sets her study of Alarcón against the background of the Christian ideology of the 'Baroque', neglect to provide detailed accounts of the ideas which they claim are reflected in Alarcón's work as they appear in the literature of the age.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly little has been written to date about either of the two principal aspects of the background to Alarcón's works which are discussed in this study, namely the moral controversies concerning the legitimacy of literary fiction (and theatrical performance) on one hand, and the use of deception as an instrument of political and private policy on the other.<sup>5</sup>

As regards the first of these aspects, it is true that many scholars have offered to define those characteristics which distinguish Alarcón's dramatic technique from that of Lope de Vega and his followers, or have passed comment on the extent to which Alarcón's plays appear to observe the precepts advocated by the literary theorists

<sup>4</sup> See Parr's collection of essays on Alarcón's theatre entitled *After Its Kind*, especially: 'Alarcón and the Contexts of Criticism', pp.9-21; 'Fate, Suicide, Free Will: *El dueño de las estrellas*', pp.37-46 (p.41); 'Fortune's Favours: *Todo es ventura* and *Los favores del mundo*', pp.48-55 (p.51); and '"O tempora, O mores": Marginal Meditations on Manners', pp.60-65.

A few studies consider the intellectual or historical background to one or more of Alarcón's plays in more depth. See, for example: Burke, 'The 'Banquet of Sense' in *La verdad sospechosa*' [on neo-Platonism]; Juan A. Ortega y Medina, 'Divertimiento crítico en torno a *La verdad sospechosa*, y *Le Menteur*', in *Conciencia y autenticidad históricas: homenaje a Edmundo O'Gorman* (México: UNAM, 1968), pp.257-77 [on Cartesian rationalism]; Antonio Cortijo Ocaña, 'Ejemplo de *declamatio* en el *Examen de maridos* de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *BH*, 95 (1993), 541-56 [on formal rhetoric]; and Victorio. G. Agüera, '*El examen de maridos* y las pruebas de limpieza', *Papeles de Son Armadans*, 84 (1977), 221-38 [on 'limpieza de sangre'].

<sup>5</sup> The latter issue has been interestingly discussed with regard to Calderón's 'wife-murder plays' in a recent study by Melveena McKendrick, who writes of these plays that: '[...] few informed and aware spectators could have watched [them...] untouched by that related but larger and more controversial manifestation of the battle between ethics and those rules fashioned by society and the state for their own preservation - the *razón de estado* question' (Melveena McKendrick, 'Calderón and the Politics of Honour', p.137).

(*preceptistas*) of the Golden Age. Yet whilst one is often struck by the accuracy of their perception, their statements rarely amount to more than thumb-nail sketches of the distinctive features of Alarcón's art.<sup>6</sup> To my knowledge only one extensive study of the formal characteristics of Alarcón's dramatic technique has been made to date.<sup>7</sup> It is regrettable, therefore, that the study in question should focus on the minutiae of Alarcón's observance of the neo-Classical Unities (and other such matters) to the extent that it excludes any meaningful discussion of the larger debate concerning the relation between aesthetics and morality, and particularly as regards the important contemporary controversies regarding the moral legitimacy of literary fiction and dramatic representation and how they might impinge upon Alarcón's dramatic writing, which I have sought to address in chapters 1 to 3 of the present study.

Similarly, scholars have observed that Alarcón's verse at times betrays the influence of the '*culteranista*' style associated with Góngora - particularly in the case of don García's 'banquet lie' in *La verdad sospechosa* - and yet, to my knowledge, it has not previously been recognised that Alarcón reserves his *culto* passages almost exclusively for his vainglorious and deceitful villains, or that the whole concept of a literary style which is based primarily upon elaborate figurative and auditory effects is contrary to Alarcón's insistence that the primary function of language is to convey an appropriate meaning, and that its *sentido* rather than its *sonido* is what matters most.<sup>8</sup>

Another area in which this study seeks to refocus existing critical approaches, and even, in my judgement, to correct a number of influential critical studies of

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for example: José Frutos Gómez de las Cortinas 'La génesis de *Las paredes oyen*'; and the brief comments offered (some time ago) by Valbuena Prat, *Historia del teatro español*, pp.188, 190, 203.

<sup>7</sup> See María Del Carmen Soto de Benchoff, 'El teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y las preceptivas dramáticas' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, the University of California at Riverside, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter 1 of this study; also Poesse, *Alarcón*, pp.106-09; and Denis, *La Langue de J.R. de Alarcón*, pp.50-53, 165-67.

Alarcón's theatre, is the debate among Alarconian scholars concerning the nature of the moral vision presented in Alarcón's plays and the degree to which they are didactic in intent. This represents possibly the most discussed area of Alarconian criticism. The present consensus of critical opinion favours a view of the moral function of Alarcón's drama which falls between the position adopted by Castro Leal - who rejects the idea that Alarcón's plays are moral fables<sup>9</sup> - and that adopted by Alice M. Paulin and Ellen Claydon - who are in no doubt that Alarcón's plays were intended to be morally exemplary, and who consider their morality to be essentially religious in conception<sup>10</sup> - with the result that Alarcón has most often appeared as an exponent of a particularly rational and practical form of morality which, whilst never in direct opposition to the precepts of the Church, is, for the most part, focused upon the problem of how one may best act in the here and now, rather than how one might best prepare oneself for Heaven.<sup>11</sup> Despite the prevalence of this view, however, I believe that the present

---

<sup>9</sup> See Castro Leal, *Alarcón: su vida y su obra*, pp.141; 'Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y la moral', *Filosofía y letras*, 3 (1942), pp.73-79 (pp.74-76); and Poesse, *Alarcón*, pp.123-24.

<sup>10</sup> See Claydon, *Alarcón: Baroque Dramatist*, pp.163, 171: 'All of Alarcón's plays dramatise a moral virtue or virtues [...] All of Alarcón's morality, however social and rational it may seem, is presented in function with the salvation of the soul'; and Alice M. Paulin, 'The Religious Motive in the Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *HR*, 19 (1961), 33-44 (p.33): 'Alarcón's theatre is a mirror which reflects, in distinct and lucid focus, the dignity of man in his striving for and attainment of moral victory. Generally, the mirror reflects traditional situations concerned with [...] honour, [...] matrimony, or the defence of king and state. [...] Another image, reflected not very extensively but with brilliant intensity, is the spectre of a menace to his faith coming from without. The *comedia* form [...] is here adapted to the vivid representation of an extraordinary theme. The author is concerned chiefly with two things: the dangers besetting the Catholic Church in post-Tridentine Spain and, simultaneously, the fearful havoc wrought upon the moral being of man as he plods his way [...] through a morass of ambivalence and deception until [...] he is saved, morally and spiritually, in his realization and acceptance of the truth of orthodoxy' [!]. Unlike Claydon, Paulin does not seek to prove that all of Alarcón's plays are essentially religious in conception and discusses only those plays with undeniably religious elements - a fact which makes her thesis the more readily acceptable in the case of the plays which she does discuss.

<sup>11</sup> As regards Alarcón's rational outlook, see, for example: Paulin, *ibid.* p.33, who refers to 'the stoicism, the rationalistic manner and detached humanism so frequently ascribed to him'; Parr, 'Alarcón and the Contexts of Criticism', p.12, who speaks of Alarcón's 'advocacy of reason [...] and the pains taken everywhere in his work to offer logical explanations for behaviour and to analyze actions and motivations'; Carlos Ortigoza-Vieyra, *Los móviles de la Comedia* (Mexico, 1957), p.131; and Charles E. Perry 'Comedy and Common Sense in Alarcón's *El semejante a sí mismo*, p.734, n.2.

Alarcón is a 'rationalist' in so far as reason is opposed to the deceptive and destructive effects of passion. Yet he recognises that there are times when reason alone is not sufficient. This is most

study is the first to consider in detail how Alarcón's dramatic characters attempt to maintain their moral principles in the face of the adversities inevitably encountered in the simulation of actual experience represented by the dramatic plot.

The problem of successfully applying principle in practice is rarely more apparent in the literature of the time than in the treatises on the institution of kingship and the education of princes which proliferated during the Spanish Golden Age, since these were simultaneously concerned with an idealised conception of the potential for virtue of a particular individual (the king), and the practical necessity of maintaining the political integrity of the state as a whole in a world where virtue does not necessarily prevail. Yet, despite this, a recently published study by Cynthia Halpern of Alarcón's political theatre focuses on the issues of natural law and the deposition of tyrants (associated with Jean Bodin and Juan de Mariana respectively), to the virtual exclusion of the at least equally significant attempts of the political theorists of the Spanish Golden Age to find acceptable means of accommodating the unpalatable necessities of political life so notoriously expounded by Machiavelli to a no less indispensable system of Christian ethics. In this, she ultimately covers much the same ground as John W. Gilmour, whose doctoral thesis, written two decades earlier, deals with a very similar subject area.<sup>12</sup> Despite the undoubted usefulness of these studies as regards other aspects of Alarcón's political vision - Halpern's acknowledgement that Alarcón 'had read widely in the major political treatises of his day' (p.137) is particularly welcome, even if she ignores what is, in my view, one of their major

---

apparent in plays with a religious aspect such as *La cueva de Salamanca* and *El anticristo*, but it can also be seen in *El examen de maridos*, where doña Inés' rational *examen* of her suitors must ultimately be set aside if she is to make the right choice of husband, and in *El dueño de las estrellas*, where Licurgo's rationalism leads directly to his suicide.

<sup>12</sup> See Halpern, *The Political Theatre of Early Seventeenth Century Spain*, and Gilmour, 'Political themes in the theatre of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón'.

concerns - it is regrettable that Gilmour and Halpern should omit discussion of this aspect of contemporary Spanish political thought, particularly because, as I have sought to show in Chapter 6, it is an aspect which bears directly and centrally on the arguments of Alarcón's political dramas, and because the application of the practical principles associated with it is apparent not only in those half-dozen plays but throughout his work.

If no one has previously commented on the use of deception as an instrument of political and private policy in Alarcón's plays, other scholars have of course noted the frequent incidence of *engaño* in his work, even if they have not sought, as here, to identify and to examine the connection between his presentation of deceit and the kind of practical morality referred to above.<sup>13</sup> Thus for Claydon the presence of so many *engaños* in Alarcón's plays points only to a 'Baroque' view of 'worldly life as a short-lived illusion' in which 'life was a dream'.<sup>14</sup> Whilst it is certainly possible to identify metaphysical concepts of this sort in one or two of Alarcón's magic plays, however, they cannot be said to be prevalent throughout his work or, therefore, to represent the primary significance of Alarcón's presentation of *engaño*, as Claydon maintains.

In addition, most of the critical studies devoted to Alarcón's drama appear to overlook or to be indifferent to the important distinction between simulation and dissimulation in his works, and those who have apprehended this distinction, particularly as regards the contrast between don García's mendacity (simulation) and the prudent dissimulation practised by Jacinta and (to a lesser extent) by don Beltrán in *La verdad sospechosa*, seem to misunderstand its significance, preferring don García's

---

<sup>13</sup> See, for example, Moreta and Salafranca, *La manganilla de Melilla*, pp.271-72, whose reference to Alarcón's interest in *engaño* is confined to an endnote; and Claydon, *Alarcón: Baroque Dramatist*, p.169.

<sup>14</sup> Claydon, *ibid.*.

flamboyant tales to the calculating stratagems of Jacinta and don Beltrán.

It may therefore be seen that the analysis of the issue of the morality of deception in Alarcón's work which the present study represents provides a means of linking together and explaining many of the recurring yet previously unresolved issues central to Alarconian criticism. In addition, this study also contributes to the detailed study of Alarcón's works in a number of other ways, which it seems appropriate to summarise briefly here.

Chapter 3 offers a new analysis of *Las paredes oyen* which, by considering the nature of contemporary attitudes to literary satire as well as to slander, adds a hitherto unrecognised literary dimension to the meaning of the play. This in turn supports the proposition, developed in Chapter 2, that *La verdad sospechosa*, which has long been regarded as a 'companion piece' to *Las paredes oyen*, demonstrates a similar interest on the part of Alarcón in the moral dimension of literary creation, both in terms of style and of content.<sup>15</sup>

Chapter 4 identifies a coherent structure in the argument of *La cueva de Salamanca*, which until now has generally been regarded as a rambling and disorganised piece, and reveals that both this play and *La prueba de las promesas* are conceived upon fundamentally neo-Stoic lines.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, these two plays bear the

---

<sup>15</sup> For a brief presentation of the similarities between these two plays, see Parr, 'Virtus, honor, noblesse oblige: *La verdad sospechosa*, and *Las paredes oyen*, as Companion Pieces.', in *After its Kind*, pp.22-36.

<sup>16</sup> See Poesse, *Alarcón*, pp.47-51: 'It is a curious hodgepodge of elements, which Alarcón has introduced in one way or another, not always satisfactorily [...] the play has little literary merit [...] it is, then, a disjointed play [...] the work as a whole is mediocre and the characterisation, weak'. Even King, who is not normally given to under-estimating Alarcón, writes of this play: 'A diferencia de todo lo demás que escribió Alarcón, *La cueva de Salamanca* es entretenimiento puro, casi farsa; en vez de complicaciones de trama o de cracterización, lo que ofrece es diversión y trucos de magia' (*Alarcón: letrado y dramaturgo*, p.116). The play is dealt with more satisfactorily by David H. Darst ('El discurso sobre la magia en *La cueva de Salamanca*') and Ysla Campbell ('Magia y hermetismo en *La cueva de Salamanca*'). Both these studies, however, consider what Alarcón's play tells us about seventeenth-century attitudes towards magic, rather than what it tells us about Alarcón's use of magic as a dramatic device and as a metaphor for dramatic illusion.

stamp of the neo-Stoic philosophy (which was increasingly prominent at and after the turn of the seventeenth century) as clearly as *Los favores del mundo*, *Los pechos privilegiados*, or *El dueño de las estrellas*. The appearance of neo-Stoic ideas in the drama of the time is not of course confined to Alarcón's plays; a number of plays by Calderón, such as *La vida es sueño* and *El príncipe constante*, are clearly and importantly marked by neo-Stoicism. Neither is the influence of such ideas surprising, in view of their understandable appeal to a generation that sensed with a particular poignancy the gradual but inexorable decline of Spain's national prestige, and which sought if possible to reverse that decline through a movement of institutionalised moral reform, or, failing this, to come to terms with the uncertain nature of life under such sombre economic and political conditions. It should not be forgotten, however, that this movement of moral reform itself contributed directly to the intensification of the criticism against the theatre on the part of the anti-theatrical lobby in the years covered by Alarcón's career as a dramatist, as David H. Darst observes in a study of dramatic theory in the Spanish Golden Age:

Desde las diatribas de finales del XVI escritas por Mariana y por García de Loaisa y Girón, limosnero y capellán de Felipe II, *los curas acudieron a los estoicos*, los padres de la iglesia y los santos *para denunciar la inmoralidad del teatro*.<sup>17</sup>

In view of this fact, it seems surprising that both *La cueva de Salamanca* and *La prueba de las promesas* should feature magicians whose characters are identifiably neo-Stoic in conception and yet present the creation of illusions by those same magicians as an activity which draws a certain legitimacy from their didactic purpose, particularly in the

---

<sup>17</sup> See David H. Darst, 'Teorías de la comedia en el siglo de oro español', *BBMP*, 62 (1986), pp. 16-36 (p.23) (my emphasis).

case of the latter play. In view of the suggestion made by Concha and others that we may justly regard the art of the magicians as analogous with that of the dramatist, I contend that Alarcón is seeking in these plays to demonstrate that the aims and activities of the moral dramatist need not conflict with, and may even support, the system of moral values espoused and promoted by the neo-Stoics. If this is indeed so, then it provides us with another instance of the his ability subtly to refute the moral charges laid against the theatre by its detractors in their own terms - something I have already asserted in Chapter 3 as regards Alarcón's treatment of dramatic satire.

In Chapter 5, in addition to identifying the most likely source (Luis Cabrera de Córdoba's *Historia de Felipe Segundo*) for *La manganilla de Melilla*, a play which has long been regarded as no more than a minor 'magic play' (and to which little critical attention has previously been given, except by Claydon, whose enthusiasm is confined to its religious elements), the discussion adopts a new perspective, which, by giving prominence to the military aspect of the play, reveals that Alarcón was as well versed in the literature regarding the nature of military virtue as he was in that regarding the proper conduct of princes. The primary significance of the play in the context of the present study, however, is that it provides the strongest affirmation to be found anywhere in Alarcón's work that the practice of deception for indisputably virtuous ends might serve to enhance the reputation of its practitioner.

Finally, throughout this study, I have identified frequent evidence of the influence on Alarcón of the philosophical tradition which includes the writings of Aristotle, Augustine and Aquinas. I have no doubt, however, that the influence of this tradition is more extensive than even the evidence adduced in this study suggests, and believe that the study of Alarcón's work would benefit further from the critical attention of one whose knowledge of Classical and Christian moral philosophy approximated

more closely to Alarcón's own.

Ultimately, however, what this study offers to Alarconian scholarship is a coherent and sharply focused vision of Alarcón's principal concerns, both as a dramatist and as an involved observer of contemporary society. In focusing closely on the issue of the morality of deception, I have come to hold the view that, in the minds of Alarcón and of many of his contemporaries, there existed a series of important conceptual links between the art practised by the authors of literary fictions and the artifice practised by characters such as the unscrupulous gallants, Machiavellian politicians, generals, magicians (and even the Devil himself), who people his plays.

The principal value of this approach to Alarcón's work lies in the fact that the issue of the ethics of deception is as relevant to the literary form of his plays as it is to their social content. Thus, as regards both his observance of the literary precepts recommended by those who were concerned for the reputation of imaginative literature, and his portrayal of the interaction between individuals in society, Alarcón presents the unrestricted exercise of the creative imagination as morally dangerous and advocates a defensive strategy based not only upon an adherence to the dictates of reason, but also upon a form of prudence. This form of prudence, which is characterised by circumspection and restraint, itself constitutes a kind of deception.

This in itself is a significant fact, because such prudent dissimulation was widely regarded by contemporary philosophers as a morally legitimate means of dealing with the complex and sometimes threatening dilemmas of actual existence, particularly when what was at stake was the observance of the Catholic Faith or the integrity of the state. Moreover, I contend that in Alarcón's work this concept is extended to justify acts of deception on the ground that they provide the best or only means of meeting the obligations imposed by conscience and by the duties of the individual not only to the

Church, and to the state, but also to his family and friends, in that order.

Similarly, it is my view that the figurative language of literary fiction is only acceptable to Alarcón when it is employed in support of comparable ends - reprehending vice, promoting moral virtue, and otherwise revealing moral truths in such a way as to render them more convincing than if they were simply stated explicitly. This is in accordance with the views of the literary theorists of Spain's Golden Age, who likewise held that the *comedia* had an obligation to reprehend vice and to promote moral virtue. In their view, the theatres had the potential not only to serve the public good through their direct financial support of the charitable work of hospitals but also to provide entertainments which would serve to promote and to maintain the moral code upon which that society was based.

Though in some cases the arguments advanced in favour of the stage undoubtedly represented a somewhat disingenuous attempt (on the part of those who depended on the continued success of the commercial theatres for their livelihood) to defend the theatres against the attacks of their detractors, it is no less certain that there were many who had given more serious and disinterested consideration to the issue of the moral legitimacy of dramatic poetry and theatrical representation, and who sincerely believed that the examples of social behaviour illustrated so compellingly in the dramas of the age represented a means of moral instruction of considerable practical benefit to those who frequented the *corrales*.

It is practical benefits of this kind which ultimately provide the basis for their defence of dramatic fiction: the theatre's utility, in this sense, legitimises its counterfeiting of reality and its distortions of history. It is to be remembered that plays (and other poetic fictions) were required to be true to life only in so far as was required to make them credible to their audience. Beyond this point, at least in the essentially

Aristotelian terms in which playwrights and dramatic theorists typically viewed their art, it was to the dramatist's credit that he adapted history or invented plots so as better to convey a more universal moral truth.

The prevailing neo-Aristotelian literary theory of the age also required that such moral lessons to be made explicit in the *desenlace* and supported by causally related developments in the preceding action so that they would be convincingly apparent to the majority of the audience (*el vulgo*), who might be expected to be receptive only to the most superficial aspects of the play. Nevertheless, contemporary literary theory also repeatedly emphasised the value of presenting such issues in a more figurative manner so as to encourage the more discriminating members of the audience (*los discretos*, or in the terms of Alarcón's prologue to the *Parte primera*, 'la nobleza') to look beneath the illusion of reality and the allure of theatrical rhetoric and spectacle, in all their confused variety, so as to discern a coherent system of concepts and values.

This system had no single source: its elements were drawn from the Classical philosophy of Plato, Aristotle, and Seneca; from the moral and theological writings of Augustine and Aquinas; and, on occasion, derived directly from the work of 'modern' writers on issues of particular contemporary interest, such as military virtue, the nature of kingship, or the role of the *privado*. The existence of this world of ideas beneath the visible and audible world of dramatic performance meant that, for the play to be comprehensively understood, the spectator had to employ both intelligence and judgement if he was to decipher the signs contained in the play as it was staged. This undoubtedly made playgoing a richer experience by adding an actively intellectual dimension, but it was also held to be a means of instructing the playgoer in the correct manner of apprehending underlying moral truths, not just in the play, but in life itself, and just as importantly, it necessarily involved an implicit valuation of intellect over

feeling and analysis over direct perception.

There were at least two reasons why such issues were not set out explicitly and in full in the text of the plays: firstly, sermonising in the theatre was not held to be sufficiently entertaining or compelling for the audience; and secondly, it was felt that complex issues of social, political or religious importance should not be aired before a general public which might misunderstand their nature and so fall into error.

Much the same could be said, and was said, of dramatic satire, whose object was also properly that of rephending vice, and which was thought, by those *preceptistas* who were prepared to countenance it at all, to do so most effectively and most prudently when it employed fictions to conceal the identity of its targets from the public whilst it revealed and ridiculed their vices.

Thus the legitimate *comedia*, as defined by the *preceptistas* of the Golden Age, both simulates and dissimulates. It simulates by presenting a poetic lie in the form of a dramatic fiction which creates the illusion of reality, and it dissimulates by concealing the full extent of its underlying meaning. Yet, paradoxically, at the same time as it offers to deceive its audience, it also fosters that same audience's acquisition of the intellectual skills which are required to elucidate its meaning by insistently repeating the *caveat* that appearances deceive, and by promoting circumspection and a rational approach to experience as a practical means of apprehending the truth. It will be apparent from the present study that Alarcón's dramaturgy was of this kind.

In his plays Alarcón promotes a number of virtues, many of them associated with the values of the neo-Stoics, and the list certainly includes the four Cardinal Virtues of Classical antiquity. Yet, though the virtues of Temperance, Fortitude and Justice play a major part in his plays, it is the virtue of Prudence that stands out most often as the most essential element in the successful careers of his noble protagonists,

and particularly as it relates to the practice of deception, since it is through a variety of prudent deceptions - represented in his plays by magical illusion, dissimulation, espionage and concealment - that Alarcón's heroes prevent their own deception and defeat at the hands of others who seek to subvert the prevailing moral order. Moreover, it is by means of two inter-dependent forms of deception - the creation of a fictional plot and the illusion of reality created during the performance of the play - that Alarcón advances his case. By constructing many of his plays around the conflict between the irresponsible and malicious acts of deception practised by characters in whom desire is patently stronger than reason, on the one hand, and the prudent and defensive use of more discreet forms of deception by characters who have learned to exercise a rational control over their passions, on the other, and by associating literary extravagance with the former, Alarcón demonstrates the difference between his own art and the demonic and antisocial artifice so much vilified by those contemporary moralists who opposed poetry and plays alike.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, whilst in the course of his plays Alarcón examines both the motives and the techniques of those who create illusions, and the factors which determine the degree to which others are susceptible to being taken in by them, his concern with these matters cannot be limited to the stage. This is because the performance of a play is in itself a process which involves the creation and interpretation of illusion on the part of the dramatist, actors and audience. The similarity between the audience and the

---

<sup>18</sup> An aspect of Alarcón's dramatic technique of relevance to his presentation of deception (but not discussed extensively in the present study for reasons of space) is his creation of dramatic characters who value frankness over caution to the extent that they prove extremely reluctant to dissemble even when it is for their own good or may prevent hurt to others. Don Diego of *Los empeños de un engaño* is just such a character, and the source of much distress to himself, and much hilarity to the audience, because of it. A more serious presentation of this theme is to be found in a play attributed to Alarcón, *Siempre ayuda la verdad*. The title of the play belies the fact that the *gracioso* Tello's repeated attempts to protect his master, don Vasco de Acuña, from injury or dishonour by warning the king of the threat presented to both by a visiting prince of Poland, only serves to complicate the intrigue and to earn Tello the enmity of don Vasco himself.

characters on the stage therefore goes beyond the fact that Alarcón's work is notable for its contemporary urban settings: by making his audience aware that the theatre is not a neutral medium, Alarcón is able to use the creation of theatrical illusion as a medium for moral instruction, and his didacticism is all the more profound because it is based upon his dramatic technique as a whole as well as on particular moral *exempla* or *sententiae*.

It may therefore be seen that Alarcón's concern over the moral poetics of representation, which appears to originate in his plays as a means of justifying his involvement with the theatre on the one hand, and as a way of leading the audience into a sophisticated understanding of how theatrical communication operates on the other, also becomes a way to address a world whose problems are more often resolved by sleight of hand than by direct means, and a means of reaching a compromise between precept and practice which is both effective and morally acceptable. Thus, whilst the form of Alarcón's drama is governed by the expectations of the theatre and the tastes of the public, its meaning lies the penetration of that form to reveal its inner logic.

The somewhat surprising conclusion to be drawn from all this is that Alarcón's intellectual and moral sympathies appear to have lain to a considerable extent with the moralists of the anti-theatrical 'lobby', in that he also seems at times to regard the poetic and dramatic conventions of his day as evidence of a contemporary mania, most particularly on the part of his social peers, for vain ostentation and irresponsible fantasies - something which he regarded as stemming from an almost obsessive urge to project their self-serving desires on to reality. Just as importantly, however, he differs from the general run of such critics by virtue of his evident belief that poetic theatre is also a medium with considerable potential for encouraging both moral and social reform - and his evident recognition that, as a dramatist, he has the power and the means to

exploit the tastes and attitudes of the audience in the *corrales* in such a way as simultaneously to refute the validity of their aesthetic and social prejudices, and to school them in a way of interpreting and dealing with the confusing complexities of actual experience which is marked as much by its subtlety as by its concern for ethical principles.

## Bibliography.

### Primary Sources.

- Alvia de Castro, Fernando, *Verdadera razón de estado* (Lisbon: Pedro Craesbeeck, 1616).
- Aquinas, Thomas, Saint, *Summa Theologiae*, Latin text and English translation etc., 61 vols (London: Blackfriars/Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1972).
- Arias de Valderas, Francisco, *Libellus de belli iustitia iniustitiaque* [Rome, 1533] translated as *De la guerra y de su justicia e injusticia* by Laureano Sánchez Gallego, with an introduction by D. Benjamín Fernández y Medina (Madrid: Tipografía de Archivos, 1932).
- Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, edited by Jonathan Barnes, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).
- Augustine of Hippo, Saint, *De civitate Dei*, translated as *The City of God* by Henry Bettenson (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1984).
- Barbosa Homem, Pedro, *Discursos de la jurídica y verdadera razón de estado, formados sobre la vida y acciones del rey don Juan el II, de buena memoria, Rey de Portugal, llamado vulgarmente el Príncipe Perfecto. Contra Maquiavelo y Bodino y los demás políticos de nuestros tiempos y sus secuaces* (Coimbra: Nicolás Carvallo, 1629).
- Botero, Giovanni, *Los diez libros de la razón de estado [...]*, translated by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1593).
- , *The Reason of State* [Venice, 1589], translated by P.J. and D.P. Waley, edited by Dr. R.W. Stark (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956).
- Brochero, Luis, *Discurso problemático del uso de los coches* (Seville, 1626).
- Cabrera de Córdoba, Luis, *Historia de Felipe Segundo, Rey de España* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1619).
- Carvallo Villas Boas, Martín de, *Volumen primero del espejo de príncipes y ministros* (Milan: Herederos de Paçífico Ponçio, 1598).
- Carvallo, Luis Alfonso de, *Cisne de Apolo* [Medina del Campo: I. Godínez de Millis, 1602], edited by Alberto Porqueras Mayo, *Biblioteca de antiguos libros hispánicos*, Serie A, vol.25 (Madrid: CSIC, 1958).

- Cascales, Francisco, *Cartas filológicas* [Murcia: Luis Veros, 1634], edited by Justo García Soriano, 2 vols (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1940).
- Castañega, Martín de, *Tratado de las supersticiones y hechicerías* (Logroño: Miguel de Eguía, 1529; repr. Madrid: Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles, 1946).
- Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel de, *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de La Mancha*, Part I [Madrid: Juan de La Cuesta, 1605], and Part II [Madrid: Juan de la Cuesta, 1615], edited by Luis Andrés Murillo, 5th edn, 2 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1978).
- , *Novelas ejemplares* [Madrid: Juan de la Cuesta, 1613], edited by Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce, 3 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1987).
- , *El viaje del Parnaso* [Madrid: Vuida de Alonso Martín, 1614], edited by Elías Rivers, Clásicos castellanos (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1991).
- , *Los trabajos de Persiles y Sigismunda, historia setentrional* [Madrid: Juan de la Cuesta, 1617], edited by Juan Bautista Avalle-Arce (Madrid: Castalia, 1970).
- Ciruelo, Pedro, *Reproución de las supersticiones y hechizerías* [Salamanca: Pedro de Castro, 1538] edited by Alva. V. Ebersole (Valencia: Albatros, 1978).
- Collazos, Baltasar de, *Comentarios a la fundación, conquista y toma del Peñón de la Gomera [...] desde el año de 1562 hasta el de 64*, (Valencia: Juan Mey, 1566).
- Covarrubias y Horozco, Juan de, *Tratado de la verdadera y falsa prophecía* (Segovia: Juan de la Cuesta, 1588).
- Covarrubias Horozco, Sebastián de, *Tesoro de la lengua castellana* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1611; repr. Barcelona: Horta, 1943).
- De La Véronne, Chantal, *Les Sources inédites de l'histoire du Maroc*, Première série, (Paris, 1961), *Angleterre*, I, pp.61-65, and *Espagne*, III, pp.51-58.
- Del Mármol Carvajal, Luis, *Descripción general de África*, (Granada: René Rabut, 1573).
- Diálogos de las comedias*, Anon. [Madrid, 1620], edited by José Luís Vázquez (Madrid: Revistas <Estudios>, 1990).
- Diccionario de autoridades*, 3 vols (Madrid: Gredos, 1984).
- Diccionario de la lengua española*, 2 vols (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1984).
- Escalante, Bernardino de, *Diálogos del arte militar* (Seville: Andrea Pescioni, 1583; repr. Laredo: Universidad de Cantabria, 1992).
- Feijóo y Montenegro, Benito Jerónimo, *Cuevas de Salamanca y Toledo, y mágica de España*, BAE vol.55 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1883).

- Ferrer, Juan [pseud. = 'Fructuoso Bisbe y Vidal'], *Tratado de las comedias en el cual se declara si son lícitas. Y si hablando en todo rigor será pecado mortal el representarlas, el verlas, y el consentirlas* (Barcelona: Gerónimo Margarit, 1618).
- Frías y Balboa, Dámaso de, *Diálogo de la Discreción* [Valladolid, 1579], in *Diálogos de diferentes materias inéditas hasta ahora*, Colección de escritores castellanos, 161, (Madrid, G. Hernández y Galo Sáez, 1929), pp.3-210.
- Espinel, Vicente, *Relaciones de la vida del escudero Marcos de Obregón* [Madrid: Juan de la Cuesta, 1618], edited by Samuel Gili Gaya (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1969).
- García de Palacio y Arce, Diego, *Diálogos militares* (Mexico: Pedro de Ocharte, 1583; repr. Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1944).
- González de Salas, Jusepe Antonio, *Nueva idea de la tragedia antigua o ilustración última al libro singular de poética de Aristóteles Stagirita* (Madrid: Francisco Martínez, 1633).
- González de Cellorigo, Martín, *Memorial de la política necesaria y útil restauración a la república de España y estados de ella, y del desempeño universal de estos reinos* (Valladolid: Ioan de Bostillo, 1600).
- Gracián Dantisco, Lucas, *Galateo español: De lo que se deve hacer y guardar en la común conversación para ser bien quisto y amado de las gentes* [Barcelona: Martin Gelabert, 1580], edited by Margarita Morreale (Madrid: CSIC, 1968).
- Gracián, Baltasar, *El discreto* [Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1646], in *Obras escogidos de filósofos*, BAE, vol.65 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1873), pp.541-71.
- , *El criticón* [Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1647], edited by Santos Alonso (Madrid: Cátedra, 1984).
- , *Oráculo manual y arte de prudencia* [Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1647], translated and edited as *The Oracle: A Manual of the Art of Discretion* by L.B. Walton (London: Dent, 1953).
- , *Agudeza y arte de ingenio en que se explican todos los modos y diferencias de concetos* [Huesca: Juan Nogués, 1648], edited by Evaristo Correa Calderón, 2 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1969).
- Guzmán, P. Pedro de, *Bienes del honesto trabajo y daños de la ociosidad, en ocho discursos* (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1614).
- Herrera, Alonso de, *Agricultura General que trata de la labranza del campo y sus particularidades* (Madrid, 1620).
- Horace, *The Works of Horace*, edited by E.C. Wickham, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon, 1891), vol.II 'The Satires, Epistles, and De arte poetica'.

- Huarte de San Juan, Juan, *Examen de los ingenios para las ciencias* [Baeza: Juan Bautista Montoya, 1575], edited by Guillermo Serés (Madrid: Cátedra, 1989).
- Jesús María, Fr. José de, *Primera parte de las excelencias de la virtud de la castidad* (Alcalá: Viuda de Juan Gracián, 1601).
- La Cruz, Gerónimo de, *Job evangélico stoico ilustrado* (Zaragoza, 1638).
- La Vega, Fr. Pedro de, *Declaración de las siete psalmos penitenciales* (Alcalá de Henares, 1599).
- Leonardo de Argensola, Lupericio, *Memorial sobre la representación de comedias*, (Salamanca, 1598).
- Lipsius, Justus, *Politicorum sive civilis doctrinae libri sex*, translated as *Los seis libros de las políticas o doctrina civil de Iusto Lipsio* by Bernardino de Mendoza (Madrid: Imprenta Real, 1604).
- Lisón y Viedma, Mateo de, *Discursos y apuntamientos* (Madrid, 1622).
- López Pinciano, Alonso, *Philosophía Antigua Poética*, edited by Alfredo Carballo Picazo, 3 vols (Madrid: CSIC, 1953).
- Machiavelli, Niccolo, *The Prince* [1532], translated by George Bull, Penguin Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1981).
- Mariana, P. Juan de, *Tratado contra los juegos públicos* [1598], in *Obras del padre Juan de Mariana*, BAE vols 30 & 31 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1864), II, 413-62.
- , *De rege et regis institutione libri III* (Toledo: Pedro Rodríguez, 1599).
- , *Historia general de España, compuesta, enmendada y añadida por el Padre Mariana, con la continuación de Miniana* (Madrid: Gaspar y Roig, 1852).
- Márquez, Juan, *El gobernador cristiano. Deducido de las vidas de Moisés y Josué, príncipes del pueblo de Dios* (Salamanca: Francisco de Cea Tesa, 1612).
- Martí, Juan [pseud. = 'Mateo Luján de Sayavedra'], *Segunda parte de la vida del pícaro Guzmán de Alfarache* [Barcelona: Ioan Amello, 1602], in *Novelistas anteriores a Cervantes*, BAE vol.3, 3rd. edn. (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1858), pp.363-430.
- Mártir Rizo, Juan Pablo, *Norte de príncipes y vida de Rómulo* [Madrid: Diego Flamenco, 1626], edited by José Antonio Maravall (Madrid: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, 1945).
- Mendoza, Fr. Alfonso de, *Quaestiones quodlibeticae et relatio theologica de christi regno ac dominio* (Salamanca, 1588).

- Palencia, Alfonso de, *La primera y segunda parte de Plutarcho. Las vidas [...]*, 2 vols (Seville: Pedro de Colonia, 1491).
- Partenio, Bernardino, *Dell'imitazione poetica* [Venice: G. Giolito, 1560], in *Trattati de poetica e retorica del cinquecento*, edited by Bernard Weinberg, 4 vols (Bari: Laterza, 1970), II, 519-58.
- Pineda, Fr. Juan de, *Los treinta y cinco diálogos familiares de la agricultura cristiana* [Salamanca, 1589], BAE vols 161-63 & 169-70 (Madrid, 1963-1964).
- Plato, *The Laws*, translated by R.G. Bury (London: Heinemann, 1926).
- , *The Republic*, translated by Desmond Lee, 2nd edn (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974).
- Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives*, edited by G.P. Gould, translated by Bernadotte Perrin, The Loeb Classical Library, 11 vols (London: Heinemann, 1982), I, *Theseus and Romulus, Lycurgus and Numa, Solon and Publicola*; VI, *Dion and Brutus, Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus*.
- Quevedo y Villegas, Francisco de, *Obras completas*, edited by Felicidad Buendía, 2 vols (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967).
- Remón, Fray Alonso [pseud. = 'Antonio de Liñán y Verdugo'], *Guía y avisos de forasteros en la Corte*, edited by Edison Simons (Madrid: Editorial Nacional, 1980), p.97.
- Ribadeneyra, Pedro de, *Tratado de la religión y virtudes que debe tener el príncipe cristiano para gobernar y conservar sus estados* [1589], and *Tratado de la tribulación, en que se trata de las tribulaciones particulares y del remedio dellas*, in *Obras del Padre Pedro de Rivadeneira*, BAE vol.60 (Madrid, 1868; repr. Madrid, 1952).
- Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza, Juan, *Obras completas de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón*, edited by Agustín Millares Carlo, 3 vols (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1957, 1959, 1968).
- , *La manganilla de Melilla*, edited by Miguel A. Moreta Lara and Jesús F. Salafranca Ortega (Málaga: Algazara, 1993).
- Saavedra Fajardo, Diego de, *Idea de un príncipe político-cristiano representada en cien empresas* [Monaco: Nicolao Enrico, 1640], edited by Vicente García de Diego, *Clásicos castellanos*, 4 vols (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1958-60).
- Salas Barbadillo, Alonso Jerónimo de, *Don Diego de noche* (Madrid, 1623).
- Sánchez de Lima, Miguel, *El arte poética en romance castellano*, (Alcalá de Henares: Juan Iñiguez de Lequerica, 1580; repr. Biblioteca de Antiguos Libros Hispánicos, Serie A, vol.3 (Madrid: CSIC, 1944).

- Seneca, Lucius Annaeus, *Seneca ad Lucilium epistulae morales*, 3 vols, Loeb Classical Library (London: Heinemann, 1925).
- Suárez de Figueroa, Cristóbal, *Plaza universal de todas las ciencias y artes* (Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1615).
- , *El pasajero: advertencias utilísimas a la vida humana* [Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1617], edited by María Isabel López Bascuñana, 2 vols (Barcelona: Promociones y Publicaciones Universitarias, 1988).
- Tasso, Torquato, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica; e in particolare del poema eroico* [Venice: Giulio Vassalini, 1587], edited by Luigi Poma (Bari: Latera, 1964).
- Torres, Juan de, *Primera parte (y segunda) de la filosofía moral de príncipes para su buena crianza y gobierno, y para personas de todos estados* (Barcelona: Sebastián de Cormellas, 1596).
- Valdés, Juan de, *Diálogo de la lengua* [c.1530], edited by José F. Montesinos, Clásicos castellanos (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1964).
- Vander Hammen y León, Lorenzo, *Don Felipe el Prudente, segundo deste nombre, rey de las Españas y Nuevo-Mundo [...]* (Madrid: Alonso Martín, 1632).
- Vega Carpio, Lope Félix de, *El arte nuevo de hacer comedias* [Madrid, 1609], edited by Juana de José Prades (Madrid: CSIC, 1971).
- , *Los españoles en Flandes*, in *Obras de Lope de Vega*, BAE vol.26 (Madrid, 1969).
- Vera y Zúñiga, Juan Antonio de, *El embaxador* (Seville: Francisco de Lira, 1620).
- Ximénez de Urrea, Jerónimo, *Diálogo de la verdadera honra militar, que trata cómo se ha de conformar la honra con la consciencia* (Zaragoza: Diego Dormer, 1642).

#### Secondary Sources.

- Abel, Lionel, *Metatheatre: A New View of Dramatic Form* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963).
- Agüera, Victorio, G., 'El examen de maridos y las pruebas de limpieza, *Papeles de Son Armadans*, 84 (1977), 221-38.
- Aguila, August J., 'The *Conquistadores* and the 16th-Century Spanish Concept of the Ideal Soldier', in *From Dante to García Márquez: Studies in Romance Literatures and Linguistics presented to Anson C. Piper*, edited by Gene H. Bell-Villada, Antonio Giménez and George Pistorius (Williamstown, Massachusetts: Williams College, 1987), pp.24-34.

- Agulló y Cobo, Mercedes, *Relaciones de sucesos I: Años 1477-1619*, Cuadernos Bibliográficos, 20 (Madrid: CSIC, 1966).
- , 'Relaciones de sucesos (1620-1621)', in *Homenaje a don Agustín Millares Carlo* (Gran Canaria: Caja Insular de Ahorros de Gran Canaria, 1975), pp.349-80.
- Alatorre, Antonio, 'Para la historia de un problema: la mexicanidad de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *Anuario de Letras* (UNAM: Facultad de Filosofía y Letras), 4 (1964), 161-202.
- Amezcuca, José, 'La verdad sospechosa y la poética del desenlace' in *Memoria de las Segundas Jornadas Alarconianas, 1989* edited by Héctor Azar (Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de Guerrero, 1990), pp.23-40.
- Barish, J, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1981).
- Barry, Edouard (ed.), *La verdad sospechosa, comedia en tres actos de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón*, 3rd. edn (Paris: Garnier, 1913).
- Baumlin, James S., 'Generic Contexts of Elizabethan Satire: Rhetoric, Poetic Theory and Imitation', pp.444-67, in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, edited by Barbara Keifer Lewalski (Cambridge, Massachussets: Harvard University Press, 1986).
- Bradner, Leicester, 'The Theme of *privanza* in Spanish and English Drama 1590-1625', in *Homenaje a William Fichter*, edited by David Kossof & José Amor y Vázquez (Madrid: Castalia, 1971), pp.97-106.
- Bravo, Dolores, 'La mujer en la obra de Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Memoria de las Segundas Jornadas Alarconianas, 1989*, edited by Héctor Azar (Mexico: Gobierno del Estado de Guerrero, 1990), pp.41-60.
- Brenes, Carmen Olga, *El sentimiento democrático en el teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Valencia: Castalia, 1960).
- Brooks, John, 'La verdad sospechosa: The Source and Purpose', *HispM*, 15 (1932), 243-52.
- Bunes Ibarra, Miguel Ángel de, 'La vida en los presidios del Norte de África', in *Relaciones de la península ibérica con el Magreb: siglos XIII-XVII2, Actas del coloquio de Madrid, 17-18 diciembre 1987*, edited by Mercedes García-Arenal and María J. Viguera (Madrid: CSIC, Instituto Hispano-Árabe de Cultura, 1988), pp.561-91.
- Burke, James F., 'The "Banquet of Sense" in *La verdad sospechosa*', in *Hispanic Studies in Honour of Alan D. Deyermond: A North American Tribute*, edited by John S. Miletich (Madison, Wisconsin: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval studies, 1986), pp.51-56.

- Campbell, Ysla, 'Magia y hermetismo en *La cueva de Salamanca*', in *Texto y espectáculo* (Selected Proceedings of the Symposium on Spanish Golden Age Theatre, The University of Texas at El Paso, 1987), edited by Barbara Mujica (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1989), pp.11-24.
- Caro Baroja, Julio, 'La magia en Castilla durante los siglos XV y XVII', in *Algunos mitos españoles y otros ensayos* (Madrid, 1944), p.259.
- , *Teatro popular y magia* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1974).
- Castro Leal, Antonio, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: su vida y su obra* (Mexico: Cuadernos Americanos, 1943).
- , 'Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y la moral', *Filosofía y letras*, 3 (1942), 73-79.
- Casualdero, Joaquín, 'Sobre la nacionalidad del escritor', *Estudios sobre el teatro español*, (Madrid, 1962), pp.145-59.
- Chandler and Schwartz, *A New History of Spanish Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1961).
- Concha, Jaime, 'El tema del segundón y *La verdad sospechosa*', *RCLL*, N.S.14 (1988), 253-79.
- Cortijo Ocaña, Antonio, 'Ejemplo de *declamatio* en el *Examen de maridos* de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *BH*, 95 (1993), 541-56 .
- Cotarelo y Mori, Emilio, *Bibliografía de las controversias sobre la licitud del teatro en España* (Madrid: Revista de Archivos, Bibliotecas y Museos, 1904).
- Cruickshank, Donald W., 'Calderón's King Pedro: Just or Unjust?', *Spanische Forschungen der Gorresgesellschaft*, Series I, 25 (1970), 113-32.
- Darst, David H., 'El discurso sobre la magia en *La cueva de Salamanca*, de Ruiz de Alarcón', *Duquesne HR*, 9 (1970), 31-44.
- , 'Teorías de la comedia en el siglo de oro español', *Boletín de la Biblioteca de Menéndez y Pelayo*, 62 (1986), pp.16-36.
- Davis, Charles, J. 'Tacitus in Golden-Age Spain: His Influence on Political Thought and Prose Literature' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford, 1987).
- Del Río, Ángel, *Historia de la literatura española*, (New York: Holt, 1963).
- Deleito y Piñuela, José, *La vida religiosa española bajo el cuarto Felipe* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1952).
- , *La mala vida en la España de Felipe IV* (Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1948).

- Denis, Serge, *La Langue de J.R. de Alarcón* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1943).
- , *Lexique du théâtre de J.R. de Alarcón* (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1943).
- Díez Borque, José María, 'Teatro dentro del teatro, novela dentro de la novela en Miguel de Cervantes', *ACer*, 11 (1972), 113-28.
- , *Sociología de la comedia española del siglo XVII* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1976).
- DiLillo, Leonard M., 'Moral purpose in Ruiz de Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*', *Hispania*, 56 (1973), 254-59.
- Ebersole, Alva V. Jr., *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Obras completas*, 2 vols (Barcelona: Albatros Hispanófila, 1990).
- , 'Supersticiones españolas y la obra de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *Hispanófila*, 2 (1958), 35-48.
- Elliott, John H, and J.F. de la Peña, *Memoriales y cartas del Conde Duque de Olivares*, 2 vols (Madrid, 1978-81).
- , *The Count Duke of Olivares, The Statesman in an Age of Decline* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1986).
- , *Spain and its World, 1500-1700* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1989).
- Espantoso-Foley, Augusta, *Occult Arts and Doctrine in the Theatre of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972).
- , 'The Structure of Ruiz de Alarcón's *La prueba de las promesas*', *HR*, 51 (1983), 29-41.
- Fernández Santamaría, José Antonio, *Reason of State and Statecraft in Spanish Political Thought, 1595-1640* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983).
- Fernández de la Torre, José Luis (ed.), *Melilla en la historia: sus fortificaciones. Seminario celebrado en Melilla los días 16, 17 y 18 de mayo de 1988* (Madrid: Instituto de Conservación y Restauración de Bienes Culturales, 1991).
- Fiore, Robert L., 'The Interaction of Motives and Mores in *La verdad sospechosa*', *Hispania*, 61 (1977), 11-21.
- Frutos Gómez de las Cortinas, José, 'La génesis de *Las paredes oyen*', *RFE*, 35 (1951), 92-105.
- Geneste, Pierre, *Le capitaine-poète Aragonais Jerónimo de Urrea [...]* (Paris: Ediciones Hispanoamericanas, 1978).

- Getino Luis G.A. (ed.), 'Vida y obras de Fr. Lope de Barrientos', *Anales Salamantinos*, vol.I (Salamanca: Calatrava, 1927).
- Gilmour, John W., 'Political Themes in the Theatre of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University College, Cardiff, 1972).
- , 'Ruiz de Alarcón's treatment of the King Peter theme', *RJ*, 24 (1973), 294-302.
- Griffin, Nigel H., *Virtue versus Letters: The Society of Jesus, 1550-1580*, EUI Working Paper 95 (Florence: European University Institute, 1984).
- Halpern, Cynthia Leone *The Political Theatre of Early Seventeenth Century Spain, with special reference to Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (New York: Lang, 1993).
- Hartzenbusch, Juan Eugenio, 'Carácteres distintivos de las obras dramáticas de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Comedias de don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y Mendoza*, BAE vol.20 (Madrid: Rivadeneyra, 1866), pp.xiii-xxvi.
- Hegyí, Ottmar, 'Literary Motifs and Historical Reality in Ruiz de Alarcón's *Quien mal anda en mal acaba*', *Renaissance and Reformation/ Renaissance et Reforme*, 6 (1982), 249-63.
- Henríquez Ureña, Pedro, 'Don Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Seis ensayos en busca de nuestra expresión* (Buenos Aires, 1952), pp.91-103.
- Hume, Martin, *The Court of Philip IV: Spain in Decadence* (London: Eveleigh Nash and Grayson, 1907).
- Ife, B.W., *Reading and Fiction in Golden Age Spain: A Platonic Critique and Some Picaresque Replies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
- Jiménez Rueda, Julio (ed.), *Los pechos privilegiados*, Biblioteca del estudiante universitario (Mexico: UNAM, 1932).
- Jones, Michael, 'Five Liars: French, English and Italian Imitations of *La verdad sospechosa*', *AUMLA*, 62 (1984), 192-207.
- Kantorowicz, E.H., 'The Sovereignty of the Artist: A Note on Legal Maxims and Renaissance Theories of Art', in *Selected Studies* (Locust Valley, New York: J.J. Augustin, 1965), pp.352-65.
- Keen, Maurice H., *The Laws of War in the Late Middle Ages* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965).
- Kennedy, Ruth Lee, 'Contemporary Satire against Ruiz de Alarcón as a Lover', *HR*, 13 (1945), 145-65.
- , 'The Madrid of 1617-1625, Certain Aspects of Social, Moral and Educational Reform', in *Homenaje a Archer M. Huntington* (Wellesley, 1952),

pp.275-309.

—————, 'Tirso's Satire of Ruiz de Alarcón', *BCom*, 16 (1964), 1-12.

Kermode, Frank, 'The Banquet of Sense', in his *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne: Renaissance Essays* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), pp.84-115.

Kernan, Alvin, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959).

King, Willard F., *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón, letrado y dramaturgo: su mundo mexicano y español* (Mexico: El Colegio de México, 1989).

Larson, Catherine, 'El metateatro, la comedia y la crítica: hacia una nueva interpretación', *Actas del X Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, Barcelona, 1989*, edited by Antonio Vilanova, 2 vols (Barcelona: Universitat de Barcelona, 1992), II, 1013-20.

—————, 'Metatheater and the *Comedia*: Past, Present and Future', in *The Golden Age 'Comedia': Text, Theory and Performance*, edited by Charles Ganelin and Howard Mancing (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1994), pp.204-21.

Lavroff-Claydon, Ellen, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Baroque Dramatist* (Madrid: Castalia, 1970).

—————, 'Some Observations on Alarcón's Position in the Development of the Seventeenth-Century Theatre', *Hispanófila*, 42 (1971), 7-19.

Leverenz, David, 'Why did Puritans hate stage plays?' in *The Language of Puritan Feeling: an Exploration in Literature, Psychology and Social History* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980).

Levinson, Brett, 'The Management of the Estate in *La verdad sospechosa*', *REH*, 28 (1994), 163-83.

Lomba y Pedraja, José Ramón, 'El rey don Pedro en el teatro', in *Homenaje a Menéndez y Pelayo en el año vigésimo de su profesorado: estudios de erudición española*, 2 vols (Madrid: Suárez, 1899), II, 257-339.

London, John, '*La verdad sospechosa*': *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (Madrid: Ciclo, 1990).

Lynch, John, *Spain Under the Habsburgs*, 2 vols, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

Malcolm-Gaylord, Mary, 'The Telling Lies of *La verdad sospechosa*', *MLN*, 103 (1988), 223-38.

Maravall, José Antonio, *Teatro y literatura en la sociedad barroca* (Madrid: Seminarios y Ediciones, 1972).

- McKendrick, Melveena, *Theatre in Spain 1490-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- , 'Calderón and the Politics of Honour', *BHS*, 70 (1993), 135-46.
- Melvin, Miriam Virginia, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Classical and Spanish Influences* (Michigan: Edwards, 1942).
- Menéndez y Pelayo, Marcelino, *Historia de los heterodoxos españoles*, 7 vols (Buenos Aires: Espasa-Calpe, 1951).
- Moll, Jaime, 'Diez años sin licencias para imprimir comedias y novelas en los reinos de Castilla: 1625-1634', *BRAE*, 54 (1974), 97-103.
- Moore, Roger, 'Metatheatre and Magic in *El mágico prodigioso*', *BCom*, 33 (1981), 129-38.
- Morford, Mark, *Stoics and Neostoics: Rubens and the Circle of Lipsius* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991).
- Murray, Timothy, *Theatrical Legitimation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- Nelson, Robert J., 'Pierre Corneille's *L'illusion comique*: The Play as Magic', *PMLA*, 71 (1956), 1127-40.
- O'Connell, Robert, *Art and the Christian Intelligence in St. Augustine* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978).
- O'Connor, Thomas Austin, 'Is the Spanish *Comedia* a Metatheatre?' *HR*, 43 (1975), 275-89.
- Oehrlein, Joseph, *El actor en el teatro español del Siglo de Oro* (Madrid: Castalia, 1993).
- Orozco Díaz, Emilio, *El teatro y la teatralidad del Barroco* (Barcelona, 1969).
- Ortega y Medina, Juan A., 'Divertimiento crítico en torno a *La verdad sospechosa*, y *Le menteur*', in *Conciencia y autenticidad históricas: homenaje a Edmundo O'Gorman* (México: UNAM, 1968), pp.257-77.
- Ortigoza-Vieyra Carlos, *Los móviles de la comedia* (Mexico, 1957).
- Parker, A.A., *Pedro Calderón de la Barca: No hay más fortuna que Dios* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949).
- Parr, James A., *After its Kind: Approaches to the 'Comedia'* (Kassel: Reichenberger, 1991).
- Pasto, David J., 'The Independent Heroines in Ruiz de Alarcón's Major Comedies' *BCom*, 40 (1988), 227-35.

- Paterson, Alan K.G., 'Reversal & Multiple Role Playing in Alarcón's *La verdad sospechosa*', *BHS*, 61 (1984), 361-68.
- Paulin, Alice M., 'The Religious Motive in the Plays of Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *HR*, 29 (1961), 33-44.
- Pavia, Mario, N., *Drama of the Siglo de Oro: A Study of Magic, Witchcraft and Other Occult Beliefs* (New York: Spanish-American Printing Co., 1959).
- Pérez, Elisa, 'La influencia de Plautus y Terence en el teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', *Hispania*, 11 (1928), 131-49.
- Perry, Charles E., 'Comedy and Common Sense in *El semejante a sí mismo*' *RN*, 16 (1974-75), 734-41.
- , 'The Question of Means and Magic in Alarcón's *La prueba de las promesas*', *BCom*, 27 (1975), 14-19.
- Pfandl, Ludwig, *Cultura y costumbres del pueblo español de los siglos xvi y xvii* (Barcelona: Araluce, 1929).
- Phillips, Henry, *The Theatre and its Critics in Seventeenth Century France*, Oxford Modern Languages and Literature Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).
- Poesse, Walter, *Juan Ruiz de Alarcón* (New York: Twayne, 1972).
- Reyes, Alfonso, *Ruiz de Alarcón: Teatro*, Clásicos Castellanos (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1923).
- Ribbans, Geoffrey, 'Lying in the structure of *La verdad sospechosa*', in *Studies in Spanish Literature of the Golden Age presented to Edward M. Wilson*, edited by R.O. Jones (London: Tamesis, 1973), 193-216.
- Riley, E.C., 'Alarcón's *mentiroso* in the light of the contemporary theory of character', in *Hispanic Studies in Honour of I. González Llubera*, edited by Frank Pierce (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp.287-97.
- , *Cervantes's Theory of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).
- Russell, P.E. (ed.), *Spain: A Companion to Spanish Studies*, (London: Methuen, 1973).
- , 'El concilio de Trento y la literature profana', in *Temas de 'la Celestina' y otros estudios* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1978), pp.443-78.
- Porqueras Mayo, Alberto, *El prólogo como género literario: su estudio en el Siglo de Oro español* (Madrid: CSIC, 1957)
- Porqueras Mayo, Alberto, *El prólogo en el manierismo y barroco españoles* (Madrid:

- CSIC, 1968)
- Sanmartí Boncompte, Francisco, *Tácito en España* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1951).
- Saunders, Jason Lewis, *Justus Lipsius: The Philosophy of Renaissance Stoicism* (New York: Liberal Arts Press, 1955).
- Schwartz Lerner, Lia, 'Golden Age Satire: Transformations of Genre', *MLN*, 105 (1990), 260-82.
- Severin, Dorothy Sherman, 'Ruiz de Alarcón's Romantic Heroines' in, *Golden Age Spanish Literature: Studies in Honour of John Varey* (London: Westfield College, 1991), 207-214.
- Silverman, Joseph H., 'Miriam Melvin, Juan Ruiz de Alarcón: Classical and Spanish Influences', *RI*, 17 (1952), 357-59.
- Soons, Alan, 'La verdad sospechosa', in *Ficción y comedia en el Siglo de Oro* (Estudios de literatura española: Madrid, 1967), pp.124-130.
- Soto de Benchoff, María Del Carmen, 'El teatro de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón y las preceptivas dramáticas' (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of California at Riverside, 1982).
- Thompson, I.A.A., 'Aspects of Spanish Military and Naval Organization during the Ministry of Olivares'; 'Neo-Noble Nobility: Concepts of *Hidalguía* in Early-Modern Castile'; and '*Hidalgo* and *Pebrero*: The Language of "Estates" and "Classes" in Early-Modern Castile', in his *War and Society in Habsburg Spain*, (Great Yarmouth: Variorum, 1992), pp.1-26; 53-78; 379-406.
- Torres Alcalá, Antonio, *Don Enrique de Villena: un mago al dintel del renacimiento* (Madrid: Porrúa Turanzas, 1983).
- Truman, R.W., 'The Idea of the Prince in the Latin and Vernacular Writings of Sixteenth-Century Spanish Theorists' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford, 1963).
- Tyler, Richard W., 'A Possible Influence on *La verdad sospechosa*', *BCom*, 22 (1970), 6-7.
- Urbina, Eduardo, 'La razón de más fuerza: triple juego en *La verdad sospechosa*', *Hispania*, 70 (1987), 724-30.
- Valbuena Prat, Angel, *Historia del teatro español* (Barcelona: Noguer, 1958).
- Veesser, Harold A., '"That Dangerous Supplement": *La verdad sospechosa*, and the Literary Speech Situation', in *Things Done with Words: Speech Acts in Hispanic Drama*, edited by Elias L. Rivers (Newark, Delaware: Juan de La Cuesta, 1986), pp.51-71.

- Wardropper, Bruce W., 'La imaginación en el metateatro calderoniano', in *Actas del III Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas, Mexico, 1968* (Mexico: UNAM, 1970), pp.923-30.
- Watson, A.I., 'Peter the Cruel or Peter the Just?: A Re-appraisal of the Rôle Played by King Peter in Calderón's *El médico de su honra*', *RJ*, 14 (1963), 322-46.
- Waxman, Samuel, 'Chapters on Magic in Spanish Literature', *RH*, 38 (1916), 325-463.
- Whicker, Jules, 'La ausencia del Nuevo Mundo en *El semejante a sí mismo* de Juan Ruiz de Alarcón', in *Actas del I Congreso Anglo-hispano, Huelva, 1992*, edited by Richard Hitchcock & Ralph Penny, 3 vols (Madrid: Castalia, 1994), III, 127-39.
- Wilson E.M. & D. Moir, *A Literary History of Spain*, vol.III, *The Golden Age: Drama 1492-1700* (London: Benn, 1971).
- Wilson, Margaret, *Spanish Drama of the Golden Age* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1969).
- Zagorin, Perez, *Ways of Lying: Dissimulation, Persecution, and Conformity in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1990).