Bloodworks: Poetics, Purity, and the Body in Early Modern Spanish Literature

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores literary representations of blood in seventeenth-century Spanish cultural production. During this time, anxiety over blood purity (limpieza de sangre) constituted a widespread social and literary pathology, which historians have identified as a discursive problem that can cautiously be likened to a fiction. The pathological ubiquity of the discourse of blood purity and the acknowledgment of its fictional status are my starting point: in contemporary literary debates, as well as in works by major authors, I perform close textual analyses, grounded in contemporary visual culture, political writings, and theological debates, to show the literary implications of limpieza de sangre.

Luis de Góngora’s 1613 Soledades resulted in the most important conversation on poetics in seventeenth-century Spain; I demonstrate how the aesthetic concerns of the polemicists were intimately connected to understandings of blood and the body, revealing that the ideology behind blood purity was at the very heart of poetic practice. This ideology anchors my analysis of Cervantes’s La fuerza de la sangre in chapter II, a seemingly contradictory novela that coheres because of the pernicious fiction of blood purity. I move in the third chapter to one of the most polarizing plays in early modern Spain, Calderón’s 1629 El médico de su honra. Drawing on contemporary visual culture and theories of vision, I argue that if one takes blood as the central, organizing term, many of the play’s difficulties come into sharper focus. With this approach, I demonstrate the play’s political stakes: it proposes a reformist agenda, aimed at eliminating the needless complexity of blood distinctions that allow for different kinds of Christians—old and new—that divide the Spanish empire. In the final chapter, I analyze the
intervention of the Virgin Mary in María de Zayas’s 1647 _Desengaños amorosos_,
showing how the increasing popularity of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception
provided a counterexample to the impurity blood purity ideology attributes to women.

My project reassesses our understanding of blood purity in terms of aesthetics, the
maintenance of everyday fictions and their influence, and the possibilities of literary
meaning.

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INTRODUCTION

The Discourse of Blood Purity

No ay peste en el mundo tan contagiosa, y el ayre della solo basta a inficionar, y donde entra la mancha no es posible que salga, y poquita levadura corrompe toda la massa. (Salucio 25r-26v)

Monjas y frailes, putas y pajes, todos vienen de grandes linajes. (qtd. in Martínez Kleiser 419)\textsuperscript{1}

The blood purity statutes of early modern Spain present a unique—and uniquely difficult—field of study. Varying by location, institution, and in severity, they are at once hyper-local and indicative of broader concerns; inconsequential in some cases, and definitive for an entire family line in others; and always based on a variable notion of genealogical accuracy. Agustín Salucio’s thorough, evocative 1599 treatise against blood purity statutes, the *Discurso sobre los estatutos de limpieza de sangre*, catalogues the myriad problems the statutes caused: a schism in the Catholic Church, an upside-down social hierarchy, a widespread marriage crisis, an ineffective and incompetent government, an abysmal reputation abroad, and an inescapable climate of fear and suspicion, among others. So contagious, so pernicious is the danger blood purity statutes pose, Salucio argues, that they corrupt the entirety of Spanish society. If Salucio’s assessment is the diagnosis, the *refrán* is the result: nuns, friars, whores, and servants can all be said to be of noble lineage—depending on whom one asks, on the published genealogical record (if one exists), on the right person’s memory, on the bribe that might jog it just a bit. Although the statutes’ ostensible purpose was to clearly, conclusively define Spanish society, they instead resulted in uncertainty and dispute, for both those

\textsuperscript{1} My thanks to Harry Sieber for directing my attention to this *refrán*. 
\textsuperscript{2} I am also mindful of the example of Kim Hall’s illuminating *Things of Darkness: Economies of
who found themselves subject to their requirements and for those who approach them analytically.

The historiography of blood purity is vast and often conflicting; even the most basic categorizations—what the blood purity statutes are—differ, resulting in considerable confusion. Jerome Friedman’s widely cited article “Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation,” for example, makes repeated reference to the “pure blood laws instituted by the Spanish courts of Inquisition,” a statement Emily Weissbourd disputes both on the grounds that the statutes were not laws, nor were they the province of the Inquisition (Friedman 4; Weissbourd 5). Weissbourd interrogates this confusion, concluding,

Ultimately, the attribution of the pure blood statutes to the Inquisition functions as a sort of shorthand for a cluster of events and concepts associated with early modern Spain: an obsession with honor in the context of purity of blood, the expulsion of Spain’s Jews and the persecution of the descendants of those Jews who converted to Christianity, the ‘black legend’ of Spanish cruelty both in the new world and within Iberia, and above all the power and sinister nature of the Spanish inquisition itself. (Weissbourd 20-1)

Perhaps because, historically speaking, the pure blood statutes have some tie to all of these concepts, their history has been intermingled with others. Gil Anidjar, however, finds the conflation productive; allowing the Inquisition to stand in for a host of other events and practices allows us to perceive, he argues, the fundamental centrality of blood in early modern Western Christendom (Blood 40-1). Because of this centrality, Anidjar argues, the language of blood implicates many fields of knowledge, including “literature and philosophy, law and politics, colonialism and race science, political economy, medicine, and social policy” (30). Any effort to study blood purity, then, requires
attention to the history of these fields, as well. Like blood itself, it seems, the historiography of blood purity has had a tendency to circulate.

Following the groundbreaking work of Américo Castro to show medieval Iberia as heterogeneous, Albert Sicroff was the first historian to thoroughly study the statutes with an emphasis on their local, contingent, and piecemeal implementation, and his work remains foundational. Antonio Domínguez Ortiz, in light of his long-term engagement with the role of the *converso*—the descendant of Jews who converted to Christianity—in early modern Spain, also provides an important, useful account of different varieties of statutes and the institutions that implemented them (140-67). Discussions of blood purity often appear embedded in accounts of the Inquisition, as in the case of Henry Kamen’s controversial studies, to which I will return in a moment. In the same sense, although they are not framed as studies of limpieza de sangre, Benzion Netanyahu’s *Origins of the Inquisition*, Haim Beinart’s *Records of the Trials of the Spanish Inquisition in Ciudad Real, 1483-1485*, and Yitzhak Baer’s *History of the Jews in Christian Spain* contribute to the scholarship on blood purity through the debate they enact surrounding the distinction between anti-converso sentiment as primarily a religious or a racist distinction. Literary historians have also made significant contributions to this historiography. George Mariscal and John Beusterien both attend to the historical specificity of limpieza de sangre statutes in their literary analyses, while also keeping a broader context, the history of European racisms, in sight.

Most recently, studies of blood purity statutes in themselves by Juan Hernández Franco and María Elena Martínez provide detailed, precise histories of the statutes’ development, spread, and influence. Although Martínez’s primary interest is the statutes’
relevance in the New World, her succinct overview of their effects in Spain is immensely useful, and I draw on her work extensively. Martínez’s history of blood purity is also notable for the weight is places on the literary. Her characterization of blood purity statutes as a fiction coincides with the work of several recent literary scholars who highlight the prevalence of blood purity’s influence on contemporary literature. Rachel Burk’s dissertation traces the presence of limpieza in a variety of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works. Weissbourd’s dissertation, meanwhile, considers blood purity in both a Spanish and English literary context. Georgina Dopico Black, in her insightful analysis of *El médico de su honra*, focuses on the intersection between the language of blood purity and constructions of gender, as does Balizet. This growing literature of limpieza demonstrates a pressing need for its careful consideration. Echoing Joan Scott’s classic call for an authentic, nuanced historical analysis of gender, Anidjar announces his own version: “Blood: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis” (40). I hope to shed some light on blood purity as a category of particularly useful literary analysis.

Before addressing blood in a literary context, however, we must address just what blood purity statutes are and how their influence spread throughout the Spanish empire. The ideology of limpieza de sangre was built on already existing prejudices and divisions, primarily anti-Semitism. The first mass conversions of Jews to Christianity, resulting in the first *conversos*, took place in 1391, following a wave of anti-Semitic attacks originating in Seville that resulted in thousands of deaths (Martinez 25-6). While these conversions were sometimes regarded as insincere, "the church for the most part accepted them" (27) and saw the newly converted as Christians. Dominicans and Franciscans were especially active in conversions, which allowed conversos to move out
of juderías (Jewish ghettos), granted them access to public and ecclesiastical positions, and permitted them to stop wearing distinctive clothing. As a result of this assimilation, many began relying on ancestry and lineage to determine identity: "Christians, Jews, and Muslims all responded by turning to new and mutually informed forms of communal identity that privileged ancestry" (28).

This interest in lineage and ancestry coincided with both the development of the earliest blood purity statutes. Their place of origin is generally identified as Toledo in 1449 (Martínez 30; Hernández Franco 19-20). King Juan II's unpopular tax policies sparked hatred of converso tax collectors, leading to riots against the Jewish population and new Christians (Martínez 30). In response, the mayor, Pero Sarmiento, wrote the Sentencia-Estatuto, a decree permanently barring converted Jews and their descendants from holding public office (30). The pope, Nicholas V, as well as many old Christian Spaniards strongly opposed the Sentencia-Estatuto on the grounds that it undermined Church authority, but Juan II approved the measure in a conciliatory effort in 1451 (30). Soon, similar measures began appearing in other cities, alongside rumors of conversos’ alleged treachery (30). As continued contact with the “old” ways was seen as the source of the problem, more efforts to definitively separate conversos and Jews appeared (30-1).

After the Sentencia-Estatuto, the second most significant development in the history of limpieza de sangre is the effort of Juan Martínez Siliceo, archbishop of Toledo, to require members of the Toledo cathedral to prove the purity of their blood (Hernández Franco 19-20; Martínez 44). As Domínguez Ortiz argues, “su desenlace puede considerarse que marca el giro decisivo no sólo en materia de estatutos eclesiásticos sino en cuanto al conjunto del problema” (143-4). Although, prior to this effort, religious
institutions, geographical regions, universities, public posts, military orders, guilds, and even some legal procedures all developed blood purity statutes, their passage was piecemeal and of limited authority (Martínez 43). Support for limpieza de sangre became explicit, however, in 1555 and 1556 when the pope and Philip II, respectively, approved the decision of the Cathedral of Toledo to demand purity of blood from its members, granting legitimacy to the statutes (44). This legitimacy allowed the statutes, in spite of persistent attack, to endure for hundreds of years.

At the same time, the spread of the Inquisition’s influence furthered concern over the inheritability of behaviors and character traits, fueling scrutiny over the supposed content of one’s blood. The 1478 papal bull founding the Inquisition allowed for a tribunal that had authority not over Jews, but rather over conversos and Moriscos (converted Muslims)—that is, identifiable behaviors that, the reasoning went, could influence susceptible others to revert to un-Christian habits (32-6). The Inquisition’s focus on inheritable heresies, based on canon law, provided a model for limpieza de sangre statutes; the Inquisition initially adhered to a three-generation rule, considering a suspected heretic’s parents and grandparents as well (50). The Sentencia-Estatuto also followed a three-generation rule. From the beginnings of the statutes, then, the Inquisition’s practices influenced and were influenced by more local, individual authorities.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the reach of blood purity statutes expanded significantly. Martínez particularly highlights the “feminization of impurity”: the expansion of consideration from an applicant’s paternal genealogy to the inclusion of his wife’s ancestry, as well (54). This shift to a dual-descent model had significant
consequences for the perception of women’s purity, as we will see in chapters II, III, and IV. Martínez also emphasizes the significance of shifts in the number of generations that would be investigated. While initially, only three generations—or the “cuatro costados”—were investigated, these limits were quickly eliminated. Thus by the end of the sixteenth century, the Toledo cathedral, the military orders, the inquisition and other institutions had no time limits at all, and an old Christian had to have that status since "time immemorial" (51-2). It is important to note, also, that this purity did not consist solely of freedom from converted Jewish or Muslim ancestors; any kind of heresy could be considered damaging, and illegitimacy—thanks to the uncertainty it introduced to the genealogical record—was also tantamount to impurity (66).

This was a difficult, if not impossible, standard to meet, and efforts to adhere to it resulted in social upheaval. Because the genealogical record of the nobility was public knowledge, so were its converso and morisco influences; for members of the lower classes, whose genealogies relied on memory alone, a simple forgetting could wipe the record clean—leaving the most humble peasant with more nobility of blood than Spain’s oldest families. This tension is evident in the 1507 *Libro verde de Aragón* and the 1560 *Tizón de la nobleza de España*, both of which exposed and circulated the impure blood of Spain’s most illustrious lineages. Even when not printed and distributed, imputations of impure blood could be taken as truth and have the same effect; the requirements of limpieza de sangre could thus be used to personal advantage through gossip and rumor. Domínguez Ortiz notes that Spain’s prestigious military orders, in particular, fueled this kind of controversy: “Más que ningunos otros, los estatutos de las Órdenes Militares alimentaron las rencillas y comidillas pueblerinas, los odios entre linajes, las intrigas de
toda especie” (Domínguez Ortiz 155). In addition to the fact that pure blood statutes were local in terms of their implementation, then, they were also “deeply embedded in local power struggles” (Weissbourd 58). Limpieza de sangre was thus at once a national (international, even, as Martínez shows) concern and an extremely local one, firmly entrenched by the end of the sixteenth century.

These understandings of limpieza de sangre highlight its social and cultural currency. As Hernández Franco argues, blood purity was “uno de los principales problemas sociales que registran los Reinos Hispánicos, especialmente Castilla” (16). What kind of problem blood purity posed, though, remains a matter of historiographical debate. For Hernández Franco, it is “un problema que por encima de todo fue social” (35). For Sicoff, it is likewise an “exigence sociale” that “semblait avoir pris une vie propre et hypnotisait les Espagnols” (221). As mentioned above, though, one of the primary lenses through which scholars have analyzed Spain’s blood purity statutes is that of race. George Mariscal, for example, praises Balibar’s reincorporation of Spain into the history of Western racisms as “an early example of a state-sponsored racial project that draws on the representational repertoire of European anti-Semitism” (Mariscal 16). Even more so, the statutes’ development illuminates our understanding of race in early modern Spain as a shifting, slippery category. Summarizing the statutes’ adaptation to a transatlantic context, Martínez concludes, "there was no neat transition from early modern notions of lineage to race" (12). Writing about the early modern English context, Loomba and Burton agree, arguing that attempts to delineate the history of racisms into discrete stages are misguided: "As is the case in the modern world, when we examine early modern notions of racial difference we must consider not only those divisions of
humanity that were putatively based on distinctive combinations of physical traits transmitted through a line of descent, but also the eclectic range of cultural differences that are used to explain, manage, or reorganize relations of power” (2). In early seventeenth-century writings about blood purity, this flexibility is apparent; proponents and critics of the statutes draw on both “biological” and “cultural” lines of reasoning to support their argument. Sicloff frames the concept of blood purity in this period as a “fonctionnement,” which felicitously highlights the concept’s elasticity (10).

My readings of contemporary literature align most closely, however, with approaches that consider blood’s multivalence in the context of limpieza de sangre. For Martínez, blood purity posed problems that could not be isolated to one sphere; rather, it “intensified other social conflicts—such as those between segments of the traditional nobility and the wealthy urban classes, the commoner masses and the converso 'bourgeoisie,' and factions that competed for control of local government" (40). Weissbourd likewise disputes the assertion that blood purity can be analyzed solely in terms of race versus religion, arguing, “discourses of purity of blood both depict religious identity in ways we might now call racial, and are also deployed in ways that are inextricable from questions of class identity and class mobility” (Weissbourd 50). As Burk argues, blood’s discursive density in this context makes any understanding of it, as a bodily substance, as metaphor, or as anything else, difficult to pin down: “Always valued, ‘blood’ transcended any single field of reference, playing vital and various roles in early modern legal, social, religious, and medical thought” (Burk, Salus 2). In this way, limpieza de sangre became something of a pathological concern. As Hernández Franco notes, “como decían los tratadistas, curaron una enfermedad menor y crearon otra mayor”
This pathological characterization of blood purity is also a generative one, however; limpieza de sangre created new understandings not only of blood itself, but also of all those institutions, practices, and beliefs that depended on an understanding of blood. Thus I agree with Martínez that “the problem of limpieza de sangre” constitutes “a discourse, a knowledge-producing instrument that promoted certain practices, social relationships, and identities and that was inextricably linked to operations of power” (19).

In this dissertation, I argue that blood purity functioned discursively, drawing on and shaping notions of race, social status, gender, religion, and sexuality.

Given that I address blood’s seepage into nearly every facet of early modern Spanish life, Henry Kamen’s controversial history of the Inquisition and limpieza de sangre statutes must be dealt with. Kamen argues that the statutes were more or less ineffective: "even where statutes existed Spaniards found it possible to impose them with a typical laxity that in many cases undermined their existence" (240). Further, they could be overruled, as “those who wished to avoid them did so: by bribes or by fraudulent proofs" (240-1). I propose that the imprecise, varied application of limpieza statutes does not necessarily indicate that they were ineffective; racist ideologies do not need to be perfectly consistent to produce grave consequences. Indeed, it is often precisely this lack of certainty that leads to unease among marginalized groups. The acknowledgment of rampant bribery, meanwhile, more readily hints at the complex relationship Martínez and Weissbourd suggest between social rank, mobility, and blood purity than it does the statutes’ impotence. Kamen’s frank acknowledgment that, in spite of these qualifications, “there can be no doubt of the threat [limpieza] could represent” reveals that limpieza did
operate effectively in at least one register (242). I interpret this effectiveness as evidence that further study into limpieza’s social and cultural operations are badly needed.\(^2\)

The present study hopes to address this gap, drawing particularly on the insights of Hernández Franco and Martínez that blood purity was, in large part, a textual construct. The former stresses that limpieza de sangre presented a legal, document-based approach toward halting perceived damage (15). The latter, meanwhile, is more explicit in the links between literature and limpieza: "Spanish notions of purity and impurity of blood were fictions, ideological constructs based on religious and genealogical understandings of difference that despite their invented nature were no less effective at shaping social practices, categories of identity, and self-perceptions" (61). By focusing on works published or distributed in the first half of the seventeenth century—more precisely, between 1613 and 1647—I am able to analyze blood purity as a firmly established discourse. I propose that, in order to understand blood purity’s fictionality, we must study its operation in and on works of fiction. This dissertation focuses on blood’s discursive density in a specifically literary context, revealing the extent to which varied readings of blood allowed these works to move seamlessly—and sometimes stealthily—between registers. Thus I am interested not only in recovering reflections of a historical phenomenon in literary texts, but in showing how the discourse of blood purity shaped literary practice, in terms of genre, poetic devices, legibility and interpretation, and its continuities with other fields. Limpieza de sangre—in addition to being a social, political, theological, and ontological concern—was also a distinctly literary one.

\(^2\) I am also mindful of the example of Kim Hall’s illuminating *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England:* "I am more interested in discerning the ways in which the Africanist presence is embedded in language. . . . [T]he significance of blackness as a troping of race far exceeds the actual presence of African-descended people in England" (Hall 14).
CHAPTER I

An Obscure Lineage:

The Language of Limpieza de Sangre in the Soledades Polemic

Muerto me lloró el Tormes en su orilla,
en un parasismal sueño profundo,
en cuanto don Apolo rubicundo
tres veces sus caballos desensilla.

Fue mi resurreción la maravilla
que de Lázaro fue la vuelta al mundo;
de suerte que ya soy otro segundo
Lazarillo de Tormes de Castilla.

Entré a servir a un ciego, que me envía,
sin alma vivo, y en un dulce fuego,
que ceniza hará la vida mía.

¡Oh qué dichoso que sería yo luego,
si a Lazarillo le imitase un día
en la venganza que tomó del ciego! (Góngora, Obras 462-3)

In sonnet 259, Luis de Góngora y Argote obliquely recounts a personal episode. Written in the summer of 1593, when Góngora was in Salamanca serving the bishop of Córdoba, he became gravely ill (Orozco Díaz, Soneto 149; Gribanov 315-6). According to José García Salcedo Coronel, a fellow poet and the first editor of Góngora’s Fabula de Polifemo y Galatea, Góngora was in a state of near-death (the “parasismal sueño”) for three days (“en cuanto don Apolo . . . tres veces sus caballos desensilla”), after which he immediately fell in love (Orozco Díaz, Sonetos 149, 150). The poem hinges on the transition between the second quatrain and the first tercet; prompted by the reference to Lazarus’s resurrection, the poet is reminded of the change in fortunes of the protagonist of the picaresque novel La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes. The word “ciego” in the next line links the novel to Góngora’s love affair by relating Lazarillo’s first master, the blind
man, with Cupid, the blind god of love (150). The sonnet coheres because of these correspondences; they hold together disparate and even opposing concepts.

For the modern reader, the most striking opposition may be that of Góngora, known as one of the most illustrious, abstruse authors of Spain’s literary Golden Age, and Lazarillo, a blasphemous, low-born vulgarian who, even in the “cumbre de toda buena fortuna” is nothing more than a swindling town crier, fending off rumors that his wife may be a prostitute in the service of a priest (Lazarillo 135). Aside from the conceits of this sonnet, there is precious little to connect the two; if not this comparison, what could be more indicative of what Lazarillo himself would call a “mundo al revés”?

On further analysis, however, sonnet 259 reveals other surprising facets. The invoked resurrections, Góngora’s and Lazarus’s, undo the opposition and boundary between life and death. Meanwhile, relating Saint Lazarus to the decidedly profane Lazarillo undermines the former’s saintliness and introduces a suggestion of heresy. Gribanov identifies “la ironía gongorina” at least partly in introducing the pícaro Lazarillo into the Italian sonnet, “un género elevado y culto,” in the first place (318). Delving further into formal issues, Gribanov also notes that, although the poem follows the rhyme scheme of the Italian sonnet—ABBA ABBA CDC DCD—the decision to rhyme lines C with those of A brings the poem closer to the Spanish romance, although still in hendecasyllable lines, rendering it “una clase de romance oculto bajo la forma del soneto” (323). In sum, the sonnet presents a mixture of high and low; of plain language and extended, obscure conceits; of the sacred with the profane and even pagan; and of Italian and Spanish poetic tradition.

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3 Beverley also notes the irony of this comparison (65).
If we were to add to our assessment of sonnet 259 the fact that it contains “casi una falta total de acción,” we would approximate the primary critiques of Góngora’s— and, for that matter, Spanish literature’s—most debated work, the *Soledades* (qtd. in Martínez Arancón 317). After the poem’s rapid diffusion in definitive form in 1613, it quickly generated a flurry of critiques, apologies, commentaries, and calumnies (Roses Lozano 22; Alonso, “Manuel Ponce” 521). These metatexts became so important, Roses Lozano notes, that “el revuelo literario y la dialéctica serían ya inseparables del poema para siempre” (1). Critics have engaged the *Soledades* polemic at length. Jammes and Orozco Díaz (*En torno*), for example, consider the opinions of Góngora’s contemporaries for what they reveal about the reception of the *Soledades*. Darst and Johnson, meanwhile, mine the work itself and the surrounding debate to consider contemporary aesthetic doctrines, with Johnson focusing particularly on Spanish literature’s Latin heritage. More specifically, Kluge highlights the Platonic-Christian elements of the polemic, arguing that Góngora was among those authors perceived as “delighting in the world of matter for its own sake” (252). Roses Lozano, like Kluge, focuses on a specific aesthetic dimension and its origins in the polemic, the question of aesthetic obscurity.

Although I appreciate the specificity of both Kluge and Roses Lozano’s careful studies, they both reduce the *Soledades* polemic to a one-issue debate. For Kluge, the primary question is to what extent the “moral-ethical and ontological critique of literature . . . provided the motivation for the period's persecution of stylistic delinquency and aesthetic heresy” (257). Roses Lozano, however, insists that obscurity is “el punto crítico

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4 After providing a sketch of the plot of the *Soledades*, Dámaso Alonso drily notes, “Poco es” (“Claridad” 296).

5 This polemic was also the subject of a thorough and illuminating 2012 exhibition at the Biblioteca Nacional de España; see Góngora: la estrella inextinguible.
más importante y representativo” of the whole polemic (92). I accept that both of these are significant questions in the debate—although some of the polemic authors engage one or the other to a greater extent—but they do not capture the full range of the diverse opinions, allusions, and critiques of the Soledades’s commentators. As Collard argues, a broader context must be taken into account to understand the polemic: “La reacción a la poesía docta de Góndora en su propio siglo y su propio país adquiere su más acabado sentido si se considera la atmósfera de intereses político-sociales, de religión y de pensamiento en que ese proceso transcurrió” (53). Accepting Beverley’s insight that “the aesthetic labor of generating a new poetic form in the Soledades is also an ideological one” (55), I propose that the polemic’s engagement with the most pressing social question—that of limpieza de sangre—must also be taken into account. The language of limpieza—of heritage, lineage, influence, contamination, and purity—abounds in the commentary on the Soledades and must be considered if we are to understand the social and aesthetic contours of the polemic. The “oposición castellanidad—sectarismo religioso” Collard identifies begins to approach these complexities, and in this chapter, I will demonstrate the extent to which this opposition mimics and complicates that of pure versus impure blood (Collard 81).

The polemicists themselves do not view the debate about the Soledades and the new poetry as “merely” or solely about poetics. Instead, the stakes are much higher, and the consequence much more serious. Contrasting the Soledades polemic with the roughly contemporary French querelle des Anciens et des Modernes, Collard notes, “Llegó a llamarse guerra civil, según la designaba el contemporáneo Antonio López de Vega” (53). In one of his letters addressed to Góngora, Lope sums up the problems with this
style: “Todo el fundamento deste edificio es el trasponer” (qtd. in Martínez Arancón 120). Cascales’s warning is even more grim: Góngora’s poetics are “[v]olviendo a su primero caos las cosas; haciendo que ni los pensamientos se entiendan, ni las palabras se conozcan en la confusión” (qtd. in Martínez Arancón 208). Without even the common ground of mutual, linguistic understanding, Jáuregui conflates the disorder of the Soledades with social disorder:

Suponga Vm., por ejemplo, que un hombre honrado, hijo de tales padres, se para en mitad de la calle, y al uno le llama asno, al otro puto, y a la otra sucia: aunque no hable con más gracia que ésta, hará gente, y el más sesudo se llegará a ver tal desvarío en un hombre de capa negra. Así los versos de Vm. se ponen en mitad de España sin más respeto a ultrajar de hereje al teólogo docto; al poeta conocido, de ignorante; al noble soldado, de ignorante, digo, de cobarde; y al privado más ilustre, de ambicioso, y otras disoluciones que es vergüenza referillas. (189)

This is precisely one of the primary the anxiety caused by the ideology of limpieza de sangre: that any implication against even the most noble, most intelligent, and best citizens could be taken seriously.

In this chapter, I perform close readings of the documents of the polemic, beginning with the Pareceres of Francisco Fernández de Córdoba and Pedro de Valencia, as well as the Sylva of Manuel Ponce, and ending with the textual commentaries on the Soledades of García Salcedo Coronel and José de Pellicer, as well as comments specific to the Soledades in Cristobal de Salazar Mardones’s Ilustración y defensa de la fábula de Piramo y Tisbe. Chronologically, these documents date between 1613 and 1636, the same years that, as we saw in the Introduction, limpieza primarily functioned discursively. Throughout, I keep in mind María Elena Martínez’s insight that "Spanish notions of purity and impurity of blood were fictions, ideological constructs . . . that despite their invented nature were no less effective at shaping social practices, categories of identity,
and self-perceptions” (61). Their status as fictions made these notions uniquely suited to literary discourse and debate. The religious, genealogical, and differential approaches to the Soledades reveal that the discourse of limpieza de sangre was at the heart of early seventeenth-century literary theory and practice.

First, we must begin with an overview of the polemic. Around the same time the Soledades were being distributed in manuscript at court, Góngora requested opinions on the work from two respected friends, the humanist and royal chronicler Pedro de Valencia, and the Abbot of Rute, Francisco Fernández de Córdoba. Pedro de Valencia’s letter, the Carta . . . en censura, dates to June of 1613, while the abbot’s Parecer dates to early 1614 (Roses Lozano 13, 15). 6 Both letters were critical, and rumors about their content quickly created “un estado de opinión contrario al poema de don Luis” (17). This was in spite of Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza’s laudatory Advertencias para la ingeligencia de las Soledades de don Luis de Góngora, which Almansa y Mendoza, the primary distributor of the Soledades, included with the poem (17). The reading of another early apologist, Manuel Ponce’s 1613 Sylva a las Soledades de Don Luys de Gongora Con anotaciones . . . y un discurso en defensa de la Novedad y Terminos de su Estilo seems not to have been widely read and did little to change the debate (Alonso, “Manuel Ponce” 523; Roses Lozano 20). Soon, the polemic turned more personal: the Abbot of Rute was related to the Duke of Sessa, whose secretary, Lope de Vega, would have had access to the poem and its related correspondence (Roses Lozano 14). Although the 1615 Carta . . . en razón de las Soledades is unsigned, it is often, and with reason, attributed to Lope and his literary circle (Martínez Arancón 40; Roses Lozano 23). Its primary

6 Roses Lozano and Gates, among others, note the likelihood of a second, more positive letter from Pedro de Valencia, now lost (13; 160).
suggestion indicates Lope’s negative opinion of the work: “Haga Vm. lo posible por recoger estos papeles” (Martínez Arancón 40). Góngora’s Carta . . en respuesta, dated just fifteen days after Lope’s, hastily rebuts some of the latter’s arguments, whereas Antonio de las Infantas’s offers a point-by-point rebuttal of the Carta . . en razón de las Soledades (Roses Lozano 23-4). In early 1616, Lope wrote a Respuesta to both Góngora and Antonio de las Infantas that was no more flattering; a response from Góngora, now lost, likely accused Lope of heresy and alumbradismo (25-6). The earliest documents, then, evince a clear, and clearly temporally situated, orientation towards the personal.

Also in 1616, Juan de Jáuregui’s Antídoto contra la pestilente poesía de las Soledades appeared, shifting the debate from epistles to treatises “con cierto alcance teórico” (27). The Antídoto does not dispense entirely with the pettiness of the early letters, but many of its critiques are so minor, and so wryly phrased, that it may not have been intended as a serious attack (Romanos 438; Roses Lozano 30). Góngora himself reportedly laughed upon reading it and did not take it seriously (Romanos 438). However, it was one of the most widely diffused documents in the whole polemic, and many of Jáuregui’s criticisms appear later in the work’s critical history (Roses Lozano 30). In Góngora’s defense, the Abbot of Rute quickly responded with the Examen del Antídoto, which, of all the defenses, is “la más profunda por lo que se refiere a concepto poéticos” (31). Two other anonymous defenses, the Defensa e ilustración de la Soledad primera and the Opúsculo, can be dated to 1618 and 1624, respectively (36, 39). Two

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7 When citing documents from the polemic, with the exception of Manuel Ponce’s Sylva, Francisco Fernández de Córdoba’s Examen del antídoto, and the anonymous Opúsculo contra el Antídoto de Jáuregui, I will use the versions edited by Ana Martínez Arancón; all citations to documents from the polemic refer to her La batalla en torno a Góngora. I have preserved Martínez Arancón’s orthographical changes.

8 Consider that, for Jáuregui, even the poem’s title is wrong: “Donde había tanta vecindad de pueblos, y toda aquella caterva que baila, juega, cata y zapatea hasta caer, ¿cómo diablos pudo llamarse Soledad?” (156).
other significant elements of the polemic are the exchanges between Francisco Cascales and Francisco del Villar—a group of letters dating between 1615 and 1621—and between Juan de Jáuregui and Pedro Díaz de Ribas, in the form of treatises, likely published in 1624 (42, 43-4). These treatise-based and epistolary exchanges do not entirely avoid the more personal dynamics of the early documents, as we will see, but they do consider broader literary questions, as well.

Commentaries on the *Soledades* likewise provide insight into contemporary perspectives on Góngora’s poetics. Beginning in the 1630s, commentaries became more frequent than other polemical documents (55). The most important are those of José de Pellicer, *Lecturas solemnes a las obras de don Luis de Góngora*, 1630; and García Salcedo Coronel, *Obras de don Luis de Góngora comentadas*, 1636 (56-7). Both commentators move away from personal attacks completely and consider the works in themselves, often by finding correspondences to classical authors or referring to the more theoretical aspects of previous documents in the polemic.

Finally, the polemic became transatlantic when the Portuguese Manuel de Faria y Sousa’s 1639 commentaries on Luís de Camões’s *Os Lusíadas* defended that epic by comparing it favorably to Góngora’s poetry; Juan de Espinosa Medrano, writing in Cuzco, responded with his *Apologético en favor de D. Luis de Góngora . . . contra Manuel de Faria y Sousa, Cavallero Portugués*. Although this exchange contains insightful criticism and a fascinating perspective on transatlantic poetics, its reliance on comparisons to Luís de Camões’s *Os Lusíadas*, along with the fact that the discussion of
blood purity is markedly different in Spain’s overseas colonies, place these letters outside
the scope of this study.9,10

While this polemic was taking place in letters, treatises, and commentaries,
Góngora’s detractors also often expressed their opinions satirically, either in prose or in
verse. Lope and Francisco de Quevedo, in particular, wrote many poems and burlesques
not only attacking Góngora personally, as discussed below, but also lampooning his style.
In La culta latiniparla, Quevedo provides his readers with detailed instructions on
making sense of the new style, particularly by offering more ‘refined’ ways of phrasing
everyday speech:

    Al pastel llamará pícaro de masa.
    Para no decir vengo mal tocada, dirá vengo mal adjetivada.
    Al paje llamará intonso.
    Está inmediata, para decir está cerca.
    Por no decir: estoy al cabo, dirá: ya agonizo; y Dios lo oiga.
    A las medias llamará no enteras. (80)

The absurdity of these suggestions highlights one of Quevedo’s primary complaints about
Gongorism: its lack of clarity and the potential for misinterpretation. Many of Lope’s
satirical poems, meanwhile, focus on Góngora’s grammatical innovations, particularly his
use of transpositions, as in this example:

    Inés, tus bellos ya me matan, ojos,
    y al alma, roban pensamientos, mía,
    desde aquel triste, que te vieron, día,
    no tan crueles, por tu causa, enojos.
    Que es venturoso, se se admite, empleo,
    esperanza de amor, me dice, verde,
    viendo que te, desde tan lejos, veo. (114)

The insistent separation of each line’s final word indicates that Góngora’s complex,
balanced, intricate phrasings are—when one really gets down to it—silly. While these

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9 See Martínez, Parts II and III.
10 See, however, Jammes, “Juan de Espinosa Medrano et la poésie de Góngora.”
two examples highlight a playful side of the polemic, Lope and Quevedo’s burlesque writings on the Soledades also contained much more pointed accusations.

The responses to the Soledades, then, range from cautious personal correspondence to generalized treatises to meticulous commentaries and to parodic send ups. In spite of their differences, however, many of these documents consistently elaborate a critique that draws on the discourse of limpieza de sangre. While this, as the above mentioned authors have shown, is not the only critique they enact, the language and ideology of blood purity are of sustained, central relevance to the polemic.

1. The Purity of the Poet

In the social context defined by blood purity, an attribution of impurity could have serious consequences—or, it could remain purely in the realm of rumor and innuendo. As we will see, however, when considered in light of contemporary poetic discourse, personal insults were not exclusively personal; they inflected the work of the poet himself. In the case of the Soledades polemic, personal appeals and insults abounded. In his response to the Carta . . . en razón, Antonio de las Infantas offers a justification for considering the source of a literary work before condemning it: “Averroes dice que para conocerlo [el honor de una obra] se mira el título que tiene el nombre de quien lo inventó . . . que siendo tan insigne varón será su escudo si lo hubiera menester y excusará a sus amigs a defenderlo” (52). However, Lope de Vega, in his Respuesta a las cartas de don Luis de Góngora y de don Antonio de las Infantas, implies that he has considered Góngora’s position and found it wanting. Before launching his attack, he ominously implies that gossip and rumor are matters of import; now that people are talking about the Soledades and the letters surrounding it, “de las cosas que salen en público, en público se
puede hablar” (55-6). He less-than-subtly implies long-rumored Góngora’s failures as an old Christian, arguing that Góngora’s hasty, overly impassioned response to the first, anonymous letter—the Carta . . . en respuesta, responding to Lope’s own Carta . . . en razón—is “contra la luz de cristiano y contra la caballeresca (de que se precia tanto Vm.)” (56). The parenthetical adds insult to injury, implying that Góngora’s nobility is dear because so dearly—and perhaps newly—acquired.

In verse, particularly unpublished, then-anonymous verse, Lope and Quevedo are even more direct in their critiques. In one of Lope’s poems, the eminent Spanish Renaissance poets Garcilaso de la Vega and Juan Boscán search for a place to stay the night; at one house, a servant replies in Gongorist style—“No hay donde nocturnar palestra armada” (113)—which utterly baffles the poets:

—¿Estás en ti, mujer? Negóse al tino el ambulante huésped. Que en tan poco tiempo tal lengua entre cristianos haya! Boscán, perdido habemos el camino, preguntad por Castilla, que estoy loco o no hemos salido de Vizcaya. (113-4)

In addition to implying that Góngora’s language is so far beyond the best Spanish poetry that it is incomprehensible—a subject we will revisit shortly—Garcilaso’s astonishment that Christians could speak this way implies that Gongorist language is something else, something un-Christian, and in fact something outside the tradition of Castilian poetics. Góngora himself, it is implied, might also be outside this tradition.
Quevedo, however, is even more blunt, and more scathing, in his denunciations. Quevedo’s anti-semitism is well documented, but it is rarely more apparent than in his verses against Góngora.  

Yo te untaré mis versos con tocino,  
porque no me los muerdas, Gongorilla,  
perro de los ingenios de Castilla,  
docto en pullas, cual mozo de camino.  
Apenas hombre, sacerdote indino . . .  
¿Por qué censuras tú la lengua griega,  
siendo sólo rabí de la judía,  
cosa que tu nariz aún no lo niega? (82-3)

Casting Góngora as less-than-human—a dog—highlights even further the anti-semitism of covering his own poetry in bacon fat; the commonplace, obviously racist remark about Góngora’s nose does not require explanation, but Quevedo explicitly, repetitively refers to him as a “rabí de la judía” in any case. This insult occurs elsewhere, as well, linked directly to claims about the purity of Góngora’s blood:

En lo sucio de lo que has contado  
y en lo largo de narices,  
demás de lo que dices,  
que no eres limpio has mostrado. (92)

Here, Góngora’s speech and, by extension, his poetry, are brought into the proof of his impurity; Quevedo claims to recognize Góngora’s impure blood both through appearance and behaviors. This slipperiness signals one of the primary difficulties of analyzing blood purity as a historical anxiety: those who made such accusations could do so in myriad ways, and the suggestion of impure blood could be as potentially damaging as textual “proof.” These accusations are sometimes explicit in Quevedo’s poetry:

Cristiano viejo no eres,

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11 See, for example, Peter Mollov, “El miedo a la transculturación en la corte: El antisemitismo de Quevedo,” and Germán de Patricio, “Letradomédicos brujjudios: Ideología, antisemitismo y realidad social en algunas sátiras de Quevedo.”
porque aun no te vemos cano;  
hi de algo, eso sin duda,  
pero con duda hidalgo. (96)

The reference to Góngora’s lack of gray hair winkingly undercuts the real slight, which would not have been mistaken by any early modern Spaniard. The ominous suggestion (“hi de algo, eso sin duda”) allows the reader to imagine as many unsavory possibilities as he desires. In the satirical literature of the Soledades polemic, then, Góngora’s detractors made use of personal attacks that employed that implicitly or explicitly suggested impure blood to discredit him.

Góngora himself seems to have responded in kind. Although, as noted above, his reply to Lope’s Carta . . . en razón has been lost, Lope’s indignant response implies that Góngora also leveled the charge of heresy: “es muy bueno que Vm. [Góngora] alaba su [de Lope] paciencia, despues de llamarle hereje y alumbrado” (112). Along the same lines, a poem written against Lope alludes to his unseemly affairs:

Dicho que han por una carta,  
que es tu cómica persona  
sobre los manteles mona  
y entre las sábanas marta.

As Martínez Arancón notes, the word “marta”—which appears again in the last line of the poem—refers to Lope’s lover, Marta de Nevares, who gave birth to Lope’s daughter (68 n1). Lope’s frequent, public entanglements were considered especially unsuitable for a man of the cloth. However, the specifics of the attacks matter; while Góngora charges mere indecorousness, his detractors make specific, acerbic accusations about his lineage in particular.

In all of these cases, these attacks could be read as spurious or humorous, not something to be taken seriously in a discussion of aesthetics. However, for early modern
Spanish poets, the personal was the poetic (as well as, as we will see shortly, the political). As Ife has shown, Golden Age defenders of poetry (and what, today, we would call fiction more generally) often sidestepped the Platonic argument against poets through a creative reading that found only some poets immoral. Rather than, as in books III and X of Plato’s *Republic*, banning all poets on the grounds that poetry was a lie, poets of the age argued that what Plato *really* meant was that it was necessary to ban bad poets (Ife 26). To bolster their arguments, these defenders “based themselves not only on Plato’s praise of the philosopher, and Cicero’s and Quintilian’s praise of the orator” but also on a well-known citation from Strabo’s *Geographica*: “‘the excellence of a poet is inseparably associated with the excellence of the man himself, and it is impossible for one to become a good poet unless he has previously become a good man’” (qtd. in Ife 26-7). Contemporary humanists agreed; Alonso López, better known as “el Pinciano,” writes in his well-known, influential 1596 *Philosophia antigua poética* that Quintilian

enseña los poetas que deuen ser elegidos y leydos. De lo qual consta que entre ellos ay, como entre todos los demás hombres del mundo, buenos y malos; y assí se deuen seguir los buenos, como son vn Homero y vn Virgilio y semejantes heroicos . . . finalmente, digo que tengo por imposible que vno sea buen poeta y no sea hombre de bien. (148)

Thus the poet’s work could not be separated from the moral standing of the poet himself, and, in terms of contemporary perspectives on the Soledades, it mattered whether Góngora could be considered an “hombre de bien.”

In this context, insinuations about Góngora’s heritage matter not because his actual genealogical background is important, but because perceptions of it were considered relevant to the interpretation of his work. Lope’s remark about Góngora’s cherished status as a gentleman may have struck a personal nerve, but it also accorded
with perceptions of Góngora’s family. Although both sides of his family belonged to the nobility, their economic fortunes improved considerably during Góngora’s childhood (Jammes, Études 11, 16). Jammes sums up Góngora’s social position thus: “tous cela définit assez bien une catégorie sociale qui, si elle se proclame noble, n’en est pas moins, dans le fond, voisine de la bourgeoisie” (Études 16). Although nobility is on the one hand a clearly defined social status with certain rights and privileges, it also denotes a moral dimension. Covarrubias’s first definition of “noble” is “a causa de que por su virtud o la de sus antepasados se da a conocer” (778). Góngora’s suspect nobility thus allows his detractors to question the Soledades in terms of the work’s virtue and decency.

It is clear from the poems cited above that Góngora’s heritage was suspect in other ways, as well. Rumors of his converso heritage stem from a 1568 inquiry into Góngora’s uncle, Francisco de Góngora, which resulted in five or six declarations made against Ana González de Falces, Francisco’s mother and Luis de Góngora’s great aunt (Jammes, Études 27). According to some, Ana was not the niece of Alonso González de Falces, as claimed, but rather his illegitimate daughter; others claimed that Alonso was a converso (27). These claims were known to Góngora and his contemporaries; they resurfaced in 1598, when Góngora’s brother-in-law requested to join the Inquisition as an unsalaried assistant and underwent a similar inquiry (Jammes, Études 27; Haliczer 151). After the Soledades had already gained notoriety, the claims surfaced again; in 1622, Góngora’s nephew, Francisco de Argote y Góngora, was admitted into the Order of Santiago, and his inquiry revisited—and dismissed—the claims of illegitimate or converso heritage (Jammes, Études 27). Even if, as Jammes argues, Góngora and

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12 As we will see in Chapter II, Rodolfo’s immoral behavior is considered troubling because it does not match his nobility; similarly, in Chapter IV, the ignoble behavior of noble men in Zayas’s tales is presented as the root of social ills.
members of his literary circle did not think of these rumors “comme autre chose que des calomnies,” their circulation remains significant (28). They opened the possibility of accusing Góngora of baseness or false nobility, of illegitimacy, of heresy, and of crypto-Jewishness—of a secret, hidden identity. These claims—and other troubling, more literary-theoretical questions—quickly became associated with the Soledades themselves.

2. The Nobility of the Poem

In addition to personal attacks, many criticisms of the Soledades faulted the work for its perceived lack of nobility. In his Parecer, Francisco Fernández de Córdoba argues, “faltóle a esta obra para ser digna del ingenio de Vm. (esto es perfectísima) la perspicuidad, que es bondad, y requisito necesario en género de narración, luego no tiene suma bondad, que debiera por tal dueño” (19). For the Abbot, the Soledades are undignified, especially in comparison to Góngora himself; as a result, they lack the goodness poetry requires. In the first printed edition of the Soledades, the same complaint emerges again. The poem appeared in Juan de Vicuña’s 1627 Obras en verso del Homero español, which collected Góngora’s works, including many satirical and burlesque poems. However, the work was quickly banned; in June of 1628, Juan de Pineda, whose writings on poetry we will revisit in a moment, signed a declaration against the volume (Alonso, Obras xxix). On the one hand, Pineda complained, “el dicho libro es contra la honra y reputación del autor, y auearlo impresso y publicado es auele hecho manifiesto agrauiio; porque el autor, mirando prudentemente por su honra, no quiso, ni permitió en su vida, que sus obras se imprimiesen, por lo mucho que desdezian de la dignidad de su estado de sacerdote” (Pineda qtd. in Alonso, Obras xxx). Here, Pineda claims that the works printed undermine Góngora’s honor and nobility, particularly because of his status
as an ordained priest. Later in the same complaint, however, Pineda takes a different approach: “aunque este libro no sea del todo lasciuo, mas porque el autor sólo tuuo su famosa eminencia en lo lasciuo y picaril, verde y picante, por esta sola materia y título es leído y buscado, como si de esto solo escriuiera” (xxxi). Alonso notes that the charge of lasciviousness tended to prompt Inquisitorial action, but more interestingly, Pineda’s claim implies that there is little else to be found in Góngora’s works; they are ignoble in themselves (Alonso, Obras xxxi). This contradiction—appealing to Góngora’s natural honor as a priest on the one hand, denouncing his lascivious reputation on the other—allows Pineda to critique the nobility of Góngora’s works on multiple fronts.

Góngora’s supporters also found nobility to be a problem. For Antonio de las Infantas, in a reply to Lope’s first, anonymous letter, the problem does have to do with nobility—not Góngora’s or that of the Soledades, but of the very age in which he lives. Sounding not unlike don Quijote in his famous Golden Age Speech, Infantas writes, “¡Oh, infeliz siglo de hierro el que gozamos! A la virtud se llama vicio, y lo que la antigüedad en tanto estimó que es la invectiva, por viciar la obra baptizan con nombre, por no saber o no querer o no poder ampliarla” (51). In this argument, Góngora heroically restores virtue to the world with his poetics. Manuel Ponce, in his early Sylva in praise of the Soledades, likewise laments the current, diminished state of poetry: “O miserable Poesía! Quánto as perdido de to primitiuo decoro, siendo tú la que fuiste

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13 Although the effort to suppress Vicuña’s edition was successful, the stated reasons did not respond to Pineda’s claims; instead, the Inquisition relied on more technical objections. The book was banned because it did not identify Góngora as the author, and because Vicuña—in a bold move, and, in Pineda’s opinion, in an attempt to avoid scrutiny—dedicated the volume to the Inquisitor General himself (Alonso, Obras xxxi, xli). The Inquisition found that “la dedicatoria al Inquisidor General era ‘falsa’” (xli).

14 “¡Dichosa edad y siglos dichosos aquellos a quien los antiguos pusieron nombre de dorados, y no porque en ellos el oro, que en esta nuestra edad de hierro tanto se estima, se alcanzase en aquella venturosa sin fatiga alguna, sino porque entonces los que en ella vivían ignoraban esas dos palabras de tuvo y mio! . . . No había la fraude, el engaño ni la malicia mezclándose con la verdad y la llaneza” (Cervantes, DQ I 155-6).
For both Infantas and Ponce, Góngora’s authority is more than sufficient. Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza, in his Advertencias, is more explicit about this authority:

“Y siendo el Sr. don Luis emperador en nuestra lengua será digna de veneración cualquiera determinación suya” (34). By casting Góngora as an emperor, Almansa y Mendoza makes the poet the very source of honor and nobility.

Lope’s critiques of the Soledades, as in his personal insults to Góngora, often refer to matters of nobility. In his signed letter to Góngora and Antonio de las Infantas, he recounts a joke that offers a direct reply to Almansa y Mendoza’s assessment:

[N]o se me ha olvidado el chiste del que hallando loco a un hermano después de una larga ausencia, y que era su temer decir que el puerto de Lisboa y los navíos que en él entraban eran suyos, hizo tanta diligencia en curarle que sanó al enfermo, de que mostró mucho sentimiento, porque sano perdía el señorío de que su imaginación gustaba estando loco, y agradeció a su hermano la voluntad y no la obra; mas yo espero que Vm. lo agradecerá todo pues todo es tan bueno. (59)

The Soledades, Lope insinuates, have given Góngora a false sense of title. The empire they purport to signal is a mere illusion, and Góngora himself is mad if he takes it seriously. In his critique, Lope pretends he is only trying to show Góngora the truth, to provide a desengaño, and reveal that Geongora lacks an illustrious title after all. On the subject of Almansa y Mendoza himself, Lope is equally dismissive, and again presses a point about Góngora’s nobility. In the Carta echadiza, in which Lope assumes the voice of a “friend,” he argues that Almansa y Mendoza diminishes Góngora’s reputation: “me desatina a mí, por la opinión de muchos, que en esto lo están conmigo, que quiera Vm. manchar la claridad de su raro juicio con escribir a un hombre de tales prendas” (110).

The use of “manchar” provides a clear link to the language of blood purity. Going even
further, Lope compares this association to a bad match: “le sucede a Vm. como a las mujeres hermosas: que, al declinar la edad, se amanceban con oficiales, habiendo sido antes príncipes” (110). By associating himself—and the Soledades, as Almansa y Mendoza was the work’s distributor—with such a man, Lope hints that Góngora is losing standing in the world, likely permanently.

In a dedicatory to the works of Fray Luis de León from 1631, Quevedo does not write explicitly against the nobility of the Soledades, but his true target is impossible to mistake. Fray Luis’s clarity and style are, he writes,

de tal casta, que ni se autoriza con lo vulgar, ni se hace peregrina con lo impropio. Todo su estilo con majestad estudiada es decente a lo magnifico de la sentencia, que ni ambiciosa se descubre fuera del cuerpo de la oración, ni tenebrosa se esconde ... Esto mandaron con imperio los que escribieron ars de poesia, y escribieron desta suerte los que tienen el imperio de los poemas. (97)

“Casta,” as Covarrubias notes, “vale linage noble; y . . . castizo, el que es de buena línea y descendencia” (282). The nobility of this style does not permit vulgarity or impropriety, as a less noble or even ignoble style might. It is majestic in itself, comparing favorably to poetic styles that have more in common with ambitious social climbers—like Góngora, for instance. In yet another rejection of Almansa y Mendoza’s claim to Góngora’s poetic empire, Quevedo denies Góngora’s authority and instead places it in the hands of unnamed authorities and poets of Fray Luis’s standing.

In addition to citing the Soledades’s lack of nobility, and often as a piece of evidence to support that claim, critics faulted Góngora’s extraordinary linguistic experiments. Specifically, they objected to the mixture of languages. Lope, in the Carta . . . en razon, for example, uses a frequently repeated criticism of the Soledades: “muchos
se han persuadido que le ha alcanzado algún ramalazo de la desdicha de Babel” (40).\(^{15}\)

Elsewhere, in his reply to Góngora and Antonio de las Infantas, Lope pleads with Góngora to “sacar a luz la miscelánea cuatrilingüe que ofrece” (57). Similarly, Quevedo, in a poem written to Góngora, bitingly summarizes the *culto* style: “cuando garcicopleas Soledades, / francigriegas latinas necedades” (86). In attempting to use the style of Garcilaso, Quevedo quips, Góngora instead produces a jumble of stupidities across languages.

For both Quevedo and Lope, and Góngora’s other critics, the problem with mixing languages is not only that it is heretical, difficult to understand, or simply foolish. Rather, this mixture introduces foreign elements; the resulting poetry is no longer purely Spanish (or, even more precisely, Castilian). In the preface to Fray Luis de León’s works, Quevedo laments,

De buena gana lloro la satisfacción con que se llaman hoy algunos cultos, siendo temerarios y monstruosos; osando decir que hoy se sabe hablar la lengua castellana, cuando no se sabe dónde se habla, y en las conversaciones aun de los legos tal algarabía se usa, que parece junta de diferentes naciones, y dicen que la enriquecen los que la confunden. (107)

While those who speak in the *culto* style may identify it as Castilian, Quevedo argues, this “algarabía” is in fact “[l]a lengua de los Afrikanos” (Covarrubias 60). The word’s root indicates more specifically that this language is Arabic; Quevedo thus links *culto* language to Moorish influence, something to be scrupulously avoided under the ideology of limpieza de sangre.

\(^{15}\) The comparison of the *Soledades* with Babel appears repeatedly, which Collard also notes (77). In the eighth letter of the *Cartas filológicas*, Francisco Cascales complains about the use of the new “estilo tan fuera de todo estilo, y con una lengua tan llena de confusión, que parece todas las de Babel juntas” (193). Quevedo, in the *Aguja de navegar cultos*, provides a “receta para hacer *Soledades* en un día”:

que ya toda Castilla,
con sola esta cartilla
se abrasa de poetas babilones,
escribiendo sonetos confusiones. (74)
In another of his poems written against Góngora, Lope raises the stakes of this anxiety over mixing influences. Reasoning that Góngora is not elevating Spanish, as many of his apologists claim, Lope writes,

Ampliar la lengua es cosa urbana,  
Adulterarla es bárbaro defeto,  
porque su idioma y cándido dialeto  
con voces peregrinas se profana . . .  
Unas voces se inventan y otras caen,  
pues hasta las mujeres andan cultas  
hurtando a las naciones lo que traen. (115)

This poem rehearses Quevedo’s concern about introducing foreign elements, but here, they are not only foreign but barbarous. As in other writings, he also suggests their religious unorthodoxy (“se profana”). Citing women’s use of these *cultismos*, however, suggests their unique susceptibility to these foreign influences. In so doing, Lope implies both a low opinion of women’s intellect generally, but also an oblique reference to women’s unique role in maintaining the purity of national traditions and, indeed, the nation itself. He implies a similar notion in a letter replying to Góngora, claiming, “no es enriquecer la lengua dejar lo que ella tiene propio por lo extanjero, sino despreciar la propia mujer por la ramera hermosa” (124). Instead of remaining faithful to his legitimate wife—the Castilian language—Góngora has illegitimately consorted with less decorous languages. Góngora’s poetry, the resulting progeny, is also illegitimate, and thus impure.

The imputation of un-Christian aesthetics was not new; Garcilaso de la Vega’s contemporary critics critiqued his poetry along the same lines, arguing that it was heretical. On the one hand, this coincidence provides a clear—if somewhat ironic—line of continuity between Garcilaso and Góngora that would frustrate the latter’s detractors. On the other hand, it is also important to note the specific way in which Garcilaso was
accused of poetic heresy. Collard cites an anti-Garcilaso poem written by Cristóbal de Castillejo “aludiendo a la escisión luterana” (74). Indeed, Castillejo limits his accusation of heresy to an equation with Lutheranism; he does not hint at any of the charges lobbied against Góngora, such as converso or morisco heritage, or alumbradismo. Thus Collard’s conclusion, given the apparent consolidation of faiths in seventeenth-century Spain, that “es razonable suponer que secta, sectario, hereje, herético y otros términos afine, en las acusaciones de unos españoles contra otros, hubieran perdido la nota de alarma que la Reforma había provocado,” is only partially true (73). Charges of heresy, particularly in an aesthetic context, no longer evoked a specifically Reformation angle; instead, they changed to reflect more contemporary anxieties about mixed lineage—specifically, with limpieza de sangre.

Góngora’s apologists did not deny that he mixed languages; instead, they sought to cast this mixture in a positive light. In Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza’s Advertencias, he responds to the use of “vocablos nuevos” by complaining, “pésame que cosa tan moderna como diálogos de Justo Lipsio no hayan visto, y si visto olvidado, y Horacio reprehendiendo a Caton que habia dado esa misma culpa a Virgilio los defiende con sus versos Ovidio” (33). Not only is Góngora's elastic language old news, the criticism was known to be spurious to classical authorities. Pedro Díaz de Ribas, in the Discursos apologéticos, argues, “Los Latinos, aunque más modestos en fingir nuevas voces, con todo eso, habiendo alcanzado algún ocio después de las armas, ador[n]aron se lengua (antes pobre) de la copia griega” (131). The addition of Greek vocabulary naturally followed armed conquest. For the Abbot of Rute, Góngora was merely expanding Spanish; and, in any case, he notes that the languages Góngora does borrow from are
genealogically similar: “para realzar la elocución se an de introducir y usar en el Poema palabras diferentes de las vulgares, y derivándolas de otras lenguas vecinas a la nuestra materna y con terminaciones propias nuestras” (Fernández de Córdoba 430). In this way, Góngora’s linguistic lineage remains pure.

Díaz de Ribas also responds to the charge of impurity, arguing that the inclusion of Latinate words achieves precisely the opposite effect of that proposed by critics:

\[\text{Lean, lean los Poetas antiguos, griegos y latinos y los mejores toscanos, y advertirán que a nuestro Poeta se le deben dar muchas gracias, porque enriqueció nuestra lengua con los tesoros de la latina, madre suya, no sólo en las voces, sino en la gracia del decir, en la composición de las dicciones y en las demás virtudes, que era lo que a nuestra lengua le faltaba para su policía y artificio; porque la latina puede prestarle a la nuestra voces elegantes, sonoras, venustas y modos graciosos, valientes, etc., con que llegará a la cumbre de su perfección, desechando las voces bárbaras, poco sonantes o puras. (134)}\]

The closer Castilian comes to Latin, in other words, the purer it will be. This assessment would let Spanish simply erase the heteroglossia of Al-Andalus entirely, allowing Góngora to achieve what one of his detractors—Jáuregui, in the *Antídoto*—calls the “pureza de el gran Virgilio” (161). Martín de Ángulo y Pulgar goes one step further than Díaz de Ribas, suggesting that Spanish might now be even more pure than Latin: “don Luis merece mayor alabanza, pues igualando el nuestro al lenguaje Latino, si excedióle no, ha sacado de vulgar nuestra poesía, y de la mediocridad con que se ha satisfecho nuestros predecesores” (215). In all of these defenses, Góngora’s apologists link the poet’s use of language with the Roman empire. Because of Spain’s imperial conquests, it

\[\text{In his commentaries on the *Soledades*, García Salcedo Coronel makes much the same argument: “ninguno puede negar, que fué [Góngora] el primero de nuestros poetas, que huyendo las frasis vulgares, enriqueció nuestra lengua con voces que realzaron la poesía castellana (humildísima hasta su tiempo)” (225).}\]
can be seen a continuous with the classical era; it need not acknowledge any other heritage or influence.\textsuperscript{17}

Góngora’s critics responded to this proposed continuous lineage by arguing that there are significant differences between Latin and Spanish, and that the specificity of Spanish poetry must be preserved. In his reply to Góngora and Infantas, Lope argues that Spanish excels

por la excelencia de haber hallado cómo decir en una redondilla un concepto y a veces más sin necesidad de otra para acabar de explicarle; y por haber adelantado tanto la perfección de los versos endecasílabos después que se usan en España, que casi cada uno construyéndole sin dependencia de otro hace sentido, y explica enteramente un concepto que en poesías italianas antiguas, y apenas en modernas, los hallará Vm. . . . Esta excelencia siendo de las mayores de nuestra lengua la destruye Vm. con su nueva gramática. (60)

Both the forms specific to Spain, like the redondilla, and those it has adapted, like the hendecasyllable, have already achieved perfection in Spanish poetry; this perfection resides in their clarity and unity. The \textit{Soledades}, meanwhile, deform Spanish verse through their opacity. Francisco Cascales also chastises Góngora for not following the example of a pure Spanish poetics:

[L]a lengua latina tiene su dialecto, y propio lenguaje y la castellana el suyo, en que no convienen. Que el trastorno de palabras sea natural en la latina, si es menester traeré para ello seiscientas autoridades. . . . Siendo pues cierto, que la lengua latina y castellana corren por diferentes caminos, quererlas don Luis llevar por una misma madre, es violentar a la naturaleza, y engendrar monstruosidades. (204-5)

Although Cascales quite often relies on classical authorities, in the matter of phrasing, he finds the differences between Latin and Spanish necessary. By likening their mixture to

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{17} For his part, Góngora simply denies the use of multiple languages while maintaining that, if he had wanted to write in multiple languages, he certainly could, and there wouldn’t be anything wrong with it. In response to Lope’ \textit{Carta . . . en razón}, he writes, “no van en más que una lengua las \textit{Soledades}, aunque pudiera, quedando el brazo sano, hacer una miscelánea de griego, latín y toscano con mi lengua natural, y creo no fuera condenable” (44).
\end{quote}
monstrous offspring, Cascales again affirms the importance of keeping the lineage of Spanish poetry pure.

This mixture of languages was often cited in relation to Góngora’s mixture of styles or registers, one of the most frequent complaints about the poetry of the Soledades. Similarly, this critique rested on the authority of classical authors, and occasionally on Garcilaso’s example. In a succinct, biting critique from his letter to both Góngora and Antonio de las Infantas, Lope summarizes the failure of Góngora compared to the greatest poets: “Homero y Virgilio fueron poetas heroicos; Horacio y Píndaro, líricos; Juvenal y Marcial, satíricos; Terencio y Plauto, cómicos; Vm. y Merlín Cocayo, ridículos” (63). While most of the poets he lists have one consistent, recognizable mode and register, Góngora is grouped with Merlino Coccajo, the pen name of the macaronic poet Teofilo Folengo. Thus not only does Góngora’s poetry fail to conform to one language, it cannot be considered purely satirical, purely comic, or purely anything else; it defies classification.18 Fernández de Córdoba, rather than finding a blend of styles, finds one glaring disparity: between the style of the poem and its content. While the heroic style is used successfully by Tasso, for example, he uses it for a “[p]oema grave, trágico, heróico, o otro semejante,” rather than a bucolic one, as Góngora does (21). Jáuregui, in a more satirical style, also faults the disparity between Góngora’s style and the content of the poem: “Parece a veces que va Vm. a decir cosas de gran peso, y sale con una bagatela o malpare un ratón” (158). Curiously, the literary-technical term for the practice of mixing genres is contaminatio; Góngora’s poetic mode is linked to Latin

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18 Later, in the Examen del Antídoto, Fernández de Córdoba changes course; he acknowledges the presence of seemingly disparate elements in the Soledades—dramatic, epic, bucolic, etc.—but does not see a need for resolution: “porque introduce a todos los referidos es necesario confesar que es Poëma, que los admite y abraza a todos” (424).
literature by the very language of poison and contamination his detractors use against him.¹⁹

The language of poison and contamination in relation to poetry also resonates with contemporary debates about the virtue or vice of fiction in general. Barry Ife identifies Juan Luis Vives’s 1524 *De Institutione Christianae Feminae* as a major source for this language. Vives found fiction particularly problematic for women readers: “women sip the poison unwittingly, leaving Vives uncertain whether he should even mention the subject, ‘lest it hurts others with the smell and defile them with the infection’” (Ife 13). Other contemporary critics, including Fray Juan de la Cerda, Luisa María de Padilla Manrique, Alejo Venegas, and others also made use of the trope, describing books as “sweet venom driving young girls to evil thoughts, moral suicide gradually and almost imperceptibly administered, a diversion mingled with deadly poison, pleasant tales with poisonous plots, and a savoury and secret bane with which the devil ensnares the tender souls of young girls” (34). In terms of contemporary literary criticism, then, this language would have been readily available.

Of course, given that Góngora’s detractors are all poets themselves, they are not, like Vives, against poetry. Their use of this trope rather taps into existing moral panic and develops the critique of Gongorism alongside other language that ties the *Soledades* to the social decay wrought by limpieza de sangre. When Lope, in the *Carta . . . en razón*, implores Góngora to collect the circulating copies of the *Soledades*, he implies that otherwise, the madness might spread: “por corregir el vicio que se introduciría entre

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¹⁹ Thomas Greene summarizes this technique, coined in the Renaissance, as bringing together authors and conventions from a variety of traditions: “History becomes a vast container whose contents can be disarranged endlessly . . . The art of poetry finds its materials everywhere, materials bearing with them the aura of their original contexts, charged with an evocative power implanted by the poet or the convention from which they are taken” (T. Greene 39).
muchos, que procurarán imitar el lenguaje destos versos” (41). If the problems posed by
blood purity statutes create a generalized social pathology, those introduced by the
Soledades amount to a pathology that affects poetry in particular. This becomes clearer
when we read the critiques of the influences of the Soledades, which are often cast in
terms of lineage. This was a matter of concern for contemporary poets even outside the
Soledades polemic. In an influential, contemporary work on poetics by Góngora’s fellow
Córdoban, Luis Carrillo y Sotomayor, the difference between a poet of legitimate lineage
and one of illegitimate lineage is the felicity with which the poet imitates the Latin greats:

“Forzosa consecuencia será, pues, que la Poesía usada de algunos
modernos de este tiempo, siendo imitadora de los antiguos, será la buena,
e imitándoles se han de tratar con su agudeza elocuciones e imitaciones y
no ignorar de todas las ciencias los puntos que se les ofrecieron; luego la
Poesía fundada en contrario de esto no será Poesía, pues en esto—como se
ha probado—se diferencia el Poeta del Versificador” (61).

For the apologist Ángulo y Pulgar, the pathology spreads only by false heirs who produce
monstrous births: “las faltas no están en sus obras, sino en las de los que le imitan sin
dicha, e introducen en la prosa las licencias y voces del metro: estos son los inventores de
la monstruosa jerigonza en metro, de la disparatada prosa” (220). The question of which
poets influenced Góngora’s style, and which poets would be influenced by it, constituted
a significant portion of the polemic.

Góngora’s detractors sought to malign the Soledades by denying its legitimate
poetic lineage. In particular, they aimed to show the differences between classical
authorities, particularly Horace, Cicero, and Virgil, and the new poetry. In a poem
directed against Góngora, Quevedo clearly lays out the dispute:

20 Criticism of the Soledades polemic, too, has occasionally employed this language; for example,
Roses Lozano: “La aceptación o rechazo de sus innovaciones nos revela hasta qué punto la práctica poética
gongorina era hija o monstruo de su tiempo” (10).
este descomulgado,
con su propio bonete encorozado,
dotor en mierda, graduado en pujos,
que, para deshonrar otros linajes,
luego les achacaba sus agüelos (89).

In order to avoid the stain and filth of his own aesthetic creation, Quevedo implies, Góngora and his followers attribute the fault to their poetic forebears. But the other participants in the polemic were adamant that Góngora’s *Soledades* had nothing to do with classical authorities. Cascales summarizes what he views as the major problem with Góngora’s poetry—its difficulty, to which we will return in a moment—succinctly:

“Virgilio, Horacio, Catulo, Propercio, Tibulo, Ovidio, Ausonio, Nemesiano, Frascatorio, Pontano, y otros mil, que entre los latinos reverenciamos, juntamente con nuestros españoles, Lucano, Marcial, Séneca y Claudiano claro escribieron” (193). Cascales claims Góngora’s style has no precedent, and, given how difficult it is to understand, he implies it will likely have no influence of its own, either: “Ocioso, vano, y sin fruto es el lenguaje, que el oyente no entiende” (192).

Lope, in reply to Góngora and Infantas, echoes the same opinion; Góngora and his defenders consistently claim the new style imitates the greatest Latin poets, but “de ninguno dellos se ha dicho jamás que es intricado y confuso, y se las Soledades lo dicen casi todos en general” (61). Elsewhere, he implies that the greatest poets all share a lineage (to which Góngora, of course, does not belong): “aquí no es ocasión de revolver Tassos, Danielos, Vidas y Horacios, fundados todos en aquellos aforismos de Aristóteles” (118).

In other instances, Góngora’s critics propose alternate lineages. Although, elsewhere in the polemic, Góngora’s Cordoban heritage endures insult and scrutiny, for
Quevedo, the new style is not worthy of the great city.\textsuperscript{21} Instead, he suggests other origins for the new poetry’s impurities:

\begin{verbatim}
poeta de lo comido,
  musa de desatacados,
  ingenio de melecina,
  que siempre apunta a lo bajo,
  no es posible que seas hijo
  de ciudad a cuyos partos
  debe Roma y todo el mundo
  los Sénecas y Lucanos.
  Córdoba no te parió,
  si no es que se hizo preñado
  algún arrabal de tí,
  y que naciste en el campo. (94)
\end{verbatim}

Góngora’s works are not worthy of those of Seneca and Lucan, and so he cannot be of their descent; instead, Quevedo casts him as an outsider, an illegitimate pretender to their heritage. The source of Góngora’s inspiration, rather than these worthy models, is something much more base: that which has already been consumed, or perhaps—quite the opposite of the divine inspiration of the muses—an enema.

Góngora’s apologists, meanwhile, pursued a twofold strategy to combat claims of illegitimate poetic lineage: first, they sought to find precedent for Góngora’s style in classical authors; second, they asserted the novelty of his poetry, claiming it was an entirely new invention whose originality only added to its nobility. While the first strategy provides a direct rebuttal to Góngora’s critics, the second seeks to change the terms of the debate, moving away from a discussion determined by the language of blood, influence, and lineage, and toward one that considers aesthetics as outside these mundane concerns.

\textsuperscript{21} In a likely insult to Góngora’s absence from court, in the \textit{Carta echadiza}, Lope writes, “[A]ñade Vm. que Dios le libre de ser alumbrado, aludiendo a varios clerigos que con este nombre fueron viciosos, no sé si en Córdoba” (112).
A clear example of the first strategy is found in Pellicer’s *Lecturas solemnes*, in which Góngora appears as the rightful heir of Spain’s literary tradition:

¿Quién dió a Roma a Marcial, Séneca, Lucano, Silio Italico, Idacio Claro, S. Damaso y Prudencio, poetas insignes? ... [A]si [escribe el obispo de Orleans] contra Claudio opisbo de Tours: Dissertissimos viros, et eloquentissimos atque catholicae et apostolicae fidei invictissimos defensores, Hispaniam protulisse, manifestu est. Pues si esto se decía de España casi DCCC años ha, por qué ha de hacer novedad que prosiga agora en criar ingenios. (239)

Pellicer’s reading provides an illustrious, and pointedly local, lineage for Góngora’s genius. By focusing on Latin poets and authors who lived on the Iberian Peninsula, Pellicer traces a continuous, uninterrupted line, one that does not admit the novelty of the new poetry. Instead, he presents Góngora as another such genius, not someone whose writing upsets or diverges from precedent. Pellicer also, as Díaz de Ribas argues about Góngora’s use of Latinate words and syntax, allows Spanish letters to skip over the Peninsula’s multicultural medieval period, whose poets would not figure into Góngora’s lineage. This negates the charges of “algarabía” or other “foreign” influences Góngora’s detractors cite. Pellicer is also careful to attribute this assessment to two foreigners, bishops of France, thus mitigating more contemporary anxieties on outside perceptions of Spain that the ideology of blood purity made possible.  

In his defense of the *Fábula de Píramo y Tisbe*, Cristóbal de Salazar Mardones defends the new poetry, in part, by referring to examples from the *Soledades*. He affirms Góngora’s classical lineage by defending some of the most seemingly offensive tendencies of the poem. Above, I noted the common criticism that Góngora mixed styles; his critics also tended to object to any low or vulgar language, no matter what it was.

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22 As, for example, Salucio mentions: “advierten que los estatutos sirven de que los estrangeros comunemente nos llaman marranos. Y que no podemos escapar de ser tenidos o por infames, o por locos” (7r).
mixed with. Jáuregui, for example, particularly objects to the lines “Del Océano pues antes sorbido, / y luego vomitado” (Góngora, Soledades 22-3) on the grounds that they are “[d]e bien plebeyo estilo” (163). Salazar Mardones, however, meticulously cites the classical lineage of the passage. If “sorbido” was objectionable, Salazar Mardones cites examples from Book 1 of the Aeneid (“Atque; imo barathri ter gurgite Vastos / Sorbet in abruptum fluctus”), Book IV of Lucan’s De Bello Civili (“Iam tumuli, collesque; latent, iam flumina cuntca / Condidit una palus, vastaque; voragine mersit / Absorpsit penitus rupes”), and Gregorio Hernández’s translation of the Aeneid (249). If, however, Jáuregui objected to “vomitado,” Salazar Mardones finds ample precedent there, too: Virgil (“que dijo de Caco, que vomitaba llamas”), Lucan, again in Book IV of De Bello Civili (“Restituit raptus tectum mare, cumque; cavernae / Evomuere fretum”), and two examples from the Italian poet Annibale Caro, both in his translation of Virgil and in his own poetry (249). Salazar Mardones performs the same exercise with the lines

Bien que impulso noble
De gloria, aunque villano, solicita
A un vaquero de aquellos montes, grueso,
Membrudo, fuerte, roble (1002-5).

His scrupulous efforts to remove the appearance of vulgarity, or at least to more appropriately contextualize it, on Góngora’s part demonstrate the poet’s continuity with the very authors his detractors use against him.

In the Epístolas satisfactorias, Martín de Ángulo y Pulgar provides a middle ground between the two strategies. He writes, “Pues por qué han de ser licencias (puesto que lo sean) reprehensibles en don Luis, cuando en lo teórico las favorecen Aristóteles, Horacio, Cicerón y Quintiliano (como vimos) y en lo práctico las hallamos usadas primero en otros tan celebrados poetas, así latinos como castellanos, y aún con más continuación
y atrevimiento?” (219) Not only, he reasons, do Góngora’s poetics have ample precedent in classical authors, but the author of the Soledades takes those practices to daring new heights. For Ángulo y Pulgar, Góngora is thus a deserving heir of Latin poetry; he continues its prestige and adds to that of Castilian literature.

Pedro Díaz de Ribas, in the Discursos apologéticos, and García Salcedo Coronel, in his commentaries on Góngora’s works, highlight Góngora’s novelty. In so doing, they also draw on contemporary understandings of genius, which the renowned sixteenth-century physician Juan Huarte de San Juan perceived as based in novelty: “Huarte funda su valoración de los ingenios sobre el grado inventivo individual; para él, lo importante es superar a los antiguos e innovar cada quien según su propio talento” (Collard 61). For Díaz de Ribas, Góngora’s excellence and originality cannot be appreciated by his contemporaries because they are unaccustomed to such greatness: “El estilo del señor Don Luis de Góngora . . . ha parecido nuevo en nuestra edad, no usada a la magnificencia y heroicidad que pide la poesía” (127). How could they be expected to appreciate the Soledades, Díaz de Ribas reasons, when it has no precedent? Salcedo Coronel acknowledges Góngora’s predecessors, but only insofar as they frame his new achievements in Castilian:

Vea pues el más riguroso censor de las obras de nuestro poeta con cuánta atención siguió la autoridad de los antiguos escritores en ilustración de nuestro idioma, valiéndose de las licencias que le han enriquecido, y de metáforas que maravillosamente le adornan, sin que en esta parte conozca ventajas en ninguno de los antiguos, pues nadie usó más propiamente dellas ni las continuó con mayor decoro. (231)

Although, in part, Góngora follows classical examples, Salcedo Coronel emphasizes that these poetic ornaments have never been used so decorously, and certainly not in this language.
Both Góngora’s detractors and his supporters, then, employed the language of lineage to further their arguments, showing either its legitimacy or illegitimacy with respect to poetry’s Latin heritage. This figurative genealogy moves the debate from the purity (or lack thereof) of Góngora himself and into the realm of poetics, without ever losing sight of the ever-present anxiety over blood purity. It is this anxiety that moves Fernández de Córdoba, in the Examen del Antídoto, to assert that the poem “será sin duda perfecto Poema legítimo, noble, illustre de todos cuatro costados” (417), explicitly drawing on the language of limpieza de sangre.

3. The Possibilities of Poetry

Given the suspect nature of the poet himself, the jumble of languages he employs, the difficulty of his phrasing, and his questionable aesthetic lineage, Góngora’s critics also considered the possibility that the Soledades were pure artifice, with no substance or truth to them. If truth could not be achieved in the Soledades—if the continual addition of more texts, more ornaments, more commentaries, more inquiries, and more proofs did not move its readers any closer to the truth—then the same might be possible of other textual fictions, particularly that of limpieza de sangre.

A frequent criticism of the Soledades, as Roses Lozano has shown, is the work’s difficulty; it was simply hard to understand (86). One of the earliest documents in the polemic, Pedro de Valencia’s Parecer, complains, “que apenas yo le alcanzo a entender en muchas partes” (5). In the Antídoto, meanwhile, Jáuregui faults the Soledades for allowing too many meanings: “Casi no tiene Vm. frasis que no se pueda entender de catorce o quince maneras” (180). In one instance in particular, with regards to the line “Cuya memoria es buitre de pesares” (Góngora, Soledades 502), Jáuregui shows how a
reader could easily arrive at precisely the opposite of the intended meaning (173).\textsuperscript{23} Jáuregui denies that the problem lies with the reader; instead, it is the fault of “la pestilencia detestable de los negros versos” (183). In his more well-known formulation, Cascales argues that Góngora is not “el príncipe de la luz, se ha hecho príncipe de las tinieblas” (208).\textsuperscript{24}

This difficulty was often likened to an aesthetic elitism, or an “arte para minorías” (Roses Lozano 86-7). In this regard, Góngora’s style in the Soledades stands in stark contrast to the style Lope defines in his 1609 discourse on how to write plays, the Arte nuevo de hacer comedias.\textsuperscript{25} Citing the authority of Terrence and Plautus, he describes his intentions as an author:

\begin{quote}
y 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. (45-9)
\end{quote}

The poet’s job, Lope argues, is to give the people what they want. This means using plain language, specifically avoiding “el lenguaje / [que] ofenda con vocablos exquisitos” (264-5). A good comedia, it follows, is one whose meaning is readily legible to the entire audience, including its least sophisticated members. It requires no interpretation, and its truth is readily apparent to all who see it.

Góngora’s supporters did not deny the difficulty of the Soledades; instead, they celebrated it. Díaz de Ribas argues that Góngora is “huyendo del estilo plebeyo” (142).

\textsuperscript{23} “Mas ¡ay!, que queriendo decir que le causaba grandes pesares, da a entender lo contrario, si bien se advierte, porque parece que aquella memoria, como buitre, se engullía y tragaba todos sus pesares; o, a lo menos, no se escapa de maldita anfibología” (173).
\textsuperscript{24} Rhodes argues that, by the mid-seventeenth century, difficulty in literature was often seen by censors as linked to fiction’s moral imperative (10). This argument does not seem to hold much weight for either Góngora’s supporters or detractors.
\textsuperscript{25} Although Lope describes writing plays, rather than poetry, he views them as extremely similar: “Ya tiene la comedia verdadera / su fin como todo género / de poema o poesis” (49-51).
Furthermore, in opposition to Jáuregui’s claim and Lope’s poetics, he writes, “el Poeta no tiene obligación de regular la alteza de su ingenio con el juicio del vulgo” (145). Góngora himself agreed, citing Ovid as an authority on matters of aesthetic obscurity: “si la obscuridad y estilo entrincado de Ovidio . . . da causa a que, vacilando el entendimiento en fuerza de discurso, trabajándole, . . . alcance lo que así en la lectura superficial de sus versos no pudo entender; luego hase de confesar que tiene utilidad avivar el ingenio, y eso nació de la obscuridad del poeta” (43). The difficulty of the Soledades thus revives this literary context, allowing his readers to come closer to the true meaning of the text. For Góngora, there is indeed an ultimate meaning in poetry; one simply has to find it, “descubriendo lo que está debajo de esos tropos” (44). For these readers of the Soledades, textual truth is possible, but it might only be available to the most elite audience.27

But critics who charge Góngora with too much opacity do not only worry that few readers will be able to understand the Soledades; instead, they warn that there may be no stable meaning behind them at all. In his Parecer on the Soledades, the Abbot of Rute compares Góngora’s style to an overly adorned woman. Who doubts, he writes, “que para aumentar la hermosura de las damas se inventasen, para la cabeza apretadores, rosas de diamantes, rubíes, esmeraldas, plumas de la misma materia; para las orejas zarcillos, arracados de oro y pedrería: para el cuello y pecho cadenas, cabestrillos, randas, sartas de

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26 Brownlee notes that this opposition was a commonplace in early seventeenth-century Spain: “the readers of ephemera and other “vulgar” materials were consistently juxtaposed in countless literary prologues and texts of the time to the discerning, educated culto reader” (88).

27 One critic—not Góngora’s contemporary—notably denied the obscurity of the Soledades. Dámaso Alonso finds the work a model of exemplary clarity: “No oscuridad: claridad radiante, claridad deslumbrante. Claridad de una lengua de apurada perfección y exacto engarce gramatical, donde las imágenes aceradas han apesado y fijado las más rápidas, las más expresivas intuiciones de nuestra realidad eterna. ¡Difícil claridad que nos satisface, que nos sosiega con un placer cuasimatemático, la de la poesía de Góngora, de esta poesía que es la más exactamente clara de toda la literatura española!” (316).
perlas y brincos”? (17). But if a woman were to cover herself completely in these ornaments, “la / cabeza de apretadores, rosas, plumas; las orejas de arracadas; el cuello y los pechos de cadenas, cabestrillos, randas, sartas y brincos,” the result would not be beautiful, “pues serviría de ofuscar, y encubrir su hermosura, antes de acrecentarla tal concurso, y muchedumbre de joyas con que en ella luciría, ni lucirían ellas, por preciosa que fuese cada una” (17-8). “Así sucede en la Poesía,” the Abbot writes, arguing that while individual ornaments can be exquisite, when piled one on top of the other, they lose their significance.

This description calls to mind that of Zoraida in the Captive’s Tale of Don Quijote. When Zoraida, determined to flee her father’s influence and convert to Christianity, she brings as many valuable items as she can, all of which she wears:

[M]ás perlas pendían de su hermosísimo cuello, orejas y cabellos, que cabellos tenía en la cabeza. En las gargantas de los sus pies, que descubiertas, a su usanza, traía, traía dos carcajes (que así se llamaban las manillas o ajorcas de los pies en morisco) de purísimo oro, con tantos diamantes engastados, que ella me dijo después que su padre los estimaba en diez mil doblas, y las que traía en las muñecas de las manos valían otro tanto. Las perlas eran en gran cantidad y muy buenas. . . . Digo, en fin, que entonces llegó en todo estremo aderezada y en todo estremo hermosa, o, a lo menos, a mí me pareció serlo la más que hasta entonces había visto; y con esto, viendo las obligaciones en que me había puesto, me parecía que tenía delante de mí una deidad del cielo (Cervantes, Don Quijote I 497).

Throughout the Captive’s Tale, Zoraida serves as a site of contested ownership—the quintessential Lévi-Straussian object of exchange between men. Nowhere is this made more explicit, however, than in the above description; she ceases to be a woman at all, appearing instead as a pure embodiment of wealth to be pillaged from Spain’s enemies.28

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28 Collard also links Góngora’s aesthetic excess; he supposes that, for Lope, “[l]a incrustación de cultismos en un fondo narrativo le haría pensar en la artesanía morisca, para él quizá excesivamente ornamental” (90).
She is a sign with no meaning in herself, only insofar as she points to an already established, understood referent.

For critics of the *Soledades*, however, there was no such referent, no matter what interpretations the work’s supporters offered. The poem was a collection of obscurities whose meaning—or meanings—if they even existed, would likely remain unknown. Of this possibility, the Abbot of Rute writes, “Si todo es en grado superlativo; ¿qué harán del positivo y comparativo los pobres gramáticos?” (24). In spite of the Abbot’s formulation, this is not a mere technical or grammatical point. As Johnson argues, “in transforming so often quotidian things into aesthetic objects, Góngora leaves himself and his readers no room to appreciate differences or to represent true, epic grandeur” (188). If everything is superlative—if everything is pure perfection, including a simple glass of milk offered by some goatherds or the complexion of a rustic bride—can anything truly be excellent? If everything and everyone is noble, is anything or anyone?

Remarkably, even one of Góngora’s apologists, the anonymous author of the 1624 *Opúsculo*, accepts the claim that the meaning of the *Soledades* is unstable and perhaps even unknowable: “a sus obras del señor Dn. Luis . . . le atribuyen ombres doctos de la facultad, más sentidos y misterios de lo que ellas en sí encierran, y todos muy buenos, porque verdaderamente son capaces de ellos, aunque a su autor no le pasó tal, ni aun por el pensamiento” (398). This Barthesian avant-la-lettre approach introduces serious anxieties about the possibility of truth in poetry, or perhaps in fiction more broadly. If the text allows unauthorized meanings, or if it authorizes multiple meanings, how can a reader ever arrive at the truth?
Through this analysis of the *Soledades* polemic, I suggest that the discourse of blood purity and contemporary poetic practice are intimately related. The critiques of the poem, and of Góngora personally, draw implicitly and explicitly on contemporary understandings of purity, and the polemic must be situated in this context to make sense of its aesthetic, moral, and epistemological dimensions, as well. The intersection of blood purity and poetics also raises significant questions about the social upheaval prompted by limpieza de sangre and the truth of its narratives. In the next chapter, I show how the possibility of the truth of blood fictions in Cervantes’s *La fuerza de la sangre* addresses those questions.
CHAPTER II

It’s A Miracle!—Or Is It?

The Fictions of Blood in *La fuerza de la sangre*

Even though it never had a chance to provide an on-stage critique, Cervantes’s *El retablo de maravillas*—published in the somewhat drearily titled 1615 collection *Ocho comedias y ocho entremeses nunca representados*—nevertheless provides a succinct, incisive, and timely assessment of the problem of limpieza de sangre. The *entremés* stages a clever fraud by two flattering swindlers, Chirinos and Chanfalla, that exploits the most vulnerable characteristic of the citizens of a contemporary rural village: their honor. Drawing on the same source material as the seventh *exempla* of Juan Manuel’s *El Conde Lucanor* and Hans Christian Andersen’s *The Emperor’s New Clothes*, the interlude centers on a trick that compels its audience to participate in a collaborative charade. The tricksters convince the villagers that they possess a magical stage, enchanted by “el sabio Tontonelo” (Cervantes, *Entremeses* 220), capable of producing wondrous, incredible visions—but only for a select group of people.

As Chanfalla explains, anyone with impure blood would miss the show: “ninguno puede ver las cosas que en él se muestran, que tenga alguna raza de confeso, o no sea habido y procreado de sus padres de legitimo matrimonio” (220). Both “raza” and “confeso” were terms strongly associated with impure lineage. Covarrubias, for example, considered “confeso” as synonymous with a lack of limpieza: “[e]l que desciende de padres judíos ... confeso es lo mismo que judío” (344). “Raza,” as we will see in more
detail below, could readily be interpreted as a pejorative, “como tener alguna raza de moro o judío” (851). Illegitimate birth was often associated with impure blood both because it was “‘infamous' by law” and because it called the entire genealogical record into question (Martínez 66). Of course, Chanfalla and Chirinos are counting on the curious effect of limpieza ideology to turn existing social structures upside down by attributing the most honor to the lowest born, who, unlike the nobility, have no genealogical records to scrutinize. As one contemporary critic sums up: "quanto vno fuere mas principal, lo [impurity] podrá menos esconder" (Salucio 30r), while the less illustrious could easily hide or simply be ignorant of their lineage.

From the moment of their arrival, Chanfalla and Chirinos take care to invoke the honor of these “venal, ignorant, as well as illegitimate bumpkins” (Gerli 105) in the most highfalutin manner possible. When the governor appears, Chanfalla grovels, “A tener yo dos onzas de entendimiento, hubiera echado de ver que esa peripatética y anchurosa presencia no podía ser de otro que del dignísimo Gobernador deste honrado pueblo” (218). Chirinos, in turn, seems set on packing as much honor as possible into a single greeting when he ingratiatingly implies that the governor cannot help but be honorable, as though maintaining one’s honor was the easiest, breeziest task in the world: “Honrados días viva vuestra merced, que así nos honra. En fin, la encina da bellotas; el pero, peras; la parra, uvas, y el honrado, honra, sin poder hacer otra cosa” (219). In the reading of Michael Gerli, who considers the Retablo “one of the most compelling works of Cervantes’ theatrical repertoire” (95), “[t]he savage parody of honorific epithets and the sycophant language contained in the swindlers’ greetings could not be clearer” (101). Given this intense parody, it seems likely that the villagers’ honor will not emerge intact.
As the “show” begins, though, they gamely play along, loudly confirming to one another that they see Samson bringing the temple columns down on his head, a charging bull, lions, dragons, and even Herodias, with whom one of the villagers claims to dance. Amid the supposedly raucous exhibition, though, the governor begins to experience some creeping doubts. In asides, he expresses what the others must no doubt be thinking: “todos ven lo que yo no veo; pero al fin habré de decir que lo veo, por la negra honrilla” (229). As the charade carries on, and no one else seems the least bit concerned, the governor truly begins to doubt his origins, wondering, “¿Mas si viniera yo a ser bastardo entre tantos legítimos?” (230). The farce is abruptly brought to an end when a military officer—who has not heard the explanation of the retablo’s powers—appears, questions what these seemingly insane people are doing watching an empty stage, and the entire scene devolves into chaos and violence. Each individual audience member knows, privately, that their own personal purity of blood is suspect, yet they nevertheless participate in, sustain, and even embellish the public illusion, adding in new details or characters that the rest of the audience then has to “see,” as well. In spite of their misgivings, their fear of discovery prompts them to be complicit in propping up an implausible, damaging, collective lie—until the moment that the officer’s intrusion reveals their supposed honor to be a tenuous, illusory fiction.

While the subject of blood purity has recently been studied in Cervantes with respect to Don Quijote (R. Greene) and La Numancia (Burk, “La patria”), I will focus on one of the least-studied works in Cervantes’s narrative oeuvre: La fuerza de la sangre, which, like the Retablo, explores the public acceptance of the absurd fiction of limpieza de sangre, while also reflecting on the limitations and possibilities of genre. Here I draw
on María Elena Martínez’s characterization of the Spanish concept of blood purity and impurity as “fictions, ideological constructs based on religious and genealogical understandings of difference” (61). In spite of their fictional nature, these “were no less effective at shaping social practices, categories of identity, and self-perceptions” (61). Wardropper insightfully argues that “the esthetically most important” interpretation of the Retablo is “the exploration of the limits to which the creation of credible artistic fiction may be pressed” (“Butt” 25). In Fuerza, however, the investigation of the fiction of blood purity is even more nuanced and thorough. The novela draws on multiple registers and genres to skewer the ideology behind limpieza, arguing that the purity of blood can never be known, and hence that any system based on this premise is pure fiction. Rather than drawing on the transparency of the Retablo’s biting satire, Fuerza draws ironically on the conventions of the miracle narrative and the romance. While Cervantes punctures the posturing of the laughable but still recognizable fools of El retablo, as well as for its assumed theatrical audience, the same final, revealing gesture does not occur for the inscrutable, impenetrable characters La fuerza de la sangre. Instead, the novela approaches the problem of pure blood obliquely, taking advantage of genre conventions and the coded language of limpieza, while at the same time pointing to their fissures and inconsistencies. In other words, Cervantes asks us to dismantle the fiction of limpieza de sangre by dismantling the fiction he presents to us.30

30 El Saffar has also discussed Fuerza, and the Novelas ejemplares more generally, in terms of fiction, which she sees as “not only the mirror of reality, but the means by which the author and the character and the reader discover and recreate themselves” (Novel 167). As I argue below, fiction should instead be interpreted in terms of textuality and credibility. Thus in the end, and also because of El Saffar’s problematic chronology, I disagree with her assertion that Fuerza and the other so-called “idealistic novelas point the way not toward the modern novel, but toward the romance” (Novel 168).
If we approach the novela this way, its unlikely events can be authorized through a single glimpse of spilled blood and its miraculous credibility. This central “miracle”—at once believable and inconceivable—allows the reader of Fuerza the possibility of accepting the truth of the narrative while consistently undermining its reliability. Blood must be the central sign in the novela because it allows this ambiguity: the ideology of limpieza de sangre insists that blood can be made legible and knowable, but as a mere bodily substance, it remains opaque, an empty signifier. This interpretive disconnect, the novela argues, is the specific province of fictions, both those that take place on the page and those that operate in readers’ everyday lives, including those that underpin even the most entrenched institutions.

This novel approach to Fuerza demonstrates that many of the dismissive or contentious entries in its critical history are misguided; they either fail to allow or account for its irony or simply acknowledge its ambiguity with no further nuance. It also allows us to resituate Fuerza with respect to the rest of the Novelas ejemplares, challenging traditional divisions attributed to the work.

Fuerza recounts the rape of Leocadia, a noble but poor young woman, by Rodolfo, a wealthy nobleman. After seeing Leocadia walking with her parents one night, Rodolfo conspires with his friends to abduct her, whereupon Leocadia loses consciousness; Rodolfo rapes her in this state after carrying her to his parents’ house. When Leocadia awakens and realizes what has happened—and after Rodolfo attempts to rape her a second time—she begs him to promise he will maintain “perpetuo silencio” (II, 80), never once mentioning these events to anyone else. Rodolfo, to prevent his own identity from being discovered, leads Leocadia out of the house blindfolded and leaves
her in the town plaza. He blithely continues with his plans to travel to Italy, “con tan poca memoria de lo que con Leocadia le había sucedido, como si nunca hubiera pasado” (85). Leocadia, meanwhile, fears for her own honor and the reputation of her entire family, a fear confirmed by her father’s recommendation that she likewise keep silent.

Unfortunately, it soon becomes apparent that Leocadia is pregnant; after giving birth to the child, Luisico, in secret, the latter is sent to live with relatives for a number of years before rejoining his mother in the guise of a younger cousin. One day, as Luisico is playing outside, an out-of-control horse tramples him, “derramando mucha sangre de la cabeza” (86). A nearby nobleman—Rodolfo’s father, unaware of his son’s rape of Leocadia and hence of the fact that he is Luisico’s grandfather—is immediately so affected by the boy’s plight that he takes him to his own house to recover. When Leocadia learns where Luisico is, she rushes to his side, and quickly realizes that the room where he is recovering is the very same room in which he was conceived. She reveals the truth to Rodolfo’s mother, who orchestrates an elaborate plot to bring Rodolfo home and trick him into marrying Leocadia. Rodolfo does not recognize his bride-to-be but is still, as he was before, taken with her beauty, and he agrees to the match. A hasty wedding follows, and Rodolfo learns the truth of Leocadia’s identity, as well as of the existence of his child, Luisico. After, “quedó toda la casa sepultada en silencio,” and Rodolfo and Leocadia live, so we are told, happily ever after: “que muchos y felices años gozaron de sí mismos, de sus hijos y de sus nietos” (95).

Although previous readings of the novela have discussed the centrality of blood, they do not explore the simultaneous proliferation of meaning and specificity that Cervantes allows for. Piluso, for example, limits his analysis to a rather unhelpful
tautology: "La lección que se saca de La fuerza de la sangre es ésta: la sangre como fuerza" (490). Egginton astutely links the titular blood to limpieza, noting that it "seems to extol the force of blood in a society obsessed with the discriminating potential—in terms of class, religion, and overall privilege—of that force" (Theater 34). While I agree with his conclusion that the novela undermines the concept of honor to the point of denying its existence, I contend that blood signifies much more than mere honor, and that both Fuerza’s social and literary critiques are broader than these readings suggest.

Other readings acknowledge the persistent, multivalent character of blood in the novela but do not follow through on these observations. Howe, for example, rightly considers blood an "all-pervasive presence" (66), but her analysis focuses on improbable details—such as Leocadia’s blood pressure—and the many suggestions she sees behind Luisico’s blood do not cohere into a single argument. Gitlitz identifies at least five potential meanings of blood: “that of Christ” in terms of absolution; “lineage,” as in the continuity between Luisico and his grandparents; “the nobility of the two protagonists;” the violence of both Leocadia’s rape and Luisico’s injury; and, lastly, “the hot sexual instincts of Rodolfo” (118). In spite of his insight that all of these possibilities “are operative simultaneously” (118), he concludes that the novela is simply “another case of Cervantean moral ambiguity” (119) without considering the work’s specificity.

Some of the most influential readings of Fuerza, meanwhile, overemphasize its religious valences, reading it as ultimately redemptive and underestimating the irony the narrative authorizes. Calcraft, in spite of a nuanced, careful structural analysis, sees an echo, “impossible to mistake” (202), allegorizing Christ and the Virgin Mary in order “to show that in art, and perhaps also in life, inseparable links can exist between earthly and
heavenly responsibility for matters concerning man's moral and spiritual salvation" (203).

This interpretation, along with that of other critics who see Fuerza as idealist, fails to account for much of the novela, as we will see below. Casalduero is even more specific in his classification of Fuerza; not only is it an idealist text, it is, along with El licenciado vidriera, one of two redemptive novelas about original sin. The titular blood is thus that of Eve—“[e]sa sangre que es pecado” (150)—and Rodolfo and Leocadia’s marriage sacrament is what redeems them, and indeed, all of humanity: “Abuelos, padres, nietos, la humanidad toda, que de su primera caída ha sido rescatada por la sangre de Cristo, que purifica la unión del hombre y la mujer en el sacramento del matrimonio” (166). This reading, however, fails to describe how Leocadia—other than by mere virtue of being a woman—can adequately be allegorized into Eve; indeed, the novela takes great pains to insist that Leocadia is completely innocent and that Rodolfo is to blame. If the novela is indeed an allegory or retelling of the Fall, it cannot take Leocadia’s fault as a given. It would need to presented again, demonstrating how her susceptibility to temptation or deceptiveness led to her downfall; there is no suggestion, explicit or implicit, that this is the case. Secondly, Casalduero’s reading is problematic in positing marriage as the antidote to original sin. This has never been its purpose, and contemporary theologians confirm that this was not the case in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Spain. Jerónimo Martínez de Ripalda, whose catechism was in wide circulation in both its 1591 and 1619 editions, makes this clear. Of baptism, in the plain, accessible style of the question-and-answer format Ripalda employs, he writes,

P[regunta]. Que cosa es el Baptismo?
R[espuesta]. Un espiritual nacimiento, en que nos dan el ser de gracia, y la insignia de Christianos.
P. Que ayuda nos da el Baptismo para la vida de Christianos?
R. Las virtudes necessarias.
P. Que peccados quita?
R. El original, y qualquier otro si le halla. (122)

The effect of marriage, meanwhile, is described briefly as giving “gracia a los casados
para bien viuir en el [matrimonio]” (127). Casalduero’s interpretation thus does not track
with contemporary understandings of the sacraments. When coupled with his untenable
allegorizing, I find this reading unworkable.

The reading closest to my own is Forcione’s, which considers Fuerza to be
“probably [Cervantes’s] most religious exemplary novella” (395) even as it allows that it
is “directly concerned with the claims of the secular world” (386). Forcione interprets
blood in both registers, concluding that while this tension persists until the very end of
the novela, “the opposition from which they spring should be seen as one of
complementarity rather than as one of exclusivistic antagonism” (394). As I will show,
however, the concept of complementarity does not quite complete the picture; the tension
Forcione identifies does open up multiple avenues of interpretation, but it does so to
foreground what connects them and in order to advance a coherent, precise critique of the
linchpin of early modern Spanish social life, limpieza de sangre. By looking at the
novela’s tensions as undoing its very premises, I show the novela uses the fiction of
limpieza de sangre to reveal the entanglement of fiction with everyday life.

1. Limpieza Historically versus Fictionally

Although it would be impossible to give a complete history of the development of
the concept of limpieza de sangre in this space, a brief overview is necessary to
understand the resonances of blood in Fuerza. As historians of medieval Spanish such as

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31 Here, as with the other early modern texts cited, I have modernized the nasal vowels by adding
the n.
David Nirenberg have shown, the concepts behind limpieza began developing well before they were codified into institutional practices beginning in the mid-fifteenth century. As these practices gained more and more favor, particularly that of the crown, the ideals behind them became deeply engrained in nearly all aspects of social life. Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, anti-Semitism was on the rise, fueling concerns about the figure of the “secret Jew,” which “was starting to appear alongside a strident Old Christian identity rooted in the traditional military nobility and in the idea of Christian superiority over Jews and Muslims” (Martínez 29). Following forced conversions, this anti-Semitism transformed into anti-converso sentiment, particularly around the mid-fourteenth century (Hernández Franco 85). This can be seen in the 1449 Sentencia-Estatuto, discussed at greater length in the introduction, and in the writings of Fray Alonso de Espina and Fray Alonso de Oropesa, who both argued in favor of division and discrimination among the newly converted (85-6). At the same time, discrimination against Muslims and moriscos grew, including of course the “retaking” of Granada in 1492, as well as decrees to convert or leave the peninsula in 1502 (Castile) and 1526 (Aragon).

At the same time, the Inquisition was growing in importance and scope. Founded by a papal bull in 1479, its stated goal was to prevent the backsliding or contamination of conversos into their old religion (Martínez 33). Although, on the surface, this would seem to imply that the focus would be on rooting out particularly dangerous practices, this was not the case; for Inquisition officials, “lo importante no es descifrar qué es herejía, sino castigar a quien es hereje” (Hernández Franco 87). In other words, it was personal. The spread of the Inquisition, from having a single office in Seville to a peninsula-wide
presence—and even a presence in the New World—is significant to the history of limpieza de sangre ideology because limpieza statutes were initially modeled after the Inquisition’s heresy statutes (Martínez 49). Both allowed that dangerous influences could be transferred between generations, an idea that blurred the lines between inherited and learned behaviors in ways that would have major consequences for understandings of early modern race and cult distinctions.

Despite initial opposition from Juan II to the first limpieza statutes, the Spanish monarchy, from Enrique IV onward, supported the statutes to at least some degree. A victory for proponents of the statutes came in 1548, when Carlos V supported the statutes of the council of the Cathedral of Toledo (Hernández Franco 96-7). This gave permission to other organizations “bajo administración o patronato regio” to make their own statutes, as well (115). Following 1548, orthodoxy of religion and blood, endorsed by the crown, were combined (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 224). The result of the beginnings of limpieza ideology was that, as authority and privilege continued to condense into the hands of nobles and old Christians, limpieza statutes created “un problema y un debate que se instala en la médula de la sociedad hispana, casi estructuralmente” (Hernández Franco 19). An awareness of limpieza ideology was almost inescapable.

Over the course of the sixteenth century, the initial practices of limpieza investigations solidified into the ideal of the noble, old Christian from time immemorial. The category of pure blood expanded in four important ways by the end of the sixteenth century. First, institutions with statutes began to search not only for evidence of a connection to any particular disallowed group—conversos, for example—but to any evidence of all of a brush with the Inquisition. Thus any petitioner connected in any way
genealogically with a person relaxed, reconciled, penanced or even just tried by the Inquisition could be considered suspect (Martínez 51). Next, following the second Alpujarras uprising, moriscos came under increased scrutiny, and limpieza investigations began considering links to moriscos more closely and more seriously (51). Third, while the paternal line of any petitioner had previously assumed primary importance, the maternal line came to assume at least as much importance, doubling the potential for finding a perceived impurity (52). Last, while the investigations initially limited their search to a petitioner’s grandparents—following the model of the heresy laws—this time limit was slowly broadened, until limits were scrapped entirely (52). The result of these expansions was “the uniquely Iberian paradigm of the 'hidalgo-cristiano viejo' and with it a whole culture of social differentiation based on blood and religion" (Martínez 80).

As limpieza investigators were expanding the scope of their searches, they were also growing increasingly indiscriminant about the kinds of sources they relied on. Some investigations required witnesses to report whether they had ever heard, in truth or by mistake, a person implied to be impure (Sicroff 215); thus a drunken slur or even a jest could have serious consequences, and even someone who felt confident of their genealogical record could not rest easy. Precisely because of the impossibility of meeting this standard with any kind of consistency, the late sixteenth and even more so the seventeenth centuries saw increasingly panicked calls for reform, discussed in more detail in later chapters. Agustín Salucio’s 1600 Discurso sobre los estatutos de limpieza de sangre worried, "aora de la gente a quien se conocen ascendientes toca [la infamia] ya por ventura la mitad" (29r). No less an illustrious figure than the royal favorite of Felipe IV, the Conde-Duque de Olivares, wrote in favor of reform, recognizing that “la mancha
también puede arruinar a los limpios” (Hernández Franco 156). But the statutes persisted, and attempts at reform were “infructuoso” (207).

In spite of the unattainable, unmaintainable nature of the figure of the hidalgo-cristiano viejo, it had significant real-world impact; it was an impossible standard, but it was nevertheless the standard. Even if one accepts Kamen’s extreme position as to the limited scope of the Inquisition and limpieza ideology—and I do not—he still grants that “there can be no doubt of the threat it [limpieza] could represent” (242). Sicroff describes the concept of limpieza de sangre as not simply “une idée abstraite, intellectuellement conçue” but rather “un ‘fonctionnement’” (10). Along the same lines, one anonymous petition to a committee in Castile aimed at investigating reforms, which Sicroff dates to 1598, complains that blood purity was determined "de façon toute 'métaphysique'" (210). As Martínez rightly explains, limpieza was not necessarily important because crypto-Judaism was, historically, a serious threat, but because “it powerfully shaped Old Christian attitudes, motivations, and actions ... and intensified other social conflicts” (40). It was, in sum, “uno de los principales problemas sociales que registran los Reinos Hispánicos” (Hernández Franco 16)—an ideological problem.

Necessary to support this massive, unwieldy ideal and all its attendant ideological implications were a vast bureaucracy and a staggering amount of paperwork. Investigating, documenting, and verifying limpieza required a legal, document-based approach. There were, broadly speaking, two principal categories of documents in any particular investigation: informaciones de limpieza, any documentation a petitioner provided; and probanzas de limpieza, all of the records of an institution’s efforts. The former category included family genealogical histories produced specifically for limpieza
investigations. Some of these were so thorough—and so clearly fictional—that they extended back to Abraham (Hernández Franco 139). The latter category, the probanzas, included the final certification, information about familial estates and income, and witness interviews and testimonies, the number of which varied wildly between institutions (Martínez 71). The prestigious military orders had some of the most exhaustive witness requirements: at least 24 witnesses to prove blood purity, 20 to prove nobility, and whatever other witnesses might become necessary, but some cases could require up to 500 interrogations (71). The concept of limpieza was thus an impossible, textual ideal—a fiction.

Another document-based social construct changed significantly around the same time that limpieza ideology was developing. The practical changes to the marriage ceremony developed at the Council of Trent, although not prompted by concerns about limpieza, nevertheless compounded the problems the concept of blood purity posed. Prior to Trent, marriage could be a relatively uncomplicated proposition: in the late medieval period and early fifteenth-century Spain, for example, “single men and women could be married secretly simply by copulating after having stated their intention to marry” (Lacarra Lanz 162). While the Church “advised them to make their decision public ... they were not obligated to do so” (162). In the post-Tridentine world, however, marriage was a family affair, as the church “surrendered its couple-oriented notion of marriage to secular demands for greater public authority by abolishing clandestine marriages and by promoting dowry exchange as an indirect form of parental control” (Sperling 68). Rather than simply voicing a desire to marry, “a couple now had to publish banns on three consecutive Sundays, receive their priest’s blessing in the presence of at least two
witnesses, and register the marriage in their parish church of origin” (70-71). As we have seen, at the same time, limpieza investigations increased scrutiny into relatives by marriage; a male petitioner also had to demonstrate the purity of his wife’s entire lineage (Martínez 63). Paired with the new, more stringent requirements the Council of Trent put forward, this made couples increasingly hesitant to marry lest they throw their family’s reputation into jeopardy. As one contemporary proverb put it, “ dexastes a fulano porque le conosciades, y escogistes a fulano porque no le conosciades” (Salucio 30r): anyone whose lineage was known was probably a threat to one’s own blood purity.

In Fuerza, however, none of the bureaucratic convolutions, uncertainty, or metaphysical disputes that marked the historical, quotidian experience of limpieza ideology are present. In fact, wherever these would appear, they are instead conspicuously absent: the fictional world of the novela takes blood purity completely for granted, as though it were an indisputable, straightforward given. In this way, the novela is a sendup of contemporary practices, revealing their artifice, arbitrariness, and impossibility in making the content or value of one’s blood legible and of ordering a system of interpretation around it.

In the novela, the concept of limpieza de sangre is never invoked directly; instead, it is reduced to its literary counterpart, honor. This reduction simplifies the many problems of limpieza into a single convention, but as the novela shows, even this ‘simple’ formulation is contradictory and unsustainable. Honor is presented as both a genealogical fact and as the province of one’s private conscience; these irreconcilable definitions demonstrate that honor, like blood purity, is an impossible fiction. For Rodolfo and Leocadia, at the start of the novela, honor is an inherited, inalienable property. Rodolfo
explains to his mother, Estefanía, that he possesses “la nobleza, gracias al cielo y a mis pasados y a mis padres, que me la dejaron por herencia” (91). Leocadia makes a similar assertion: “soy noble porque mis padres lo son y lo han sido todos mis antepasados” (88). Nevertheless, after the rape, honor is presented in quite a different light. Leocadia’s father, urging her to maintain her silence about the matter, consoles her by explaining, “la verdadera deshonra está en el pecado y la verdadera honra en la virtud” (84). Because Leocadia has not sinned, she cannot be dishonored; God knows her innocence, and this is sufficient for her to continue living honorably. As Egginton demonstrates, Leocadia’s father’s definition affirms both that "hidden dishonor is better than exposed honor" and that "exposed dishonor is worse than hidden dishonor" (Theater 37). The only possible conclusion is that there is “no such thing as honor, only the fear of exposure” (Theater 37)—a fear as palpable in the Retablo as it is subtle in Fuerza. Although honor does have consequences for the characters, it is, like limpieza, fictional.

To highlight the implausibility of both of these characters’ understandings of honor even further, the novela allows them to be immediately knowable. Honor as a genealogical fact is presented as obvious in the case of Luisico, who “daba señales de ser de algún noble padre engendrado” (85), even though his true parentage is known only to Leocadia and her parents. The conception of honor as a private, religious matter is likewise clear when Leocadia is “temerosa que su desgracia se la habían de leer en la frente” (85). In either case, the dizzying array of documents required to prove limpieza de sangre are rendered unnecessary. This idealized, effortless vision of honor stands in stark contrast to the laboriously constructed, always precarious status of blood purity.
The world of *Fuerza* further distinguishes itself from practices contemporary to Cervantes when it comes to the subject of marriage. As we saw above, late sixteenth-century Spanish marriages required documentation, and they resulted in significant paperwork for any descendants looking to prove the status of their blood. Yet the marriage of Rodolfo and Leocadia is instantaneous and pointedly verbal. After Estefanía lures Rodolfo home with the promise of marriage and tricks him with a false portrait, she presents the beautiful Leocadia as his true bride. After a bit of commotion—Leocadia, overcome with emotion, faints; Rodolfo once again takes advantage of her unconscious state to throw himself at her—the two are married by a priest who was waiting in the wings. The moment Leocadia comes to, Estefanía tells the priest to get on with it already, “diciendo al cura que luego luego desposase a su hijo con Leocadia” (94). And the priest obliges: “Él lo hizo ansí, que por haber sucedido este caso en tiempo cuando con sola la voluntad de los contrayentes, sin las diligencias y prevenciones justas y santas que ahora se usan, quedaba hecho el matrimonio” (94). This description of the marriage sharply contrasts with contemporary practices, idealizing a simpler ceremony while carefully maintaining a grudging respect (“justas y santas”) for the post-Tridentine conventions. (It also cheerfully overlooks Leocadia’s lack of “voluntad” to be in this situation in the first place; it is only because Rodolfo raped her that she now finds herself required to marry him.) Neither Rodolfo nor Leocadia know anything about each other’s families—other than having asserted their nobility—an utterly unthinkable proposition outside of the novela. The difference in social status between the two—Leocadia is noble but poor while Rodolfo’s family is both noble and wealthy—is likewise blithely ignored, although this would have been a determining factor in contracting any marriage.
At every moment that a contemporary reader of Fuerza might expect an acknowledgment of the constraints of blood purity, then, the narrative deflects such concerns. Thus the operation of limpieza ideology in the novela is more or less the polar opposite of its historical functioning. Fuerza glosses over any potential difficulties, but the effect of this is to throw their absence into relief. The improbability of the novela’s take on limpieza is a mirror of its improbability in everyday life; both are equally suspect. Through this oblique approach to the concept of limpieza, then, the novela points to the ruptures in its everyday operation.

This oblique approach, however, has generated a divided critical assessment on the ending of the novela. A number of other critics have noted the seeming implausibility of Rodolfo and Leocadia’s marriage, reading it as an unfortunate, unlikely, or even offensive conclusion. For Olivares, contrasting Fuerza with María de Zayas’s La fuerza del amor, Fuerza is “una de las novelas más idealistas de Cervantes” at the same time that it “reescribe las consecuencias de la violación y las acciones de la dama ultrajada” (82). Because of the wedding, for Avalle-Arce, the novela is “un fracaso” (25) because “Cervantes desatendió de triste manera la caracterización de sus personajes” (27), leading to “inverosimilitud” (31). Hainsworth summarizes quite a prominent critical position on Fuerza thus: “En un mot, nous ne connaissons pas dans l’oeuvre cervantesque un plus frappant example de mauvais goût” (qtd. in Forcione 362). On the other hand, critics who tend to group Fuerza under the ‘idealist’ umbrella see the marriage as restoring harmony and tend to view it positively. Calcraft, for instance, argues, "[t]he effects of time and place have restored to Rodolfo the natural gifts that 'sangre ilustre' he was once happy to dishonour in pursuit of the most selfish ends" (201). Clamurro also sees Rodolfo as a
changed man by the end, asserting that, when he is re-introduced to Leocadia just before the wedding, he “immediately falls in love with her, this time in love in the best sense of the word” (150). El Saffar approaches the ending philosophically: “the union of Leocadia and Rodolfo is a hymn to the ultimate reconcilability of all things” (Novel 136).

This idealist take on the wedding is unjustified by the text. There is no evidence to support the theory that Rodolfo has changed; the narrator takes care to point out that he is just as lascivious and self-centered as ever. When Leocadia is unconscious, Rodolfo, “llevado de su amoroso y encendido deseo, y quitándole el nombre de esposo todos los estorbos que la honestidad y decencia del lugar le podían poner, se abalanzó al rostro de Leocadia, y, juntando su boca con la della, estaba como esperando que se le saliese el alma para darle acogida en la suya” (94). The irony of the tone is unmistakable. Given that, as it appears, Rodolfo is still a “libidinous S.O.B.” (Gitlitz 113), my reading of the wedding is closer to the first group of critics. I agree that the ending is in bad taste, but I do not think this should be the end point of our analysis. If, as I argue, the novela is constantly pointing us toward the fractures in its own narrative and in the ideology it describes, there is no need to limit our assessment to the mere actions recounted. The bad taste of the wedding is precisely what should alert us to the fact that something is off; it draws our attention to the attitudes and actions that have allowed it to take place. The careful symmetry of the novela, which many critics have discussed, asks us to read this second union of Rodolfo and Leocadia alongside the first. This simultaneous reading reveals that the only difference is that, the second time around, the ‘union’ of Leocadia and Rodolfo has the patina of social legitimacy granted to it by marriage.

32 Calcraft: “The clear symmetry of the story’s events is perhaps the most obvious structural features of the work” (197); Gitlitz notes the novela’s “extraordinary symmetry” (113); Piluso: “Hay una simetria perfecta en la estructura” (488).
This legitimacy is precisely what is brought under our scrutiny. After the wedding, the narrator tells us, “Fuéronse a acostar todos, quedó toda la casa sepultada en silencio, en el cual no quedará la verdad deste cuento, pues no lo consentirán los muchos hijos y la ilustre descendencia que en Toledo dejaron, y agora viven, estos dos venturosos desposados, que muchos y felices años gozaron de sí mismos, de sus hijos y de sus nietos” (95). This insistence on the illustrious character of Rodolfo and Leocadia’s descendants, and the even more insistent mention of their children and grandchildren, should give us pause. After raping and impregnating Leocadia, Rodolfo went to Italy, where it is strongly implied that he continued his lascivious ways. (It seems unlikely that “[s]onábale bien aquel Eco li buoni polastri, picioni, presuto e salcicie, con otros nombres deste jaez, de quien los soldados se acuerdan cuando de aquellas partes vienen a éstas y pasan por la estrecheza e incomodidades de las ventas y mesones de España” [84-5] actually refers to charcuterie.) Instead, we should read the narrator’s rosy take on the marriage ironically. Although it grants a particular, socially mediated kind of legitimacy, there is no doubt that it denies or conceals, as well. Luisico’s rapid transformation from unacknowledged, illegitimate son to a part of this “ilustre descendencia” confirms this point. As Slaniceanu argues, “There can be no doubt that Cervantes scrupulously chose this coda ... for the purpose of undermining the authority of those figures normally associated with its formalities” (110). The kind of legitimacy described here—the purity of Rodolfo and Leocadia’s lineage, their honor—cannot be made legible in the idealized style Cervantes satirizes here, and it cannot be made legible through an untrustworthy, unwieldy, unrealistic bureaucratic apparatus, either. The conditions that authorize this
marriage reveal that the fiction of illustrious, noble, Christian descent is precisely that: a fiction—a textual fiction that, like this very novela, can be deconstructed.

2. Romance, Miracle, Both, Neither

The implausible nature of the novela, discussed above in terms of the particular case of the final, distasteful marriage, is broader than this example alone. Aside from the symmetrical pairing of events to highlight their differences, there are numerous other details and facets of the novela that point toward artifice. Selig notes the reliance of the novela on the visual, and in particular its tendency toward representation and composition. Leocadia’s appearance before Rodolfo at the very end of the novela is a carefully staged tableau, which Selig argues draws on contemporary theories of painting (125). The characters themselves, as Avalle-Atce laments, have no depth; they are mere archetypes. Leocadia’s “innocence is amorphous,” moving into and out of being as the plot requires, while Rodolfo’s “lawlessness is devoid of intentionality” (Slaniceanu 103). One effect of this is that the characters are not particularly adept at analyzing their own situations; Rodolfo, in particular, “es un lector que no profundiza sino que se deja llevar por las apariencias” (Parker Aronson 78). In sum, the novela displays a consistent, marked inclination toward the artificial and the superficial. But as critics of the novela, we can be better readers than Rodolfo.

To further our reading, I draw on both Slaniceanu’s and Forcione’s analysis of the novela’s indebtedness to two popular, contemporary genres: the romance and the miracle, respectively. I use “romance” as a genre—rather than, following Northrop Frye, a mode—here because of the contemporary influence of Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica* via el Pinciano and Fernando de Mena (El Saffar, *Novel* xiv). I acknowledge, however, that it is
a “notoriously slippery category,” recognizable by specific attributes (Fuchs, Romance 1). The Aethiopica nevertheless incorporates the most salient attributes: the movement of the two principal characters toward marriage, a series of travails that threaten the marriage, and the “blood will tell” motif. I approach both of these genres with Fuchs’s assertion that Cervantes often “deploys literary convention ... to disguise the power of his own critique behind a veil of conventionality” in mind, as well, specifically with respect to normative identities (Passing for Spain 17). As Slaniceanu points out, Fuerza includes a number of the "obvious romance features," including “the woman’s dominant role in the action, the blood-will-tell motif, the opposition of violence and fraud, exemplified by the act of rape, and its vindication by the heroine’s enormous resourcefulness” (102). The romance is appropriate for a novela intended to undermine the status quo by suggesting its implausibility because this genre “relies on lack of verisimilitude;” thus Cervantes can exploit “this very weakness to create subtle interplay between the unlikely event and the critical check of self-parody” (Slaniceanu 105).

This interplay manifests in the novela both through the narrator’s seeming forgetfulness and the characters’ unlikely self-reflection. The narrator often “forgets” to give the reader important information, calling the reliability of any of the novela’s events into question. For example, the second time Leocadia is in Rodolfo’s house, to check on the injured Luisico, she is able to definitively confirm that it is the same house in which she was raped because the number of steps is the same as the number she walked when being escorted out of the house, blindfolded, by Rodolfo. But the narrator had not previously mentioned this counting; he adds it as an afterthought: “Finalmente, sacaron a luz la verdad de todas sus sospechas los escalones, que ella había contado cuando la
sacaron del aposento tapados los ojos (digo los escalones que había desde allí a la calle, que con advertencia discreta contó)” (87). The clarifying parenthetical only adds to the impression that this information has been falsely inserted after the fact as corroboration. It pulls one out of the narrative and asks the reader to again consider Leocadia’s implausible poise and reason immediately after a traumatic event. Leocadia herself cannot quite believe her own abilities; after a lengthy, carefully reasoned discourse to Rodolfo about why he should keep the rape silent for the sake of her honor, she wonders aloud, “No sé cómo te digo estas verdades, que se suelen fundar en la experiencia de muchos casos y en el discurso de muchos años” (80). In both cases, the effect is to jolt the reader out of the narrative to reflect on the suspect likeliness of these events, even those that do not come with clarifications, excuses, or confirmation.

Aside from these seeming narrative shortcomings, Fuerza challenges even the broadest definition of romance in the character of Rodolfo, who is far from the “wandering hero” (Fuchs, Romance 66) typical of the early modern romance or the chivalric ideal of late medieval romances. Indeed, he compares unfavorably to the contemporary ideal and resembles nothing so much as the “frivolous young man” (Kennedy 289) decried by late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century reformers. A few points of comparison with the hero of Salas Barbadillo’s 1620 El caballero perfecto, a mirror for gentlemanly behavior, illustrate this. The novel’s protagonist, Alonso, is of noble birth, and “igualó con sus costumbres a su sangre” (5). Rodolfo, in spite of his “sangre ilustre” (Cervantes, Novelas 77), also suffers from “la inclinación torcida, la libertad demasiada y las compañías libres, [que] le hacían hacer cosas y tener atrevimientos que desdecían de su calidad y le daban renombre de atrevido” (77). When
Alonso travels to Italy, it is to expertly serve the often conflicting interest of multiple kings at once, and not, as Rodolfo does, to sample the local goods. We might also consider this cautionary tale of an unsavory gentleman that Alonso hears:

No contento con auer violado la honestidad de muchas mugeres vírgenes y casads, de todas calidades, vnas persuadidas por sus solícitos ministros, otras compradas por sus inmensos tesoros, y las que a todo se resistían, forçadas por la violencia de vn tirano tan bárbaro, se enamoró, o (por no infamar al amor, que es ofendelle dezir que en pechos tan brutos cabe) apeteció la hija de vn vasallo mío, bellíssima por la hermosura y por la edad, porque de sus años aun no auía cumplido los diez y siete. (20)

Even without the knowledge that this gentleman ends up kidnapping and raping the young woman, which he does, there are clear parallels with Rodolfo’s behavior toward Leocadia. Rodolfo’s flaws as a romance hero further undermine the novela’s credibility, particularly its ending.

In addition to the resonances with the romance, scholars have demonstrated how *Fuerza* owes a debt to the miraculous in two ways: first, by invoking a miracle said to have occurred in Toledo; and second, by drawing on and simultaneously undermining certain literary forms present in contemporary miracle literature. Both Allen and Forcione discuss the similarities between the plot of *Fuerza* and a popular legend, summarized by José Zorrilla as “A buen juez, mejor testigo.” The legend recounts the story of a nobleman who gives his word to marry a woman of lesser social status in front of a crucifix, known as the Cristo de la Vega, outside a Toledan church—the basilica of St. Leocadia. They consummiate the union, but the nobleman goes back on his word and refuses to marry the woman. With no other witnesses, the woman appeals to the crucifix, asking the image whether or not the nobleman gave his word in marriage. The crucifix makes a gesture with its arm, indicating that this is true, and the nobleman finds himself
obligated to follow through. The plot parallels with *Fuerza* are clear, and Leocadia’s theft of Rodolfo’s crucifix, along with her appeal to it as a “testigo” (88) strengthen the connection. Cervantes was likely aware of the legend, especially given that the remains of St. Leocadia were taken to the basilica in 1587, and the procession passed Esquivias, where Cervantes was then living (Allen 274).

Although it is clear that there are similarities between this legend and *Fuerza*, the novela diverges in some ways from the miracle narrative. Broadly, Forcione identifies this narrative as relying on “the intervention of divine agency” to restore heroes who are “quite unheroic, and frequently even fallen,” and who are “victims rather than combatants;” and that “the meaning of the situation in which they are involved is to be sought in the significance of the single central event rather than in the exemplary nature of their acts” (329). Leocadia is certainly fallen, but she is not necessarily unheroic. Her impassioned arguments and fierce self-defense successfully prevent Rodolfo from raping her a second time, even as they seem to lack verisimilitude. Similarly, although she is certainly a victim, she is also a combatant for an outcome that will restore her honor. Her theft of the crucifix links her to the legend Zorrilla summarizes, but the narrator makes it quite clear that her interest in the image is not religious: she steals it “no por devoción ni por hurto, sino llevada de un discreto designio suyo” (82). Sieber rightly argues that this points toward human agency rather than divine (16). Finally, it is not divine agency that finally brings about the marriage but Leocadia’s and Estefanía’s machinations. There is no indication of the divine to “underplay the material nature of both women’s calculatedness” (Slaniceanu 108). Thus Forcione and Slaniceanu both conclude that the
novela takes an ambiguous stance toward the miraculous and the miracle narrative as a

Although considering *Fuerza* in light of both the romance and the miracle
narrative can help clarify some aspects of the novela, extending Forcione’s and
Slaniceanu’s critique to consider the interplay and mutual subversion of genres throws
the miracle of Luisico’s accident into relief. Forcione aligns *Fuerza* more closely with the
miracle narrative as a particular form of the romance genre; I argue that the movement
between the two is what allows us to most fully appreciate the novela’s argument. Of
Cervantes’s works, this interplay of genres is explored most fully in the *Persiles* (1617),
but here, he exploits the limits of both to demonstrate the impossibility and absurdity of
the idea that blood could ever be legible. First, the movement between the specifics of the
miracle narrative and the romance allows the reader to be complicit in the eventual
marriage of Leocadia and Rodolfo—to root for it, in some sense—while also maintaining
a certain distance from it because, as the miracle narrative implies, the resolution is out of
our hands. This complicity and distance helps account for the opposition of critical
opinions on the ending. Second, pairing these genres allows Cervantes to demonstrate the
implausibility inherent in the romance genre in the first place, undermining the very idea
of the “happily ever after” of marriage, a Cervantine hobby-horse explored at length in
*Don Quijote*, particularly the intercalated novela *El curioso impertinente*, as well as
elsewhere in the *Novelas ejemplares*, notably *El celoso extremeño*. At the same time, the
shadow of doubt moves in both directions: the elements of romance also call the
plausibility of the miracle narrative into question, revealing both genres to be incapable
of being entirely believable. Consequently, this central lack of credibility, as I will
explore more fully in the next section, permits us to see the conflict between contemporary miracle narratives of conversion and the far less miraculous limpieza distinctions that persist in Spain between old and new Christians.

3. A Bloody Miracle, After All?

With both of the primary genres the novela employs called into question, I now turn to the central “miracle” of Fuerza: Luisico’s accident and his grandfather’s extraordinary response.

Sucedió, pues, que un día que el niño fue con un recaudo de su abuela a una parienta suya, acertó a pasar por una calle donde había carrera de caballeros. Púsole a mirar, y, por mejorarse de puesto, pasó de una parte a otra, a tiempo que no pudo huir de ser atropellado de un caballo, a cuyo dueño no fue posible detenerle en la furia de su carrera. Pasó por encima del, y dejóle como muerto, tendido en el suelo, derramando mucha sangre de la cabeza. Apenas esto hubo sucedido, cuando un caballero anciano que estaba mirando la carrera, con no vista ligereza se arrojó de su caballo y fue donde estaba el niño; y, quitándole de los brazos de uno que ya le tenía, le puso en los suyos, y, sin tener cuenta con sus canas ni con su autoridad, que era mucha, a paso largo se fue a su casa, ordenando a sus criados que le dejases y fuesen a buscar un cirujano que al niño curase. (85-6)

The “miracle” of Fuerza is that Rodolfo’s father is able—instantly, definitively—to see Luisico’s blood for exactly what it is: pure, noble, and of his own lineage. The Retablo provides a foil: there, we are firmly in the world of the quotidian, and the wonders on the stage can never actually be realized. As I discuss above, while this moment is often read as pivotal, it is read either as simply a feature of the romance, as “a peculiarly literal cri du sang” (R. Greene 108), or as essential to the moment the novela “fails to become a subversion of a miracle” (Forcione 394). Although it is true that this moment cannot be read as a true miracle, this is not because Fuerza “recoil[s] from the miraculous” (355); rather, it is because the movement between romance and miracle has made a true miracle
impossible. Without the neat resolution of romance, and absent the possibility of divine authorization, we are left with something that has the characteristics of a miracle but that is still not entirely believable. Diegetically, the action is credible; no one questions Luisico’s grandfather’s actions. But to the reader, it appears implausible. More succinctly, it has the characteristics of fiction: it can be believed at the same time one knows it to be untrue, and it points us toward the implausibility of limpieza de sangre and the fictionality of the system that proposes it.

The concept of fiction Cervantes employs in Fuerza derives from a classical understanding of poetics. In the Poetics, Aristotle argues that poetry could tell a lie that was somehow greater than the truth: it is “a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular” (69). Later, for Horace, an ethical component is added, and the lies poetry tells must not only be greater than the truth but also contain “moral truths” (Egginton, Man Who Invented Fiction 164). Boccaccio drew on this tradition in shaping the Italian novelli and explicitly added the component of entertainment or delight (12-3). Cervantes clearly draws on all of these traditions: in the introduction to his Novelas ejemplares, he highlights the invented nature of the tales, their moral exemplarity, and their potential for entertainment. But, as I will show, the fiction of Fuerza adds yet another complication: it is a fiction that is not limited to the page but that encroaches on and influences the lives of its readers.

In order to appreciate the accident’s seemingly miraculous quality, we must look to the kinds of miracles it draws on. The miraculous is present not simply as a genre or in reference to the legend attributed to the basilica of St. Leocadia. Luisico’s accident draws specifically on accounts of miraculous bleeding leading to conversion, inflecting them
with the language surrounding the discourse of limpieza de sangre. These narratives originate with the story of Longinus: “According to an old medieval legend still popular in the Renaissance, Longinus was blind when he attended the Crucifixion, but when he pieced Christ’s chest with a spear to be sure that he was dead, blood and water miraculously poured out of Christ’s body and Longinus was healed of his blindness” (Pereda, “Performing Doubt” 69). In the Gospel of John, this moment is marked as the moment of conversion from belief to disbelief: “But one of the soldiers with a spear opened his side: and immediately there came out blood and water. / And he that saw it hath given testimony: and his testimony is true. And he knoweth that he saith true: that you may also believe” (The Holy Bible: Douay-Rheims Version, John 19:34-35). Upon seeing Christ’s miraculous blood, Longinus instantly believes; whereas before he was blind, the blood allows him to perceive the truth of Christ’s divinity.33 This articulation of credibility with respect to vision was an important, prominent theme in early seventeenth-century Spanish cultural production (Pereda, “Performing Doubt” 80). One of the primary ways this theme developed into the early modern period is through the myths associated with sacred images, particularly crucifixes. As these myths developed, the particular details of each image tended to be attributed to many; for example, many of them were said to be created by Nicodemus himself. What is important for our purposes is not so much the influence of any one image, although some were quite popular, but rather the confluence of the discrete motifs of the crucifix, its miraculous bleeding, and the resulting conversion.

33 This movement from disbelief to belief through vision has a long history of application to both textual exegesis and the interpretation of images, which I will consider further in chapter 3; see Kessler.
Two of the most important images known for these particular characteristics are the Beirut Crucifix and the Cristo de Burgos, strongly tied together in early modern Spanish thought. According to late medieval legend, the Beirut Crucifix was stabbed in the side by a group of Jews and began bleeding profusely; those responsible for this profanation, along with all of the other Jews in Beirut, converted to Christianity because of this miracle (Pereda, “La conversión” 233). Interest in the Beirut Crucifix saw a resurgence because of the immense popularity and devotion to the Cristo de Burgos, “una de las piezas de culto más impactantes de la imaginaria tardo-gótica que puedan encontrarse en Castilla” (231). Awareness of the legends surrounding the Beirut Crucifix “conoció un claro renacimiento desde la segunda mitad del siglo XV” (233), and these legends were often attributed to the Cristo de Burgos instead. The Cristo de Burgos is a dramatic, imposing image; according to the introduction to a 1604 collection of miracles attributed to it, “si se miran las llagas de los açotes, los arteros de las heridas tan leuántados, la sangre tan viua, no parece sino que a la hora le acabaron de dar los tormentos, que a Christo nuestro Redemptor dieron” (Libro de los milagros 10r). This insistence on lifelike suffering, on the brutality of the wounds and the realistic appearance of Christ’s blood, renders it distinctive even among images of its type; it is more brutal than “tal vez ningún otro de los crucifijos dolorosos documentados en el centro de la Península Ibérica” (Pereda, “La conversión” 231). Like the Beirut Crucifix, then, it is strongly associated with blood imagery; and, like the Beirut Crucifix, it is associated with narratives of conversion: it was thought both to be made by Nicodemus and to have led to the conversion of pilgrims who discovered it (232). In a detail that recalls the legendary

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34 I have here preserved all spelling and punctuation conventions save for the long s, which has been modernized.
gesture of the crucifix outside the Basilica of St. Leocadia, one of these pilgrims supposedly “vivió tal vida de santidad que el propio Cristo, en una ocasión, se inclinó hacia él y le dirigió la palabra” (232). Further connecting the Cristo de Burgos to Fuerza are the many miracles attributed to it that recall Luisico’s injury: the “más notable” of its miracles was “la supuesta reanimación de un niño que había resucitado después de caer de lo alto de una tapia” (234). The 1604 compilation, similarly, features quite a few narratives of the miraculous resuscitation of children (*Libro de los milagros* 85v, 86v, 91r, among many others).

The interest in these narratives and their associated images culminated in the arrival of a copy of the Volto Santo di Lucca in Madrid at the Real Basílica de Nuestra Señora de Atocha in 1610. The origin of the Volto Santo and the miracles attributed to it are bound up in those concerning the Beirut Crucifix and the Cristo de Burgos, as well. For example, Francisco de Quevedo writes of the original image, “Hizo la Imagen Nicodemo, Varon santo, q le vio clauar en la Cruz, y ayudò a descenderle della, q oyò sus palabras, y creyò su doctrina” (qtd. in Blancalana). It was also strongly associated with Christ’s miraculous blood; while inspecting the image, Nicodemus, “especulando, y mirando, con cuidado, y por menudo la santa imagen, hallò dentro una cantidad de reliquias ... y particularmente vna redoma de la sangre de nuestro Redentor Iesu Christo” (Blancalana 40r). Knowledge of and interest in the copy was widespread. Bernardino Blancalana’s 1638 book celebrating its arrival attests to its popularity and prominence: the edition is dedicated to the prince of Asturias; includes an introduction by Quevedo,

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35 In citing Blancalana’s edition, I follow the above conventions for the *Libro de milagros* and Ripalda’s *Catecismo*. 

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from which the above citation is drawn; as well as introductory poems from Luis Vélez de Guevara and other well known figures.

On a less rarefied level, miracle narratives of conversion were prominent in popular literature. The 1604 compilation discussed above is one such example, but they exist in ephemeral literature, as well, much of which has not survived until the present. One example from 1627, though published after the *Novelas ejemplares*, attests to the proliferation of these narratives. The anonymous pamphlet (it is signed “escrita desde Madrid a un Religioso desta Ciudad”) purports to be the “[r]elación verdadera, de vn caso raro y marauilloso, sucedido en el Reyno de Polonia.” The account begins by stressing the ubiquity of such narratives: “Larga Experiencia pueden tener todos los fieles Christianos de los casos raros, y portentosos.” The author then describes an event that supposedly took place in May of 1627, in which a group of Protestant Polish soldiers happen upon a crucifix in the road:

> viendo al santo Crucifixo los peruersos herejes, y mouidos de su venenosa rabia, y estimulados del rancor y aborrecimiento que tienen al nombre de Christo: tomaron la determinacion mas inicua y peruersa, que podia persuadir les Satanas con toda su infernal industria; que a la sancta Imagen le tirassen muchos balasos para dessa manera vengarse en su figura ya que no podian en su propia persona, como lo resolueron lo ejecutaron aquellos peruersos demonios encarnados con la crueldad que de su infernal rabia se a podido esperar, y assí de hecho le tiraron muchos balassos, firiendo [?] a la sancta Imagen en su costado. *(sic* throughout)

As a result of the attack, the crucifix bleeds profusely: “assi luego que huuieron herido el costado de la imagen manò ... grande copia de sangre por siete dias continuos sin parar vn punto.” As soon as the crucifix begins bleeding, the miracle occurs: all those who shot at the crucifix are themselves miraculously shot at “con el mismo impetu ... hiriendoles en la misma parte del costado en que el Crucifixo fue herido.” In all, an astonishing fourteen

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36 In citing this pamphlet, I follow the conventions used with Blancalana’s work, listed above.
thousand soldiers are killed instantly. Perhaps even more astonishingly, an additional four thousand remained, who immediately transferred to the Catholic army, “arrepintiendose grauemente de sus enormes pecados, y pidiendo al mismo Señor a quien offendieron misericordia y perdon de todo su coraçon.” Like the Beirut and Burgos crucifixes, this account hinges on the miraculous appearance of blood that results in conversion.

Around the time that Fuerza was being written, then, narratives of miraculous conversions related to the Volto Santo via the Cristo de Burgos were in wide circulation. Although many miracles were attributed to both images, the origin miracle is that of conversion, the movement from disbelief to belief, through the witnessing of blood. Furthermore, given the way attributes of the miraculous tend to travel—as they did between the Beirut Crucifix and the Cristo de Burgos—the details of some of these narratives seem to recall the legend of the Cristo de la Vega. For the miracles circulating around the Cristo de Burgos in the fifteenth century, Pereda argues, “la incorporación de los judíos conversos a la leyenda no parece sustentarse tanto en factores históricos como en otros imaginarios, sobre los que se proyecta la creciente ansiedad de la sociedad castellana acerca de su propio pasado” (“La conversión” 235). That is, these conversion narratives registered concerns about the conversion and expulsion of Jews and Muslims and the move toward a unified, Catholic Spain. The narratives in circulation at the turn of the seventeenth century, however, must be considered in light of the most important social problem of their day: limpieza de sangre. The concept of pure blood questions the idea that true conversion was even possible, that it would be enough to compensate for an inherent susceptibility in the blood, and that blood can confirm the truth of one’s claim to old Christian identity.
The “miracle” of *Fuerza* is precisely this last point: Luisico’s blood does, incredibly, confirm his parentage and, eventually, restore his lineage. Rodolfo’s father, like Longinus, sees the blood of his grandchild and immediately understands its meaning; it is completely believable, a situation that is utterly impossible in the real world of limpieza investigations. It is important to note that the “conversion” of Luisico’s grandfather is not brought about by the stolen crucifix. Instead, the miracle is broken down into its constituent parts, much like the myths associated with contemporary sacred images were. While the crucifix evokes this miraculous context, the narrative makes clear that Luisico’s blood is the agent of conversion. This breaking down of miracle narratives into specific tropes mirrors the novela’s careful resistance to the confines of any one genre; *Fuerza*’s complex, shifting allegiances to its sources allow for the possibility of reading against the grain and of seeing the artifice of the narrative. The “miracle” of witnessing Luisico’s blood is thus the moment that authorizes the entire narrative, while, at the same time, calling it into question. This contradictory nature of belief is captured in Covarrubias’s two principal definitions of *creer*. In the first place, to believe is to accept “lo que no entendemos o sentimos” as a “propio acto de la fe” (364). On the other hand, he records, “En las cosas humanas los que fían poco de los demás tienen este refrán: ‘ver y creer,’ *que en rigor es no creer*” (365, my emphasis). To see and believe—to believe because one has seen—is to fail to have true faith because it requires evidence. Rodolfo’s father sees and believes, and in so doing, he calls into question the truth of his own conversion, and, by extension, the possibility of belief in pure blood. Precisely because limpieza de sangre requires so many proofs, it cannot have the divine authority of sacred Truth; like a novela, it can be analyzed and questioned, investigated and doubted.  

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37 I am indebted to Felipe Pereda for pointing this entry from Covarrubias out to me.
This investigation can be carried out by analyzing the language linking the “miracle” to the ideology of limpieza de sangre. The other characters’ acceptance of Luisico’s parentage, as well as their efforts to bring Rodolfo and Leocadia together, are all cast in language relevant to limpieza. Beginning with the accident itself, it is significant that Luisico is trampled by horses for two reasons. First, symbolically, it invokes the rape that brought Luisico into being: "Golden Age writers used the horse to indicate sensual passion out of the control of reason" (Gitlitz 117). Given the novela’s use of symmetry, it makes sense that Rodolfo’s untamed sexual desires would be recalled again here. Second, many of the early modern Spanish terms for racial differentiation, such as "raza," "casta" and "linaje," came into the popular lexicon primarily through horse breeding, and by the start of the sixteenth century they were commonly applied to racial distinctions as well (Martínez 28).  

Thus Covarrubias registers the first definition of “raza” as “[l]a casta de caballos castizos, a los cuales señalan con hierro para que sean conocidos” and ends with “tener alguna raza de moro o judío” (851). The accident, then, stages the potential threats to interpreting Luisico’s blood: illegitimacy that, given the understanding of limpieza at this time, would leave room for accusations of other impurities. His rescue, which brings him back into the family line—quite literally into his father’s house—is his rescue from this illegitimacy and impurity. 

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38 This connection would have been readily legible to contemporary readers. As Weissbourd notes, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writings about pure blood often invoked the language of horsebreeding. In the case of Archbishop Siliceo’s defense of the 1547 statute requiring pure blood in Toledo’s cathedral, Weissbourd highlights the analogy, glossing Siliceo’s reasoning: “just as purebred horses are physically superior to their less well-bred counterparts by virtue of pedigree, so pure-blooded nobles are superior to conversos” (72).

39 Luisico’s accident also showcases the paradox of pure blood: in order to remain secure and safe from contamination, it must stay inside the body, where it remains illegible; but in order to be made legible, it must be spilled. This paradox is explored at length in chapter 3.
The confirmation of Luisico’s origins and its acceptance by Rodolfo’s parents also draw on limpieza conventions. After Rodolfo’s father sees Luisico’s blood, “references to the presence of Divine Providence in the action become much more frequent and more direct” (Forcione 369). Forcione explains this with reference to the “magical power that the symbol of blood enjoyed in the religious culture of the time,” which he defines as limited to “the redemptive, propitiatory blood of Christ and the martyrs, the pure blood of the Virgin, and the tainted blood of sinful humanity” (370). Instead, I argue that, because blood is conceived in the novela in terms of limpieza, the language of providence must be read in this way, as well. Thus when Rodolfo’s father learns the truth of Luisico’s identity, the miraculous is invoked a second time: “Y él lo creyó, por divina permisión del cielo, como si con muchos y verdaderos testigos se lo hubieran probado” (89). “Muchos y verdaderos testigos” are precisely what would be required in any limpieza de sangre investigation; the fact that they can here be casually dispensed with confirms the miraculous legibility of Luisico’s blood.

Leocadia does not confirm her suspicions with recourse to the miraculous, but through more mundane means. Slaniceanu has noted how calculating Leocadia is, even likening her to “a thorough investigator at the scene of a crime” (104). Her investigations, though, can be read more fruitfully as resembling those that would take place during a probanza de limpieza de sangre. Already armed with a genealogical narrative, Leocadia seeks confirming signs and witnesses, scouring her surroundings and recalling every detail she can about the scene of her rape:

[Por muchas señales, conoció que aquella era la estancia donde se había dado fin a su honra y principio a su desventura; y, aunque no estaba adornada de los damascos que entonces tenía, conoció la disposición della, vio la ventana de la reja que caía al jardín; y, por estar cerrada a causa del
herido, preguntó si aquella ventana respondía a algún jardín, y fuele respondido que sí; pero lo que más conoció fue que aquélla era la misma cama que tenía por tumba de su sepultura; y más, que el propio escritorio, sobre el cual estaba la imagen que había traído, se estaba en el mismo lugar. (87)

Finally, she summons the crucifix, “testigo de la fuerza que se me hizo” (88) to testify on her behalf, displaying it to Estefanía at the moment she reveals the truth about their relationship. Leocadia’s careful analysis and her findings are all directed toward proving the genealogical narrative of Luisico.

The alternative to this thorough investigation, the suppression of information, is also pervasive in Fuerza. Many critics have discussed the oppressive atmosphere of silence in the novela; Parker Aronson, for example, reads “un espacio de silencio cargado de significado a pesar de su aparente amoralidad debida a la ambigüedad narrativa” (78-9). De Rentiis likewise notes that “the recurrent oppositions ‘seeing’/‘not seeing,’ ‘hearing’/‘not hearing,’ ‘talking/‘not talking’ play a fundamental role” (De Rentiis 159). This silence, like that which pervades El médico de su honra, is geared in every instance toward preserving the appearance of honor, and hence of limpieza, in an effort to quell the potentially dangerous “pública voz y fama” (Hernández Franco 196). Early in the novela, the narrator declines to identify Rodolfo “por buenos respectos, encubriendo su nombre” (77)—shielding his family line from the imputation of illegitimacy. The silence that surrounds Rodolfo’s and his friends’ actions—“todo lo cubría la soledad del lugar, y el callado silencio de la noche, y las cruces entrañas de los malhechores” (78)—serves the same purpose. Reading the final lines of the novela in terms of limpieza also accounts for the curious detail that “quedó toda la casa sepultada en silencio” (95). This final silence is similar to what Ter Horst, writing about Calderón, refers to as "the silent man..."
world of marriage" (91), but in the context of Fuerza, we see the ideological apparatus behind maintaining that silence.

The very last lines of Fuerza perfectly encapsulate its indebtedness to limpieza ideology, the romance, and the miracle narrative: “permitido todo por el cielo y por la fuerza de la sangre, que vio derramada en el suelo el valeroso, ilustre y cristiano abuelo de Luisico” (95, original emphasis). The improbable but desired union of Rodolfo and Leocadia, its divine origins, the oblique and ironic reference to the character of Luisico’s lineage, all authorized by one of the few direct references to blood in the work. Of early modern Spanish images of conversion, Pereda argues that their “Baroque potential for credibility and its artistic persuasiveness is as much a testimony of faith as it is, at least obliquely, one of doubt” (“Performing Doubt” 81). In Fuerza, Cervantes presents both credibility and doubt through the interplay of romance and miracle. Both genres are invoked in the same move that dismantles them, revealing their fundamental impossibility. Their efficaciousness in producing a convincing fiction also, necessarily, points to their fissures. This paradox is possible only because of the unique paradox of blood in early modern Spain: the prodigious efforts toward making it legible and comprehensible serve only to underscore its unavoidable opacity. In other words, when it comes to limpieza de sangre, one must always see and then believe. Blood purity is, unavoidably, a fiction, like the novela: reading Fuerza, one can see and believe—while, at the same time, disbelieving.

Thus to consider Fuerza in terms of its supposed realism versus idealism is to ignore its achievement; these two poles frame the novela in terms of what the fiction is like rather than what it can accomplish. In his introduction to the Novelas ejemplares,
Cervantes insists, “yo soy el primero que he novelado en lengua castellana” (Cervantes, Novelas, 52). While the story of Longinus, and Scripture more generally, can inspire true conversion and belief, with Fuerza, Cervantes argues that fiction’s power lies in its ability to advance belief even as its possibility is revoked. Phrased in another way, it would take a real miracle for the action of Fuerza to be credible and for the fiction of blood purity to be true. These two fictions are not simply entangled or analogous, but rather mutually constitutive. The fiction of blood purity allows the novela to cohere, while the novela allows limpieza de sangre to be true—at least temporarily. Even further, though, by insisting that the fiction of blood purity can only ever be temporarily true, Fuerza encroaches on its readers’ everyday lives by calling into question the very premise of the most important contemporary social question, allowing the possibility of thinking outside pervasive, pernicious ideologies.
CHAPTER III

Double Vision

Seeing Blood from the Creaturely Perspective in Calderón's El médico de su honra

On October 21, 1621, Rodrigo Calderón, one of the most influential statesmen during Philip III's reign, was publicly executed in the Plaza Mayor of Madrid. Widely known as the favorite's favorite—he enjoyed considerable influence with the Duke of Lerma, the privado of the king—he was condemned on a variety of trumped-up charges, including counts of exorcism and the use of magic potions (Feros 257). His fall from political grace was swift and calculated; Philip IV inherited from his father a political system widely believed to be corrupt and ineffective, and one of his first goals as monarch was to turn the tide of public opinion.

In early 1621, confidence in the Spanish monarchy was waning: Spaniards saw "a monarchy controlled by corrupt ministers, with royal prestige diminished by the delegation of too much power to [the king's] favorites, Spain's international reputation damaged by agreements reached with rebels and heretics, and worst of all, a general feeling that the Spanish monarchy was no longer invincible" (Feros 254). In order to distance himself from his father's regime, Philip IV decided to stage a public spectacle designed to restore faith in the monarchy's integrity, honor, and efficacy. Fray Juan de Santa María, one of the most important Spanish political writers of the early seventeenth century, encouraged Philip to "purge the head of the tumors" (qtd. in Feros 256) of the old regime. Rodrigo Calderón was selected as the emblem of the corruption that plagued Philip III's reign, and the new monarch planned a "ritual murder" designed to "serve as a symbol of cleansing and regeneration" (Elliott, Imperial Spain 108). Adopting the role of
physician to the body politic, Philip IV ordered Calderón's throat cut, leaving him to bleed out on a scaffold in full view of a hopefully approving, newly confident public.

Unfortunately for the new king, the popular response was not as enthusiastic as expected. Calderón's refusal to confess, along with his "stoic comportment on the scaffold . . . unexpectedly created a martyr" (Stradling 40). Instead of distancing himself from his father's rule, Philip IV burdened his new government with "a massive condemnation" (Elliott, *Count-Duke* 108). Philip's intended triumph, a bloodletting to cure the entire kingdom, backfired: it was a cruel, unnecessary, bloody disaster.

Eight years later, Pedro Calderón de la Barca (no relation) staged another cruel, unnecessary, bloody execution in a different kind of public forum. *El médico de su honra* presented its audience with another calculated bloodletting that resulted in an unchanged political status quo. The bloody spectacle of Mencía's death at the hands of her husband, Gutierre, and the approval of that murder by the king, pose a number of complex social, political and theological questions to the audience. But foremost among them is the same question both Pedro, the historical king of *Médico*, and Philip IV, in the audience, must face: how to deal with this bloody mess?

*Médico* is one of the most controversial early modern Spanish plays; throughout the history of its reception, critics have been, and remain, divided on what the play is fundamentally about. To consider only a brief sample of the enormous critical history, interpretations have identified the central issue as honor (Cruickshank, “Introduction”; Dunn; McKendrick, "Politics of Honor;" and Balizet, among many others), identity (El Saffar, “Anxiety”), melancholy (Soufas), the failures of an individual monarch (Fox, Arellano), hysteria (Lauer), violence (Carrión, “Historias”) and chaos theory (Reed). Yet
none of these interpretative frames seems able to account for all or even most of the play's language, action, and implications. Instead, there is something excessively meaningful about the play, something that eludes or even defies explication. William Blue, for example, argues that Médico "is about reading itself" (408), and that its meaning, consequently, changes to reflect reading practices. McKendrick ("Anticipating Brecht") and Cruickshank ("Pongo mi mano") both find something in the final scene that points beyond itself, an invitation to question the limits of the play. Most thoroughly, Georgina Dopico Black traces the "adultery of signs" (116) to argue that honor plays, and Médico in particular, are "plagued by a semiotic instability that troubles the very notion of legibility, or, indeed, of epistemological certainty" (20). For Dopico Black, the meaning of Médico is that meaning cannot be concretely determined; Beusterien, in spite of a historically rich analysis of seventeenth-century Spanish blood and bleeding, likewise concludes, “Calderón uses Mencía’s blood to signal the incongruency between signified and signifier” (Beusterien, Eye 63). Yet there is something unsatisfying about these explanations: they draw overly general and even anachronistic conclusions from very precise, historically grounded premises. They do not address why this particular play, using the specific language that it does, should arrive at this kind of excessive or unstable meaning. They also do not adequately account for the relationship between the two major plot lines of the play, the marital drama between Gutierre and Mencía and the succession drama between Pedro and Enrique.

While I agree that Médico certainly stages a kind of semiotic proliferation, a resistance to fixed meanings, this instability should not be the end point of our analysis. I argue, rather, that the play exploits the discursive density of blood to reveal the links
between the domestic space, the political order, and theological questions. In other words, the meaning of Médico appears unstable because its central sign, blood, is itself unstable. Over the course of the play, leading up to the final gory, grisly scene, Calderón demonstrates how the perceived impurity of Mencía's blood expands outward to implicate an entire society. By the end, it has become such an impossibly complex knot of meanings that the king himself is powerless to unravel it. The problem begins in Gutierre's perception of impurity: the moment he imagines Mencía's blood as corruptible, he initiates an unstoppable plague. Gutierre's perspective mirrors the ideology behind limpieza de sangre, in which the mere suspicion of impurity irrevocably stains the genealogical record. Pedro, like Gutierre, is implicated in this perspective, and his authority as king is insufficient to cure impure blood.

Following Walter Benjamin's discussion of Trauerspiel in relation to Calderón's honor plays, I refer to this perspective as the creaturely view of blood—that is, one that is cut off from redemption, and instead enmeshed in the field of guilt. For Benjamin, in both Trauerspiel and the comedia de honor, the theatrical universe is populated by mere creatures. His choice of the word Kreatur over Geschöpf highlights the distance of these characters from salvation: while the former "emphasizes the relatedness of human beings to animals, i.e., to creaturely life," the latter signifies "a product of God's Creation" (Wiegel 4, note 2). Benjamin argues that in Calderón's honor plays in particular, "[t]he Spanish drama found in honour the creaturely spirituality appropriate to the creaturely body, and in doing so discovered a cosmos of the profane" (87). In using Benjamin's term, I argue that Médico takes place in just such a cosmos—divine redemption is simply not available to any of its characters, and they use their creaturely perspective to relate to
each other's creaturely bodies, treating the play's central sign—blood—in purely profane terms. But in a Benjaminian context, profane is not equivalent to secular. Rather, it should be thought of as "the distance from Creation," or "in terms of a difference from Creation, but in full awareness of one's own present language originating from biblical language, of its derivation from a beginning that must be thought of as always already lost" (Wiegel 29, original emphasis). When the creaturely is conceived in these terms, "language acquires its double sense," in which words and figures "reflect the double reference to both profane and religious ideas: double reference instead of equivocality" (29). In this way, the language and images of Médico can be read two ways: within the context of the honor play—a profane universe—and as pointing beyond that genre. If, as Benjamin argues, "[t]he creature is the mirror within whose frame alone the moral world was revealed to the baroque" (91), then Médico asks its audience to consider the difference between the person who gazes into the mirror and the image the mirror presents. By acknowledging the creaturely perspective at work in the play, we can analyze this difference.

Drawing on Dopico Black's assertion that, in Médico, "Calderón criticizes the limpieza de sangre ideology and the institution charged with preserving it much more radically than has been previously suggested" (117), I argue further that this criticism is broader even than Dopico Black suggests—it extends to the king himself—and that Calderón does provide a path out of the instability and uncertainty that the play portrays. Calderón's exploitation of the discursive density of blood allows him, in the final scene, to simultaneously obscure and evoke the understanding of blood that would move his characters out of the cyclical, all-encompassing violence that plagues them: blood as the
sign of redemption through bodily participation in Christ. In the final scene, I argue, Calderón tests the eye of his audience—and in particular that of Philip IV—to see beyond the profane spectacle and perceive the spiritual principle behind it. Médico, I argue, is fundamentally about the inevitability of proliferating signs when one perceives blood from the creaturely perspective, and by revealing what a social, political, and epistemological nightmare that perspective is, the play argues that this unsustainable complexity should be reduced to a simple, sacramental truth.

By taking blood as the central element in Médico, we can move beyond interpretations that limit the play by reading it as a response to one particular issue or that present it as a Derridean or Lacanian text avant la lettre. Instead, it allows us to access Calderón's intricate, exhaustive exploration of the complexities of blood, and how he proposed to resolve an almost impossibly complex problem.

I. Patient Zero

At the outset of the play, the marriage of Gutierre and Mencía seems to promise stability and continuity. Through the sacrament of marriage, "the husband and wife ostensibly become one flesh" (Dopico Black 115), and the result of this perfect interpenetration of bodies is a single, stable bloodline. In order to guarantee this kind of stability, only Gutierre and Mencía's bodies can be implicated in the marital bond, and the overlap must be complete. In the first act of Médico, the language that both Gutierre and Mencía use to describe their love for each other illustrates precisely such a bond; in Gutierre's words, "vive tan unida / a dos almas una vida, / dos vidas a un albedrío" (496-

40 Burk also acknowledges that blood carries multiple meanings in the final scene but offers a reductive choice: “This last scene presents two versions of how to read Mencía’s spilt blood: as safeguard of Gutierre’s honor or indictment of his actions” (Burk, Salus 93).
8). Even when they are apart—as when Gutierre is imprisoned overnight—they cannot be completely separated. When a guard frees Gutierre so that he can see Mencía, Gutierre argues that the guard did him a favor, but, because of his connection to Mencía, he was already somewhat liberated:

hizo muy poco por mí
en dejarme que hasta aquí viniese; pues si vivía
yo sin alma en la prisión,
por estar en ti, mi bien,
darme libertad fue bien,
para que en esta ocasión
alma y vida con razón
otra vez se viese unida;
porque estaba dividida,
teniendo en prolija calma,
en una prisión el alma,
y en otra prisión la vida. (1199-1210)

Because Mencía's body contains Gutierre's soul, he was only partially absent; they are inextricably joined together. In the seventeenth-century Catholic understanding of marriage, both Mencía and Gutierre's souls are contained within the marital body. Mencía describes the bodily element of the marital bond using a metaphor of two instruments tuned to each other. The two are so profoundly connected that bodily harm to Gutierre affects Mencía as well: "si el golpe allá te hiriera / muriera yo desde aquí" (1219-20).

Through their marriage, then, Gutierre and Mencía realize the consolidation of both noble households into a single bloodline, achieved through the union of the marital body. Given their status, it seems safe to assume that the "diligencias y prevenciones justas y santas que ahora se usan" (Cervantes, Novelas 94), cheerfully dispensed with in *La fuerza de la sangre*, were taken into account before their union was authorized, and that both Mencía
and Gutierre belong to some of the most illustrious lineages. Thus, through their marriage, Mencía and Gutierre will continue the hegemony of noble, old Christian blood.

In spite of these initial appearances of stability, however, it quickly becomes apparent that this union of bodies is problematic. The resulting instability calls the idyllic nature of their relationship into question and renders their bloodline suspect. For example, we quickly learn that, in spite of Gutierre's flowery language, both he and Mencía have some reservations about their union. Mencía and Enrique were in love before her marriage, and although she is a dutiful wife, she does not feel the passion for Gutierre that she felt for Enrique. After seeing the latter again, she bitterly laments, "¡Aquí fue amor! Mas ¿qué digo? / ¿Qué es esto, cielos, qué es esto? / Yo soy quien soy" (131-33). In other words, who she is now is a married woman without love. Gutierre's old flame, Leonor, might also not be completely out of the picture. When Gutierre decides to go to court to serve Enrique, Mencía casually implies that he might have an ulterior motive: "¿Quién duda que haya causado / algún deseo Leonor?" (514-5). Both spouses, then, have an attachment to someone outside their marriage, potentially doubling the number of bodies implicated in the bloodline of their offspring.

The breaking point for this tenuous situation comes about because of the threat Enrique, or more specifically his dagger, represents. As he recovers from the shock of learning that Mencía has married, Enrique tries to glean an explanation from her guarded language. Because Gutierre is present, Mencía cannot speak freely, and Enrique interprets her impersonal platitudes—"oídla vos, que yo sé / que ella se disculpará" (423-4)—as an invitation to visit her that night. When he does, and when Gutierre unexpectedly returns home, Mencía is terrified, knowing what it could mean for her. She hides Enrique in her
bedroom and comes up with a clever plot to hurry him out of the house, but he accidentally leaves a dagger behind. Gutierre discovers the dagger, and learns at court the next day who its owner is.

The presence of Enrique's body in Mencía's bedchamber seriously complicates the marital bond. Instead of the seamless joining of flesh implied by marriage, and even instead of the unspecified and only potential problems posed by the past involvement of Enrique and Leonor, Enrique's access to the domestic space irreversibly damages the marital bond. The problem begins with the vulnerability of Mencía's body, which is staged several times throughout the play. After he is released from imprisonment, Gutierre comes home to find Mencía sleeping alone in the garden. At first, he interprets her solitude as a sign that all is well: "bueno he hallado mi honor" (1900). But, moments later, the very same fact of her solitude also serves to undermine his confidence: "Pero ¿ni una criada / la acompaña? ¿Si acaso retirada / aguarda...?" (1903-5). The possibility that someone else might have access to the garden—and to Mencía—is made even more menacing because of the confusability of Gutierre's body with Enrique's. After Mencía wakes up, Gutierre learns that Enrique must have been in the house because Mencía, unable to discern in the darkness who is addressing her, unwittingly refers to her husband as "tu alteza" (1931). This provokes a panic in Gutierre—if Enrique was in the house, he in some sense replaced Gutierre, altering the terms of the marital bond. Enrique's unannounced, late-night visit is threatening because of the access it provides to the closed space of marriage. Ariane Balizet has insightfully analyzed the relationship between the domestic (marital) space and the preservation of sexual honor through blood purity. In the ideology of honor, Mencía's body and the domestic space must both remain inviolable
because they are, functionally speaking, the same: "The home—along with its perceived perdurability or weakness—was metonymized in the female body, on which patriarchal systems of honor were contested" (Balizet 26). Thus the evidence of Enrique's presence in the most interior, guarded space of the home stands in for a violation of Mencía's body, as well, and, by extension, the marital bond.

In the context of the honor plays, this violation—embodied in Enrique's dagger—serves a very specific function. Left behind in Mencía's innermost rooms, it makes visible the suspected threat to Mencía and Gutierre's bloodline. Following Balizet, in Médico and other honor dramas, "familial honor is embodied by women, whose material bodies are seen as penetrable, porous, and vulnerable to moral and sexual failing" (29). If Mencía's body is subject to penetration by the dagger—an obvious phallic symbol—then the familial honor can be called into question. Once the genealogical record is, to any extent, compromised—even if the compromise is only suspected—it becomes permanently stained. María Elena Martínez's analysis of the centrality of the female body in preserving familial honor reveals the material effects of the ideology of limpieza de sangre. Over the course of the sixteenth century, limpieza investigations increasingly shifted the object of inquiry onto women's bodies and genealogical records. For many institutions with limpieza statutes, the change from patrilineal investigation only to a dual-descent model doubled the emphasis on women's influence over the bloodline: they became the main sources of impurity, both for their genealogical contribution and for their influence over the domestic sphere (Martínez 55). By the beginning of the

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41 This metonymy is laid out quite explicitly in Cervantes's El celoso extremeño: the intrusion into Carrizales's house is equivalent to an intrusion onto the wife's body. In that case, too, this corruption is inevitable from the moment Carrizales perceives his wife as corruptible. In Egginton's explanation, "purity at once fears intrusion and desires it" (33); in my reading, the creaturely view of blood necessitates this conflicting dynamic.
seventeenth century, then, the "feminization of impurity" (Martínez 54) predicated the status of the entire lineage on women's perceived purity. Because limpieza could only be established and maintained by negative proof—by the absence of any evidence of impurity—pure blood became an impossible ideal, a "legal fiction" (Martínez 77), substantiated only by the perceived purity of the wife.

Following Américo Castro's insight that "[l]os dramas de honra tenían como invisible trasfondo el drama vivo de los estatutos de limpiza de sangre" (33), Melveena McKendrick clarifies the link between Martínez's historical analysis and early modern Spanish honor plays: the obsessive concern of the Spanish theater with the sexual purity of women—with the so-called honor code—is a “translation of obsessional energy from one area of experience to another” ("Honour/Vengeance" 322). The stringent demands of the honor code result from a transposition of the concern over limpieza de sangre onto women’s chastity. In other words, it is a transference of cares “from an arena where action is impossible—race—to one where action is feasible—sex” (323). In short, then, “honour and limpieza are one and the same” (319). Thus the threat to Mencía's honor and, as a consequence, Gutierre's, embodied in the dagger, makes limpieza impossible. Both honor and limpieza rely on an unattainable and untenable position: they can only ever be lost, never regained.42 Mencía's potential penetration by the dagger, viewed through the poetic lens of honor and the historical lens of limpieza ideology, irreversibly stains her lineage. In order to attempt to undo the damage of the dagger, Gutierre must go to the source of the problem: Mencía's blood.

42 This irrevocability is neatly encapsulated in Leonor's succinct complaint: "¡Ay de mí, mi honor perdí! / ¡Ay de mí, mi muerte hallé!" (1019-20).
As soon as Mencía sees the dagger, it becomes apparent that this is indeed the location of the problem. When Gutierre presents her with it, although neither he nor Mencía yet know whose it is and what that might imply, Mencía quite accurately foresees her death:

Mencía. ¡Tente, señor!
¿Tú la daga para mí?
En mi vida te ofendi.
Detén la mano al rigor,
detén. . . .

Gutierre. ¿De qué estás turbada,
mi bien, mi esposa, Mencía?
Mencía. Al verte ansí, presumía
que ya en mi sangre bañada
hoy moría desangrada. (1377-83)

This vision of the play's final scene, a "profecía exacta," reveals Mencía's "capacidad uncanny de prever su futura muerte" (Carrión, "Historias de Violencia" 29). Given the wife's precarious position in preserving the familial honor, any implication of transgression refers back to the content of her blood and to what it transfers to the next generation. The dagger, which introduces the threat of impurity and infection to the bloodline, thus necessitates an impossible cure—one that must result in Mencía's death—but Gutierre, seeing no alternative, shortsightedly attempts it regardless.

For Gutierre, too, the moment the threat is acknowledged is the moment of a bodily crisis. After matching the dagger he found in Mencía's rooms with Enrique's sword, he can no longer avoid the conclusion that cuckoldry is possible. Over the course of his monologue at 1659-1712, Gutierre narrates the crisis of the marital body and the measures it necessitates. At the beginning of the monologue, Gutierre, feels he can speak freely: "Ya estoy solo, ya bien puedo / hablar" (1585-6). After examining each piece of evidence—the presence of another man in the house, the fact that the lights went out at a
suspicious moment, the dagger, the similarity between the dagger and Enrique's sword—he finds a plausible explanation that does not imply Mencía's guilt. Temporarily convinced of Mencía's innocence and the safety of his honor, he settles into the security of the stock *comedia* affirmation of identity: "Mencía es quien es, / y soy quien soy" (1649-50). Gutierre explicitly rests this affirmation on the purity of the union, but this purity is immediately subverted:

No hay quien pueda  
borrar de tanto esplendor  
la hermosura y la pureza.  
Pero si puede, mal digo;  
que al sol una nube negra,  
si no le mancha, le turbá,  
si no le eclipsa, le hiela. (1650-6)

Given the extreme contingency of limpieza, as soon as the idea of purity is introduced, Gutierre becomes aware of the impossibility of the ideal and begins having doubts. In other words, to acknowledge that purity is at stake is to invite doubt and thus impurity into the picture, as Gutierre does. Because his suspicions call purity into question, his honor is no longer synonymous with the marital body; the seamless joining of flesh becomes an impossibility, and honor itself becomes a separate entity. For this reason, from the moment Gutierre articulates his suspicion, he is no longer, strictly speaking, alone: "A peligro estáis, honor, / no hay hora en vos que no sea / crítica" (1659-61). From this moment onward, Gutierre conceives of his honor as a separate body (as at 1665, 1894, 1900 and 2455), and, for him, this is the sick body that must be cured.

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43 In Maravall's reading, "soy quien soy" affirms the utterer's identity in terms of what is expected of him socially: "No se trata de afirmar un ser íntimo, ni una escencia individual, ni un yo interior, sino de hacer admitir una mera y rigurosa correlación entre lo que uno va a realizar y lo que le corresponde socialmente y los demás esperan de él" (Maravall 64). In this context, Gutierre affirms his identity as a married man—that is, one who is secure in the marital bond.

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However, Gutierre's diagnosis of his jealousy has another, broader consequence. While he perceives the problem—the illness—to be the particular threat to his bloodline, as the spread of contagion makes clear, it is, rather, the creaturely view of blood. For this reason, just as honor becomes detached from the marital body, so does the sickness. After Gutierre acknowledges the threat to his honor, he identifies the specific nature of that threat:

¿Celos dije?
¡Qué mal hice! Vuelva, vuelva
al pecho la voz; mas no,
que si es ponzoña que engendra
mi pecho, si no me dio
la muerte, ¡ay de mi!, al verterla,
al volverla a mi podrá;
que de la víbora cuentan
que la mata su ponzoña
si fuera de si la encuentra. (1697-1706)

Simply by voicing the problem, Gutierre brings it into being. It is not only the case that, in the world of Médico, "[u]tterances in the play that are intended by their speakers to be not even constative in nature . . . assume performative force" (Dopico Black 127, original emphasis), but rather that, more precisely, this performative force is generative. Gutierre does not merely become jealous because he voices his jealousy; his jealousy, like a blood-borne pathogen, begins to exist independently of him and hence to affect other characters, as well.\(^44\) The poison that Gutierre imagines, the specific threat to his and Mencía's bloodline, becomes a generalized threat. Gutierre's diagnosis—his acknowledgment of the corruptible nature of Mencía's blood—activates his creaturely view of blood and begins the proliferation of meanings. As he attempts to cure his honor

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\(^{44}\) Benjamin quite accurately perceives this aspect of Calderón's wife-murder plays; of El mayor monstruo del mundo, he writes, "For Herod does not kill his wife out of jealousy; rather it is through jealousy that she loses her life" (133, original emphasis). Gutierre and Herod's jealousy, the affective term for their creaturely perspective, exists as a force independent of them and affects other characters, as well.
and to restore the marital body to its prior, unproblematic state—to contain and purify the bloodline again—he instead provokes a political crisis, broadening the illness well beyond its original scope.

II. Epidemic

Gutierre's first attempt at a cure is to take his problem to Pedro. Because, from his perspective, the problem lies with his honor, the decision to seek a remedy from the fons honorum is a logical one. Strictly a sovereign privilege, the fons honorum is the guarantor of honor, "aquel que otorga y legitima la honra . . . a toda la clase noble" (Domínguez Hermida 38). On stage, the fons honorum translates into the stock rey de comedia, known for "his convention-sanctioned intervention in the domestic life of his subjects" (King 44), especially in matters of honor. Given these conventions, Pedro should, in theory, be able to provide the cure for Gutierre's ills. Instead, however, the impurity that Gutierre perceives continues to spread, moving like a contagion from the marital body to the political body. The process of infection proceeds the same way: because the relationship of the king's two bodies mirrors that of the marital body, an initially idyllic bond is disrupted by the threat of spilled blood.

As with the marital bond, initially, the bodily integrity of the king and his office serves to organize and guarantee the continuation of social and political structures. In the former case, those structures are embodied in the perpetuation of the individual bloodline; in the latter case, the structure in question is the hereditary monarchy. Beyond sharing the same goal, the relationships between Gutierre and Mencía, on the one hand, and Pedro and the state on the other, are analogous to one another. For sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish political theorists, following Aristotle's Politics, the
individual noble household could be read as a microcosm of the state. For example, Juan de Mariana's influential *De rege et regis institutione*, written for the princely education of the future Philip III, affirms this analogy and cites Aristotelian authority: "For it must not be thought that the king has less authority in the province than the head of the family in the house; for the king is equivalent to a ruler of the whole people, as Aristotle says" (158). Additionally, the metaphor of the king as married to the polity was well known to political theorists across Europe from the late medieval period onward (Kantorowicz 212). The king and the ruler of the household—the husband—are aligned, while the people as a whole and the wife occupy the same, subordinate position. The specific nature of this analogy depends on the relationships between the bodies involved. At both levels, two distinct bodies are joined; the result is a seamless interpenetration whose issue manifests in a single, stable bloodline.

In the case of Pedro's relationship to the state, the two bodies in question are both the king's. Following Ernst Kantorowicz's classic study of the king's two bodies, we can read Pedro as occupying two distinct positions. He is both the particular physical instantiation of the monarchy and the sign of the polity as a whole. In an ideal ruler, these bodies would completely overlap; that is, the individual monarch would perfectly exemplify the values of the body politic. Following Mariana's reasoning, the king is not exempt from the laws but should rather follow them more closely than anyone, "keeping

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45 For a perspective on the king's two bodies that is more contemporary with Calderón, we could turn to Fadrique Furió Ceriol's 1559 *El consejo y consejeros del príncipe*, which, according to Dian Fox, "set the pace of the *speculum principis* genre in Golden Age Spain" (67). Writes Furió Ceriol, "todo príncipe es compuesto casi de dos personas: la una es obra salida de manos de naturaleza, en cuanto se le comunica un mismo ser con todos los otros hombres; la otra es merced de fortuna y favor del cielo, hecho para gobierno y amparo del bien público, á cuya causa la nombramos persona pública" (qtd. in Fox 67). He clearly distinguishes between the discrete, finite occupant of the office of the monarch and the continuous, public position.

46 Margaret Greer, in "Los dos cuerpos del rey en Calderón," explores Calderón's awareness of different facets of the king's office, particularly with respect to the two bodies model.
justice sacred" (165). In addition to fulfilling these duties, the ideal king would also
guarantee the stability of the monarchy through the continuation of his lineage. Arguing
for the supremacy of a hereditary model of kingship, Mariana reasons, "princes come
along, as it were, continuously to a continuous state, a very salutary advantage" (125,
emphasis mine). Pedro, at the outset of the play, appears to embody precisely this image
of kingship. Even after Enrique's fall, he is determined to arrive in Seville:

he de pasar adelante;
que aunque este horror y mancilla
mi rémora pudo ser,
no me quiero detener
hasta llegar a Sevilla. (20-4)

His resolve is such that it surprises Diego and Arias, who find his behavior less than
fraternal. But Pedro's behavior in this instance should be kingly and not fraternal; the
personal connections of the king should not detract from his royal duties.47 Pedro's haste
to arrive in Seville, while perhaps not quite brotherly, is all the more appropriate to the
king for precisely this reason; his willingness to leave his brother behind speaks to his
conscientious kingship.48 Moreover, in terms of guaranteeing political stability, in the
first scenes, Pedro's royal body is unproblematic. It stands in contrast with Enrique's,
which, after the fall from the horse, "A un tiempo ha perdido / pulso, color y sentido"
(10-11). After learning that Mencía is married, Enrique interprets the fall as a certain

47 Further evidence for the appropriateness of Pedro's actions can be found in Diego de Saavedra
Fajardo's writings about Carlos V's well-known temper. In his 1640 Idea de vn príncipe político cristiano—
which represents, according to Dian Fox, the standard of the ideal ruler in mid-seventeenth century Spain
(14)—Saavedra Fajardo distinguishes between the king's private behavior and that of the public figure. He
notes that while Carlos V was often temperamental in private, he never permitted his emotions or personal
connections to be known while appearing in the guise of sovereign: "Entonces mas es el Principe vna idea
de Governador, que Hombre" (Saavedra Fajardo 45). In this scene in Médico, Pedro acts according to the
idea of a prince.

48 Lloyd King, comparing Calderón's Médico with the earlier version by Lope de Vega, notes that
the Calderonian Pedro is pointedly more solicitous about Enrique's health, concluding that the audience
would perceive the tension between personal concern and political duty (45).
portent of his death: "pues es cierto / que muero" (274-5). While Enrique's body is threatened and uncertain, Pedro's appears secure and reliable. Although Enrique's blood could be spilled, endangering the hereditary succession, Pedro's remains neatly contained: his royal bloodline appears safe. His two bodies seem, at the start of the play, to be in perfect sync and directed toward the continuation of the institution.

As is the case with the marital body, however, soon there are signs that the body natural and the body politic do not completely overlap; once Pedro arrives in Seville, the portrait becomes much more complicated. Although his audiences are efficient and effective, they are also somewhat arbitrary:

Soldado 1. Tu majestad aqueste lea.
Rey. Yo le haré ver.
Soldado 2. Tu alteza, señor, vea este.
Rey. Está bien. [. . .]
Viejo. Un pobre viejo soy: limosna os pido.
Rey. Tomad este diamante.
Viejo. ¿Para mí os le quitáis? (579-91)

The old man's incredulity at Pedro's generosity is somewhat moderated by the reply: "para darle de una vez quisiera / solo un diamante todo el mundo fuera" (592-3). The gift is extravagant, but Pedro seems to be motivated less by generosity and more by apathy and even a desire to be rid of his own authority. His action appears even more arbitrary in light of the diamond he gives to Ludovico at the end of the play (2707). In that case, Pedro rewards Ludovico's discretion and service in informing him of Mencia's murder; but during the audience in Seville, he grants the same gift simply because he is asked. In short, Pedro's "center of consciousness is not well established" (El Saffar, “Anxiety” 116), and the inconsistencies in his behavior lead to confusion (Fox 68). Already in the first act, Pedro loses the appearance of the perfect embodiment of justice and prudence.
Conflicting views on the historical Pedro's kingship compound the ambiguity of his onstage actions. Known to history as both "Pedro el Cruel" and "el Justiciero," during the first half of the seventeenth century, there was considerable debate as to which epithet was the better fit. While Pero López de Ayala's fourteenth-century chronicle of Pedro and Enrique paints the former in a harsh light, two seventeenth-century histories (H. Ávila Sotomayor's and Juan de Vera y Figueroa's) present Pedro in a "favorable" light (Cruickshank, "Calderón's Pedro" 114). More popular modes of representation did not resolve this variation. Ballads present him as the cruel murderer of his own wife on suspicion of adultery with Fadrique—his half-brother and Enrique's brother—whom he later had killed (113). Meanwhile, plays take a more measured view that includes some favorable elements (116). In sum, contemporary audiences were already primed to view Pedro ambiguously. Added to his uninspiring behavior in the first act, this Pedro does not appear to be the perfect instantiation of kingship, and Gutierre's actions set the stage for further complications.

The definitive rupture in the king's bodies comes about as a result of Gutierre's attempted cure. When Gutierre infers whose dagger he has found, he perceives the threat to his honor and addresses it to the *fons honorum*, telling Pedro, "La vida de vos espero / de mi honra; así la curo / con prevención" (2089-91). Because spilling blood is strictly forbidden, he cannot remove the threat to his honor by killing the offender, Enrique. With Gutierre hidden behind a curtain,²⁹ Pedro questions Enrique about Mencía and returns the dagger to him; during the exchange, Enrique's hand slips, and he accidentally cuts Pedro.

²⁹ Cascardi reads these concealments as "a likely historical allusion to Philip IV, who had small windows cut into the council chambers of the Alcázar of Madrid so that he could follow political discussions undetected" (72). With these allusions, Calderón invites the audience to read the drama onstage in terms of contemporary issues.
Given the superficial nature of the cut, along with the fact that the injury is "clearly unintentional" (Fox 75), Pedro's dramatic, incredulous response—"¿Tú me quieres dar la muerte?" (2271)—seems completely unwarranted. Prior to this scene, there is no indication of the future conflict between Pedro and Enrique. Considered in light of the conduct appropriate to the king, Pedro's response is improper. Saavedra Fajardo cautions the prince against allowing his emotions to distort his apprehension: "porque si se consideran bien las caídas de los Imperios, las mudanzas de los Estados, las muertes violentas de los Principes, casi todas an nacido de la inobediencia de los afectos, i pasiones a la razon" (44, emphasis mine). Pedro's overly passionate response does, in some sense, presage his violent death. Gutierre not only fails to cure his honor with help from the king, but in his effort, he unwittingly brings death to Pedro's door.

The exchange of the dagger, considered alongside Mencía's response to it, can be read as a scene of infection, explicitly connecting the impurity that afflicts Gutierre's marriage with the impurity that afflicts Pedro's kingly body. Pedro's response to the cut he suffers links his fate with Mencía's: "¿Desta manera / tu acero en mi sangre tiñes? / ¿Tú la daga que te di / hoy contra mi pecho esgrimes?" (2267-70). He responds to the dagger the same way Mencía does: as a clear sign of imminent death. This is the case because, as it did for Mencía in terms of the marital bond, the dagger signals a definitive rupture in the stable relationship between Pedro's body natural and the body politic. At the moment Enrique draws Pedro's blood and anticipates the murder at Montiel, Pedro's natural body becomes dissociated from the enduring office; he is, rather, exposed as a panicked, vulnerable, bleeding human body.
Mencía and Pedro's shared response to the dagger, beyond highlighting the violent fates of both characters, disrupts the initial stability of the play at a deeper level. Pedro's "ostensibly inviolable body becomes . . . alignable with Mencía's," and both "are revealed as being subject to penetration, bodies that bleed" (Dopico Black 153). At the outset, Pedro and Gutierre are aligned through the metaphors commonly used to describe kingship. Because Pedro's blood is drawn, however, he becomes connected to Mencía instead. This inversion of the established order threatens to end in horrific violence not only for Mencía but for Spain as well. Prompted by the cut on his hand, Pedro suffers a vision that is nearly identical to Mencía's:

¡Válgame el cielo!, ¿qué es esto?  
¡Ah, qué aprehensión insufrible!  
Bañado me vi en mi sangre,  
muerto estuve. [. . .]  
Ruego a Dios que estos principios  
no lleguen a tales fines,  
que con diluvios de sangre  
el mundo se escandalice. (2283-94)

The future that Pedro envisions is that of the civil war over succession that Enrique will eventually win. If Pedro's body is no longer inviolable, then there is no guarantor of political stability. The blood Enrique spills portends a bloody, civil conflict and the violent installation of a new, not-quite-hereditary ruler.

The particular mode of Mencía's death thus spreads outward to contaminate the entire polity. Through the violence implied by the dagger, the marital drama and the succession drama are thus deeply implicated in each other. In Georgina Dopico Black's reading, the dagger takes on so many different meanings—a "dagger-tongue-phallus" (151)—that the "adultery of signs" (116) it embodies ultimately points to "the instability that inheres in any system that takes itself for authoritative" (115-6). Although the dagger
points to different events, however—uxoricide and regicide—it’s semiotic content remains consistent in that it leads, in both cases, to problematic bleeding. Regardless of its location, the dagger always signifies the imperfect containment of blood within the body. In the first attempt at a cure, rather than finding a solution, Gutierre dramatically expands the scope of the problem. The king, like Gutierre, perceives blood from the creaturely perspective, as a corruptible substance that he must purify. Because both share this perspective, the spread of the infection is inevitable. Thus Pedro's efforts to resolve the problems posed by Mencía's blood will, like the cure Gutierre attempts, likewise prove useless. Instead, Gutierre continues to compound the problem, and the limits of Pedro's kingship become apparent.

III. Treatment

Forgotten by the king and left to his own devices, Gutierre's actions continue to develop the medical metaphor. As he does so, however, the number of implicated bodies continues to multiply, moving him farther and farther away from the marital body and the stable bloodline it promised. The localized illness has already contaminated the king's bodies, and Gutierre's attempted cure continues the apparent spread of contagion. In addition to simply spreading the illness, the treatment confounds medical procedure: the proposed cure paradoxically implies yet more contamination, activating a variety of medical discourses that build on each other to produce an incredibly complex, untreatable condition. Although the fundamental problem remains, in Gutierre's medical opinion, within Mencía's blood, the treatment reveals that it is inescapable and ubiquitous. While the real source of the problem remains the creaturely view of blood, the various kinds of
illness that Gutierre's cures evoke expand and compound the language of contagion, making a cure impossible.

Interpretations of the medical language of the play have tended to diverge on the question of whom, exactly, the title refers to, and, consequently, who the patient is and what illness afflicts him or her. For Wardropper, the matter is fairly straightforward:

"Don Gutierre se equipara al médico; Doña Mencía, su esposa, depositaria de su honor, se equipara al enfermo; el deshonor se equipara a la enfermedad" ("Poesía y drama" 585). Cruickshank, however, notes that both Enrique and Mencía employ medical language—specifically, that of curing oneself while still in health—before Gutierre ("Introduction," 16-17), complicating this schema somewhat. Amezcua, in the reading closest to my own, argues that the real illness "no es, por último, la deshonra, sino la desorbitada preocupación por ella" ("Mujer y enfermedad" 97). Lauer, in a contrary reading, argues that the illness is not related to honor at all; it is hysteria: "doña Mencía de Acuña es un personaje histérico-melancólico cuyos síntomas transforman a su ingenuo esposo en un médico metafórico que cura literalmente a su esposa sangrándola" (292). This reading—part of a long line of criticism that, mistaking the victim of misdiagnosis for the source of the problem, indict Mencía as the guilty party—fails to account for Gutierre's jilting of Leonor, which, in McKendrick's reading, shows him to be "pathologically jealous before the play opens" ("Anticipating Brecht" 227). I argue that this confusion stems from the fact that, in Médico, roles often overlap. As Gutierre's cure progresses, the confusion of bodies muddles the neat division of metaphorical roles from literal ones, doctors from patients, and cure from contagion.

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50 See, for example, Wilson, "Gerald Brenan's Calderón." "Doña Mencia was innocent; she was also imprudent. Her lies and her subterfuges showed that her virtue was in danger. She earned her death because she did not see how to act with such a husband in such an age" (7).
When Gutierre first attempts to define the doctor-patient relationship, he runs into a serious stumbling block: Enrique's royalty. The first, and most obvious, remedy in a case of honor is to confront the wife and her lover and kill both. However, because Enrique is a member of the royal family, the situation becomes more complicated. Spilling royal blood was a crime (as is made clear when Gutierre and Arias are imprisoned for drawing swords in the presence of the king), and so this option is not available. Gutierre confronts this paradox—Enrique's blood, because it pertains to the fons honorum, should provide honor but instead threatens Gutierre's—when he brings his complaint to Pedro:

si en rigor tan fiero
malicia en el mal hubiera
junta de agravios hiciera,
a mi honor desahuciara,
con la sangre le lavara,
con la tierra le cubriera.
No os turbéis; con sangre digo
solamente de mi pecho. (2093-2100)

Pedro's apparent perturbation is understandable: Gutierre's veiled threats certainly seem to imply that he means to kill Enrique—that spilling his blood would provide the cure—and his hasty retraction at the end is puzzling. How will Gutierre's own blood wash clean the dishonor he perceives? To get himself out of this bind, Gutierre comes up with another solution. Given that his blood is not merely his own, but that of the marital body, as well, then Mencía's blood is also implicated. Gutierre confirms as much after the audience with Pedro: "Muera Mencía. Su sangre / bañe el lecho donde asiste" (2305-6); Gutierre will focus his therapeutic efforts on Mencía.

The simplicity of Gutierre's statement, though, obscures a more complex set of relations, which refer to multiple bodies and bonds simultaneously. Cruickshank, in one
reading, finds the title of the play senseless: in his reading, Gutierre's honor is not "diseased" and thus "no cure is needed and his metaphor is superfluous" ("Pongo mi mano" 45). In Gutierre's own language, however, as we saw above, his honor is indeed afflicted. In the decision to bleed Mencía, Gutierre sets up yet another bodily relationship—through the concept of honor—further complicating the medical metaphor and the cure. Gutierre's honor has become detached from the marital body, and it is this entity that he regards as his patient. As a separate body, honor becomes Gutierre's double, his alter ego; it goes where he goes, it belongs to him but remains separate. The first part of Gutierre's cure—in contrast to the treatment of Mencía herself—is thus applied to himself through his honor, and not exclusively to Mencía.

In addition to referring to honor, however, a number of critics have read Gutierre's treatment in terms of melancholy; as a more or less textbook case of the suspicious, solitary insomniac, he certainly fits the profile. In response to this condition, Gutierre's medical reasoning is sound. His first recommendation is to prescribe silence:

Y así os receta y ordena
el médico de su honra
primeramente la dieta
del silencio, que es guardar
la boca, (1672-6)

In standard seventeenth-century medical practice, "[d]iet was often seen as the first and foremost way of curing those suffering from acute forms of madness" (Carrera 134), including the various forms of melancholy. When diet was not enough, however, if symptoms progressed, doctors "would prescribe bloodletting to ensure that the corrupt humours were removed from the head or the body" (133). Gutierre's mounting suspicion—the progression of his melancholy—leads him to monitor Mencía more
closely, and to find, via the letter to Enrique, further confirmation of her guilt. His prescription of bloodletting applies both to his melancholy condition and to the problem of purifying his bloodline. The discourse of melancholy is superimposed onto the already existing widespread contagion, multiplying and complicating the diagnosis while preserving the same treatment. In order to treat his melancholy, Gutierre's bloodletting affects first himself and then his honor.

Honor, though, is a bloodless body, and in order to effect this cure, a literal doctor must also attend to a literal body—Mencia's. Teresa Soufas, exploring the melancholy of Calderón's jealous husbands, argues that the bloodletting is misdirected: "it is evident that Gutierre has prescribed the cure for the wrong patient" (Soufas 194). If melancholy were the only illness at work, this might be the case; it is, however, only one of a number of ailments suggested by Gutierre's actions. Additionally, because of the links between Gutierre and Mencia's bodies—because the marital body joins them—a cure prescribed for honor implicates Mencia, as well. Honor, even when it has become detached, is the middle term of the marital body. Gutierre and Mencia remain connected through it, and, as we saw above, the feminine body is uniquely implicated in matters of honor as interpreted through blood. For this reason, the bloodletting Gutierre prescribes for his honor is transferred onto Mencia. To carry out the prescription, Gutierre coerces the doctor Ludovico, blindfolded and at knifepoint, to treat Mencia, who lies unconscious in her bedroom; he is ordered to bleed her "hasta que . . . ella expire y se desangre" (2590-1). Ludovico's presence in the house is, in some sense, a repetition of Enrique's intrusion. Like Enrique, Ludovico approaches Mencia's seemingly lifeless body in the innermost reaches of the house, compromising, as before, the domestic space and Mencia's body.
The penetration of her skin with medical instruments mirrors the implied penetration of Enrique's dagger. As with Enrique, that penetration signifies a threat to the purity of the blood—in Ludovico's case, the centrality of Mencia's blood is even more pronounced. This reprisal, carried out at Gutierre's wish and for the purpose of eliminating the problem, once again serves to multiply it and move even farther from the possibility of health. While Enrique's intrusion presented the nonspecific threat of illegitimacy, Ludovico's access to Mencia's body and blood presents a more precise threat: the introduction of decidedly impure blood. Cruickshank has shown that "there is no doubt that the doctor/cristiano nuevo association was still very much alive in the seventeenth century" ("Metaphorical 'criptojudaísmo'" 34). Ludovico's name clearly implies a non-Spanish origin, and his profession doubles the perception of otherness. Thus it is not only the case that Gutierre's preoccupation with honor "betrays all the symptoms supposedly associated with Jews or New Christians" ("Metaphorical 'criptojudaísmo'" 39), but that those symptoms manifest as impurity in the blood. In his effort to undo the potential for illegitimacy in his bloodline, then, Gutierre compounds the problem by adding the threat of contamination via converso or new Christian blood, as well.

In addition to compounding the problem, Gutierre's treatment of Mencia's blood leads it to contaminate many other residents of Seville. After performing the bleeding, Ludovico is blindfolded once again and led away from the house so that he will not be able to incriminate Gutierre. In order to be able to find the house again, Ludovico covers his hands in Mencia's blood and pretends to feel his way along the walls of the houses they pass, "manchando todas las puertas, / por si pueden las señales / descubrir la casa" (2702-4). This image of bloodstained doors suggests the red markings on the doors of
houses marked by plague (Cruickshank, "Introduction" 24, note 28). Prior to the writing and performance of Médico, the most recent major outbreak of plague took place beginning in 1596, eliminating the entirety of the sixteenth century's population growth (Elliott, Imperial Spain 294; Feros 152). The devastation of the outbreak, and its proximity to Calderón and his audience, means that this interpretation of the red markings would have been familiar and legible to spectators. In this light, the association between Mencía's blood and widespread contagion is unavoidable. The illness, because it is Ludovico who spreads it, is also strongly linked with Jewish or converso origins. As Ludovico stains the nearby houses with this infecting blood, contemporary audiences would also be reminded of works like the 1507 Libro verde of Aragón or the 1560 Tizón de la nobleza española, which exposed the converso origins of Spain's noblest families and explicitly cast those origins as stains. Mencía's blood, through this complex layering of signification, is a sign of a plague of impure bloodlines that afflicts all of Seville. As with the dagger, the attempted solution only expands the scope of the problem. The dagger expanded the threat of violence and instability from the domestic space onto the political sphere; Gutierre's cure of the illness provoked by the dagger spreads the feared contagion all over the city. Mencía's impure blood becomes Seville's impure blood.

As we saw above, given the precarious position of women with respect to the bloodline under limpieza de sangre ideology, the scrutiny of Mencía's sexual purity follows a perverse kind of logic. Her purity comes to stand in for that of the nation as a whole through the relationship of the marital body to the king's bodies. Similarly, the specific nature of the impurity that Gutierre brings about in her blood through his attempted cure infects the population at large. As before, the impurity hinges on Mencía's
femininity. Gutierre's choice of phlebotomy as a means of removing impurity invokes the natural phlebotomy of women's bodies: menstruation. Gutierre's insistence that Menía bleed out "por breve herida" (2590) suggests an excessive, imposed menstrual bleeding. Contemporary medical views on menstrual blood frequently—although not, as Gianna Pomata has shown, uniformly—saw the substance as inherently impure. Following humoral theory, many medical authorities considered women to be determined by cold and wet characteristics, which could lead to putrefaction (Amezcua 94). Menstrual blood in particular was seen as susceptible, and as potentially contaminating the entire body: "lo crudo de su sangre menstrual contamina toda su conformación fisiológica" (94). In addition to the impurity of converso heritage implied through Ludovico's involvement, Gutierre's cure thus activates the medical discourse surrounding the inherent impurity of women.

Even beyond these medical resonances, however, the convergence of converso blood and menstruation underscores a specific, local interpretation of an unexpected phenomenon: Jewish male menstruation. The idea of male menstruation was hardly new, and in Galenic medicine, "[t]he parallel between menstruation and hemorrhoids was commonplace" (Pomata 124). Jewish male menstruation, too, had a long history in the medical writings of the medieval and early modern period, typically in the context of accusations of ritual infanticide (Pomata 120). In early modern Spain, though, influential medical authorities took advantage of the anti-Semitic and patriarchal context of limpieza ideology "in an effort to associate the Jewish body with impure blood and bleeding" (Beusterien, “Jewish Male Menstruation” 453). Rather than drawing on the tradition of healthful bleeding and menstruation, authorities such as Juan de Quiñones and Gerónimo
de la Huerta, physician to Philip IV, "borrowed misogynist attitudes about menstrual blood and neatly combined them with anti-Semitism" (451). The result was that "medical discourse about menstruation was . . . uniquely combined with legal discourse in order to create a notion of racial impurity" (447). This view of Jewish male menstruation "feminizes" the "body of the cultural Other" at the same time that it maps racial otherness onto women's bodies (Dopico Black 4). In other words, in the medical view sanctioned by limpieza ideology, menstruation serves as the central term in a mutually destructive relationship in which Jewishness is feminized and femininity is racialized through uncontrollable blood flows.

In the case of Médico, this understanding of Jewish male menstruation is relevant because of the overlap of illnesses implicated by Gutierre's cure of bleeding Mencía. First, because of the strong associations between Gutierre's behavior and melancholy, the cure refers, in some sense, to himself. The self-inflicted quality of the bleeding is reinforced by Gutierre's participation in the marital body and by his doubling through the creation of the honor body. This cure applies to a male body. Second, Ludovico's access to Mencía's blood and the implied sexual penetration of her body, coupled with the strong associations between bloodletters and conversos, together suggest the presence of Jewish blood. Lastly, the fact that it is Mencía's body that bleeds provides the final link in the chain. At each stage, a total bloodletting provides a kind of cure: it permanently removes the source of melancholy, it eliminates all traces of converso blood from the bloodline, and it cures the inherent impurity of women's bodies, preventing genealogical uncertainty by precluding the possibility of cuckoldry. At the same time, though, it is the choice of a bleeding cure that introduces all of these problems. In his attempt to treat a patient,
Gutierre multiplies both patients and illnesses, and the resulting convergence of medical discourses manifests the most compounded version of impurity he could have imagined.

This intersecting, layered, convoluted result is the inevitable consequence of the creaturely perspective of blood. In terms of the spread of the epidemic and the proliferation of suggested impurities, Mencía's blood becomes more and more complicated, beginning with the moment Gutierre perceives it as potentially contaminated. The dizzying complexity of signification leads to semantic breakdown; trying to explain his diagnosis, Gutierre is unable to find the right words: "no sé cómo lo diga, / que no hay voz que signifique / una cosa, que no sea / un átamo indivisible."

(2131-4). Wardropper concludes from this that words cannot express "the ambiguity and complexity of honour" (qtd. in Pérez Magallón 348), while Dopico Black argues that Médico, like other honor plays, is "plagued by a semiotic instability" (20). Both assessments contain a part of the picture; as we saw from McKendrick, honor and blood are deeply implicated in each other. In terms of semiotic instability, in Gutierre's case, it is located specifically in possible meanings of blood. Nevertheless, the problem is more general than Wardropper's reading suggests, and at the same time more specific than in Dopico Black's. Mencía's blood, in the scenes leading up to the emblematic staging of her death, is not merely a domestic honor problem but a national political crisis; and the target of the play's critique is not "the very notion of legibility, or, indeed, of epistemological certainty" (Dopico Black 20), but a particular understanding of blood. Gutierre's treatments illustrate this, and the outlook of the infected, impure political body confirms that, while the king should provide the cure, his implication in the creaturely view prevents him from acting.
IV. Prognosis

The scene in which Pedro confronts the valientes, regardless of what else it reveals about his kingly preoccupations, demonstrates his powerlessness and recklessness in the face of impure blood. Donning a disguise, the king explores the city at night, checking up on his subjects and starting scuffles for little to no reason:

Rey. Vi valientes infinitos [. . .]
mas porque no se me alaben
que no doy examen yo
a oficio tan importante,
a una tropa de valientes
probé solo en una calle. (1427-36)

Pedro specifically notes that he tests the valientes to determine the quality of their blood:
"con su sangre / llevaron iluminada [. . .] la carta del examen" (1438-40). But this method of checking dishonor is both dangerous and ineffective. Diego reprimands the king for his irresponsible behavior: "Mal hizo tu majestad" (1437); O'Connor concurs that Pedro lacks good judgment. Given that political stability depends on Pedro's bodily integrity, putting himself in harm's way amounts to a serious political risk. This plan also seems like a rather ineffective way of patrolling the streets and rooting out impure blood.

Dishonor, it seems, runs rampant in Seville, but there is little Pedro can do about it.

When confronted with more noble blood problems, Pedro is equally hapless. When Leonor first seeks an audience with him to air her grievances against Gutierre, Pedro comes up with a scheme that will, he thinks, cleverly reveal all. Hiding Leonor behind a curtain, Pedro questions Gutierre about their relationship. This stratagem goes wrong, however, as Gutierre's accusations against Leonor's honor lead to both Gutierre and Arias drawing swords in front of the king—landing them both in prison. Pedro's attempt to resolve an honor issue—which, as we have seen, amounts to a blood issue—
fails completely. In spite of this, when Gutierre comes to complain about Enrique, Pedro decides to use the same device: he hides Gutierre behind the same curtain while he questions Enrique. It should be noted that Pedro frames this stratagem in terms of medical language: "en el mismo caso pide / el daño el propio remedio, / pues al revés lo repite" (2168-70). The result in this second attempt is even more damaging than the first: it results in Enrique cutting Pedro's hand and accusations of attempted regicide. Put otherwise, Pedro's attempted cure for cuckolded blood—for a compromised bloodline—is completely ineffective. The second failure of this device foreshadows the ultimate failures of both Pedro and Gutierre as physicians.

This failure is inevitable because, as both Pedro's failures and Enrique's attempted cuckoldling show, royal blood is as involved in creaturely confusions as nonroyal blood. In fact, Pedro explicitly denies authority in matters of honor: "El honor es reservado / lugar donde el alma asiste; / yo no soy rey de las almas" (2195-7). For all his faults as a ruler, Pedro is indeed correct about this: his every effort to restore or maintain honor fails, or, at the very least, the audience is made to know that it must inevitably fail.

Castillo and Egginton have argued that, on the early modern Spanish stage—and specifically in the case of Médico—"the plot [of the comedia] will inevitably resolve to seal the rupture between King and honor" (426). As the king matures into his role as supreme monarch, "honor serves as the medium of internalization of all the civil institutions within the private sphere, manifested as pure authority, associated with the will of God" (426) because the king is God's earthly representative. In the case of Médico, though, Pedro's decisions are shown to be ineffective in the play itself, and all available evidence points to their eventual failure. The play is set at precisely this
historical moment—just before Enrique's coup and Pedro's murder—to highlight this contingency and thereby demonstrate the inability of the monarch to restore honor. The audience is repeatedly reminded of Pedro's downfall: not only by means of the dagger exchange scene, but through the songs that foretell Pedro's murder. In the final act, a group of musicians sing, much to Pedro's annoyance, about Enrique's departure and the future tragedy at Montiel: "Para Consuegra camina, / donde piensa que han de ser / teatro de mil tragedias / las montañas de Montiel" (2634-7). Thus although it may appear that Pedro resolves his subjects' problems, the setting of the play pointedly emphasizes the emptiness of his gestures.

The limitations of the monarch, however, are not confined to Pedro's particular body. The questions surrounding the legitimacy of Enrique's kingship render his decisions equally problematic. The reason for this is that blood, viewed from the creaturely perspective, is beyond the authority of the monarch. His political authority is powerless to stem the proliferating meanings, along with all their attendant questions, when blood is merely a substance to be corrupted. This critique of Pedro’s fallibility extends to the role of the seventeenth-century monarch in confronting the complexity of blood. When blood is conceived of in terms of honor, either on the stage or off, the monarch is faced with a crisis. For seventeenth-century critics of limpieza de sangre statutes, honor was indeed what was at stake. Agustín Salucio, in a 1599 treatise arguing for limitations on blood purity statutes, considers the problem precisely in terms of honor, demonstrating the links between Médico's marital drama and its succession drama. One of Salucio's primary concerns is the reputation Spain had among foreigners, who, he feared, viewed the Spanish obsession with pure blood as a sign that all Spaniards were, in
fact, of Jewish, Muslim, or heretical origin: "los estatutos sirven de que los estrangeros comunemente nos llaman marranos" (7r). Because of the anxiety exemplified by Salucio’s fears, to a contemporary audience, honor is lost as soon as limpieza enters into the picture.

For both Gutierre and the nation, this loss is irreversible. Pedro's inability to take meaningful actions mirrors the ineffectiveness of Philip IV in response to the concept of blood purity. Neither Pedro nor Philip IV can truly be the fons honorum. As Salucio explains, the state of affairs should be that "el tesoro de la onra consiste en la suprema potencia y autoridad del Rey" (40r). If, however, honor is determined by the public perception of one's genealogical purity, the king is no longer the ultimate arbiter of honor. Instead, "la fortuna, o el olvido" (40r) have just as much, if not more, influence. This ineffectiveness was earlier demonstrated when Philip IV tried to exert control over limpieza statutes and reassert his royal authority in matters of national and personal honor. In 1623, he issued a royal pragmatic aimed at limiting the influence of the limpieza statutes. The pragmatic would have capped the number of investigations into any one person's genealogical record at three. Because of the decentralized nature of the statutes, however, many institutions preferred to retain their right to investigate whomever they wished; as a result, the pragmatic was largely ignored (Martínez 78). As a result, the creaturely view of blood remained in practice in Spain, and audiences of Médico could connect Pedro's inability to resolve these problems with their own monarch's.

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51 One of the most well-known foreign pronouncements, that of Edmund Spenser in A View of the Present State of Ireland (1596), seems to confirm Salucio's fear. Writes Spenser, "of all nations under heaven I suppose the Spaniard is the most mingled, most uncertain and most bastardly" (44).
Pedro's ineffectiveness is highlighted further by the mixing of metaphorical registers. As we've seen, Pedro adopts the medical language that links him with Gutierre at the same time that Gutierre takes on the role of the king in miniature. Thus when Pedro refers to resolving the problems of creaturely blood, he casts it in medical terms. This use of medical language mimics that associated with limpieza statutes during Calderón's time. In Salucio's treatise, the catastrophes caused by limpieza ideology are framed in terms of illness—specifically, plague: "No ay peste en el mundo tan contagiosa, y el ayre della solo basta a inficionar, y donde entra la mancha no es posible que salga, y poquita levadura corrompe toda la massa" (25v-26r). In the language of the play, Gutierre is explicitly cast as the doctor; according to seventeenth-century political thought, however, the king could also take on this metaphorical role. Fray Juan de Santa María's 1617 treatise on Christian kingship—"a bestseller of the period" (Feros 238)—the República y policía christiana, calls on the king to take on precisely this role: "el buen Rey ha de ser medico de su pueblo, y ha de curar y apacentar sus vasallos" (9r). If the illness suggested by Médico is the creaturely view of blood in seventeenth-century Spain, the cure would be meaningful action by the king. Pedro, however, falls far short of providing a model: confronted with the grisly spectacle of Mencía's murder, he despairs, "No sé qué hacer" (2792). His "cure"—to marry Leonor to Gutierre, on the spot, over the latter's objections—provides only the most tenuous solution, simply exchanging Leonor's body for Mencía's. Gutierre's hasty conference with Pedro leaves the audience in no doubt that the same fate awaits her. When Gutierre wonders what he should do if Leonor were to appear unfaithful, Pedro assures him that there is indeed a "remedio:" Gutierre's own, "sangralla" (2926, 2929). We are left to assume that "Leonor habrá de repetir una a una
las acciones de Mencía" (Amezcua 90), and that Mencia's murder could be repeated endlessly.

Neither Gutierrez nor Pedro can halt the constantly multiplying meanings of blood and the spread of confusion. Within the set of actions available to the characters on stage, there is no possible solution presented. Instead, the characters are forced to look outside the realm of the possible and consider the impossible, the mythical, and the fantastical. Through the language of the phoenix, Mencía suggests a solution to both levels of the drama—further revealing their links and situating the central problem in blood—but this solution can never be realized. When Mencía is first reacquainted with Enrique, she draws attention to his illegitimacy and the problems it poses by wishing that Enrique could be like the phoenix:

Vuestra alteza, gran señor,
trate prevenido y cuerdo
de su salud, cuya vida
dilate siglos eternos,
fénix de su misma fama,
imitando al que en el fuego,
ave, llama, ascua y gusano,
urna, pira, voz y incendio,
nace, vive, dura y muere,
hijo y padre de sí mismo (173-82)

Alan Soons interpreted the image of the phoenix in this play to imply "a quasi-immortality in Enrique" (373); I argue that its function is just the opposite. Because of the phoenix's associations with immortality, its use in Médico highlights the contingency of descent and the limits of succession. In other words, the phoenix represents the ideal solution to both the problems of preserving the honor of individual noble bloodlines and to a hereditary monarchy. With the phoenix, both father and son, there is no possibility of contamination of the bloodline. Reproduction would not require that one's wife be closely
monitored and investigated for signs of infidelity; no wife is necessary at all, and the threat of cuckoldry—of illegitimacy—is removed. In terms of the stability of the monarchy, a phoenix-like monarch would preclude the possibility of a contentious succession like that of Pedro and Enrique. Kantorowicz, discussing the importance of phoenix imagery for "corporational doctrines in general" (391), argues that the metaphor captures the essence of the perfect integration of the king's two bodies. Because each phoenix is "at once Phoenix and Phoenix-kind" (389-90), a king who resembles a phoenix is both the particular, mortal individual and the entire institution of the monarchy. Mencía's wish that Enrique be like a phoenix, however, shows the impossibility of both metaphorical solutions. It is precisely his illegitimate bloodline that threatens her own, and it is the same bloodline that threatens to disrupt political stability by replacing Pedro's. Given that only fantastical solutions are presented, it would appear that for the characters of Médico, there is no exit from this violent, profane world. Neither physician nor king can provide a lasting cure. There is, however, a third set of bodies suggested by the play's language that are pointedly absent. This third set is not merely metaphorical, and it is those bodies—the source of both the medical and monarchical metaphors—that could provide a solution.

V. A Second Opinion

The blood covering the stage in the final scene comes to signify an overwhelming, unspeakable number of meanings. Mencía's blood suggests the rupture in the marital

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52 Consider Mencía's wish in relation to the riddle posed by Blanca, another falsely suspected wife, in Del rey abajo, ninguno: "¿Cuál es el ave sin madre / que al padre no puede ver, / ni al hijo, y le vino a hacer / después de muerto su padre?" (1323-1326). Margaret Van Antwerp notes the centrality of the riddle to the play's action; I would expand on her view to argue that its importance derives from the threat of cuckoldry, and hence the contamination of the bloodline, that drives the play's action. As opposed to Médico, however, the marital drama does not imply political instability. Because of the mistaken identity of the would-be cuckolder—he is not, in the end, the king—there is ultimately no threat to the monarchy.
body, or the potential for contamination in the bloodline she shares with Gutierre. It underscores Enrique's illegitimacy and its implications for the political order. Through the dagger, the contaminating agent, it signals the instability of the monarchy as a whole, and in particular points to Pedro's murder at his brother's hand. Through the medical language Gutierre applies to it, and because Ludovico paints the blood all over Seville, it connects the perceived impurity of one woman to the perceived impurities of an entire society. Cruickshank, in his critical introduction to *El médico de su honra*, notes that it was customary in seventeenth-century Spain mark the doors of houses infected with the plague with red crosses (24). But the markings also suggest the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt, when a sign in blood on the door signaled that its inhabitants would be saved from harm (Pérez Magallón 392). These interpretations seem to contradict each other: a sign of disease and death on the one hand and a sign of life on the other. Yet there is no possibility of redemption on this stage; Pedro, although he calls himself "supremo juez" (2781), does not provide for life but condones murder. In final scene, what he sees repulses him: "ese horror que asombra, / ese prodigio que espanta, / espectáculo que admira, / símbolo de la desgracia" (2876-9). With no cure in sight, and framed by this gruesome spectacle, there seems to be little hope.

Another perspective is possible, however. A number of critics, including Cruickshank (*Calderón* 28) and Dopico Black (157), have drawn attention to the sacrificial nature of the final scene. But if Mencia is sacrificed, the audience must consider to what purpose; given the immediate marriage between Gutierre and Leonor, this sacrifice seems to accomplish nothing. An alternative is proposed, however, by this absence of change. What *could* this sacrifice accomplish? Why set up a sacrificial scene
and then fail to show what it achieves? I argue that the audience is meant to read into this absence, to see beyond it, and recognize the missing rewards of this sacrificial body. The staging is extremely suggestive, especially to a Catholic audience. When Ludovico approaches Mencía's unconscious body, he describes what he sees thus:

Una imagen
de la muerte, un bulto veo
que sobre una cama yace;
dos velas tiene a los lados
y un crucifijo delante. (2575-9)

Mencía's body is framed as though on an altar, surrounded by candles, and framed by the only specifically religious object to appear in the entire play. Framing her body in this way—as a sacrifice, displayed with the image of another sacrifice—cannot but evoke the spectacle of the Eucharist. Christ's sacrifice is pointedly contrasted with Mencía's: while the former redeems, the latter condemns.

This argument by absence has a long history in the context of vision and sacred images. Beginning in the medieval period and continuing well past Calderón's time, when it comes to religious imagery, Christian thinkers distinguished between two kinds of seeing: literal and spiritual. Spiritual sight, available only to believers, allowed one to see beyond material images and objects and perceive the "spiritual archetype" behind them (Kessler 99). Nonbelievers, in contrast, were thought to be limited to literal sight, perceiving only the objects in themselves. In the theatrical context, if we conceive of the final image in emblematic terms, it can be read as an image by the audience. A theatrical emblem allows for the broadest possible engagement with the spiritual message it conveys. 53 This emblem in particular should be thought of in terms of who is excluded

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53 This kind of image carries a didactic function. As Pope Gregory I wrote in a letter written between 599-600, touching on a central theme in the debate over religious images through the early modern
from its message. Central to the writings on sacred images was the importance of belief to spiritual perception. Jews, pagans, and other nonbelievers would not be able to see beyond materiality. Jews were excluded in large part because of Christian views on their textual practices: because they "read their own scripture literally, that is, with no sense of its true meaning as a prophecy of Christ, Jews also could not affect the transfer from object to archetype" (Kessler 100). For Christian thinkers, this spiritual blindness was especially obvious in the case of representations of Christ. Because Jews "had refused to find God in the person of Christ," they likewise "could not discover the spirit that imbued material images" (Kessler 95).

The crucifix that hangs above Mencía's corpse is no thus no incidental stage prop. It is essential to understanding how the final scene is to be perceived. Contemporary audiences were well acquainted with the importance of images in terms of devotional practices. By the end of the fifteenth century, a common way of deducing that someone was a crypto-Jew was the lack of images in the prayer space (Pereda, "Through a Glass" 273). The crucifix thus primes the audience to read a potential context of prayer onto the stage, while highlighting the lack of this context in all of the previous scenes. Second, the choice of this particular religious image encourages the audience to link the sacrifice of Mencía with Christ's sacrifice, and to consider the bodily participation in Christ through his blood. By means of spiritual vision, the audience must read beyond the theatrical images on stage and perceive the spiritual archetype behind them: the Eucharist. With

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period, images had broad appeal for their didactic qualities: "For what writing provides for readers, this a picture provides for uneducated people looking at it, for in it the ignorant see what they should follow and the illiterate read the same from it" (qtd. in Kessler 77).
this vision, instead of the "imagen / de la muerte" that Ludovico sees, the audience could instead see an image of life as promised through the sacrament.54

While all of the characters on stage might fail this test of spiritual vision, the audience might not.55 The same resonances and allusions that are available to the characters are also available to them. In another, similar context, Calderón makes this argument-by-absence explicit. In another of his so-called wife-murder plays, *El pintor de su deshonra*, the final, bloody scene in which Juan Roca shoots Serafina hinges once again on the impossibility of redemption within this profane world. This is made clear through the differences between the *comedia* version and the *auto sacramental* of the same name, written about a year later. The *comedia* version of *Pintor* has quite a bit in common with *Médico*: both center on a seemingly idyllic marriage that is upset by the reappearance of the wife's old lover; both wives refuse to engage in an extramarital affair, citing their honor; both are nevertheless murdered by their husbands; and the husbands are both immediately forgiven by the political authority and hastily married to other women. In both cases, too, the final scene hinges on interpreting the meaning of blood. When Juan Roca must explain the grisly scene of his wife's murder to the prince, he says, "Un cuadro es, / que ha dibujado con sangre / el pintor de su deshonra" (3102-4). Once again, the wife's blood must be spilled in order to guarantee the purity of the bloodline, and the prince's involvement highlights the political stakes of controlling women's blood.

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54 In this, *Médico* offers support for Anidjar's claim that “one cannot maintain a strict distinction between the two bloods . . . between the blood of the Eucharist and the blood of the Inquisition” (59).
55 Sieber identifies a similar operation in *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes*, specifically in the second *tratado*, in which Lazarillo secretly consumes the priest’s bread: “His consumption and contemplation of the face of God—that is, of the word of God become flesh—precludes his understanding of it as a *visibile verbum*. He has blinded himself to its semiotic nature by possessing it as ordinary bread, while attributing to it extraordinary meaning. . . . Lazarillo confuses his literal and figurative hungers because he fails to read properly the metonymy of his own discourse” (Sieber, *Language* 29).
The bewildered, ineffective response of the political authority reveals that temporal authority cannot resolve or redeem.

In the auto version, however, another outcome is possible. Juan Roca, the jealous, murdering husband, is transformed into Pintor, the role of God. When Naturaleza Humana, the wife character, betrays Pintor, however, a violent outcome is not required. Instead, Pintor explains,

\begin{quote}
que esta diferencia hay 
en los duelos de la honra 
entre Dios y el hombre, pues 
si a los dos vengarse toca, 
se venga uno cuando mata, 
pero otro cuando perdona. (1041-6)
\end{quote}

Given the didactic function of the auto, and the fact that God himself here argues against killing an innocent woman, it seems reasonable to conclude that the husbands of Médico, Pintor, and A secreto agravio, secreta venganza are meant to be seen as cruel. And while, in the comedias, only the wife's blood is spilled, in the auto version of Pintor, this is not the case. Pintor not only forgives Naturaleza Humana but retouches her appearance—specifically, a nail, the mark of her betrayal—with his own blood: "retocada del carmín / que de mis venas derramo, / volverá a su primer lustre, / si en esta fuente la lavo" (1684-7). In the world of the auto, forgiveness and redemption are indeed possible through the blood of God.

The final piece of the three-part bodily analogy hinges on this absent redemption; on the participation in the corpus mysticum of the church through the corpus verum—the Eucharist. Neither Gutierre nor Pedro are effective physicians, but the source of both their metaphorical identities can be. In describing the good Christian king as a physician, Santa María takes his inspiration from representations of Christ as a healer. Specifically,
he cites Matthew 9:12: "Non est opus valentibus medicus, sed male habentibus" (qtd. in Santa María 35). In the world of Médico, as we have seen, the king cannot cure the ills that plague his society, but Christ the healer could. The language of kingship, transferred onto Gutierre and Mencía, is also applicable here; representations of Christ as king are too ubiquitous to enumerate. And, finally, the language of marriage is also strongly associated with participation in Christ through the Eucharist. Indeed, the indissolubility of the marriage bond is modeled on and guaranteed by "la unión indisoluble entre Cristo y la Iglesia," which is "el porqué y la raíz del orden jurídico peculiar del vínculo cristiano" (Muñoz García 56). In addition to the this correspondence at the level of sacramental mystery, links between the marital bond and Christ's bond with the Church have metaphorical resonances, as well. In De los nombres de Cristo, Fray Luis de León explicates a number of epithets and nicknames for Christ. With "esposo," he explains that this name is chosen because of the bond it implies: it is "más estrecho y de más unidad que ninguno" (287), more so than any earthly tie. When one unites with Christ in the Eucharist, the two bodies become "cuasi un cuerpo mismo" (288), as in the marital body. Thus the relationship between the corpus verum and the corpus mysticum embodies, as it were, the confused bodily relationships of the characters on stage. Rather than complicating this schema, though, this last pair provides a stable frame of reference for the meanings of the other pairs and points to a clear solution to a complicated problem.\footnote{Anidjar explores the resonance of blood purity as a “theological construct” with respect to the body of the church (“Lines of Blood 120).} Whereas with the marital body and the king's bodies, the spilling of blood led to violence and confusion, the movement of Christ's blood between the individual and the church leads to salvation. If the characters on stage were to view blood from this sacred...
perspective—if they were to begin from this understanding—blood would become a stable, redemptive sign rather than the overwhelming, impossible signifier that it is in the play.

This reading of Médico thus builds and expands on interpretations of the play that identify inquisitorial practices as central to its purpose. But Dopico Black's reading, which foregrounds the inquisitorial influence, stops short of the full range of meanings suggested by the play:

Perhaps Calderón's greatest subversion of the honor code consists in precisely this: letting us, as spectators, walk away with the knowledge that any reading, like Gutierre's inquisition of his wife's body, that seeks to wed Truth with punishment can only either confirm its own assumptions or betray the adultery of the signs on which it has relied. (163)

This reading posits a limit to what Médico can mean: one can only read into things so much before violence becomes inevitable. But while this might be true for the characters on stage, it ignores the privileged position of the audience. As Cascardi argues, "Calderón closes his play with emblems, visual images that suggest the timelessness of ritual" (74). The emblematic quality of the final images allows the spectator or reader to look beyond the limits Dopico Black sees and to find another kind of truth that does not necessitate punishment but rather redemption. The final scene is thus a call to action to eliminate not just inquisitorial ideology but all ways of looking at blood that are not sacramental.

More specifically, Médico strongly suggests that the monarch is the one responsible for bringing about this sea change. While the entire final scene should be read in terms of what is absent and not accomplished, it is Pedro in particular who stands out as a character who fails to act meaningfully. Gutierre and Mencia's actions follow the inexorable logic of the honor drama, but when all of the other characters look to Pedro
for resolution, he is paralyzed and can only affirm the actions of others. As discussed above, Philip IV’s response to the overwhelming discursive density of blood was less than effective; it served only to tacitly approve the practices of limpieza-investigating institutions. Calderón’s critique of the monarch’s efficacy points, in part, at his audience. By showing what an ineffective, ambiguous, and—significantly—temporary ruler Pedro is, Calderón provides the negative example for Philip IV’s kingship.

If we accept that the figure of the king is the intended subject of Calderón's critique, we can also make sense of one of the more contentious, if minor, plot points in Médico: Pedro's bet with Coquín. Upon learning that Coquín considers laughter his profession, Pedro offers him a deal:

Pues cada vez
que me hiciéredes reír
cien escudos os daré;
y si no me hubiereis hecho
reír en término de un mes
os han de sacar los dientes. (778-83)

However, as with Gutierre's decision to murder his wife, we must consider this bet not in terms of justice or caprice, cruelty or humor, or any other binary terms that impose an outside morality and worldview onto the stage. Instead, the bet must be considered in terms of its relation to the play's central sign—blood—and removing teeth must be considered alongside the removal of blood. Dentistry and phlebotomy were strongly linked practices in the seventeenth century. If we consider Diego Pérez de Bustos's Tratado breve de flobotomía, first published around 1630, we can see just how closely: while the first two-thirds of the treatise discuss the finer points of bloodletting, the last

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57 Among many other interpretations, Parker, for example, views the bet as confirmation of Pedro's cruelty; Watson's view is exactly the opposite, finding clemency in the bet; and Ortiz Lottman reads it as a thinly veiled death threat.
third is devoted to dentistry. Even more illuminating for our reading of this play is a laudatory poem, authored by a licenciado Andrés de Tamayo, praising Pérez de Bustos's knowledge and advising him on how to deal with his detractors:

¿Qué ingenio, Bustos famoso,
viendo vuestras advertencias
de tan doctas experiencias
no ha de quedar envidioso?
Mas si acaso el malicioso
os mordiere con cautelas,
mandadle sacar las muelas,
y aún no es castigo capaz,
porque hay lengua tan mordaz,
que ha menester sanguijuelas.

To silence critics, Tamayo recommends precisely the same punishment Pedro proposes to Coquín: removing the teeth. In other words, if Pedro wins the bet, he wins the ability to silence Coquín, who, by the end of the play, is the "hombre de muchas veras" (2733) who reports Gutierre's horrific crime and all of the events leading up to it. Coquín is the only character to know the full truth, and also the only character willing to voice that truth. He insists repeatedly on his need to speak: "tengo de hablarte. / Escúchame. . . . Oye lo que he de decir, / pues de veras vengo a hablar" (2725-35). This insistence stands in marked contrast to the overwhelming injunction to silence throughout the play. Coquín's speech thus presents the possibility of a critique, but Pedro quickly moves to silence him: rather than confronting Gutierre's actions, he passively, retroactively authorizes them, and commands that there be no more discussion of the matter: "Esto ha de ser, y basta" (2895). Pedro's bet with Coquín thus reveals that both he and Gutierre effect their cures completely: Pedro proposes to remove all of Coquín's teeth for the same reason that Gutierre proposes to remove all of Mencía's blood—to remove the problem at its source. Pedro's bet thus dovetails with his approval of Gutierre's methods, whether they affect
Mencía or Leonor, and confirms his entanglement with the creaturely view of blood. Coquín's speech presents the possibility of an alternate ending, but Pedro's threats and his inability to act on Mencía's murder effectively preclude any onstage critique. Through his bet and his failure to heed Coquín, Pedro demonstrates his failures as a monarch. With respect to Coquín's teeth or Mencía's blood, Pedro proves a brutal but ineffective physician.

Through this critique of Pedro, Médico presents a challenge to the political authority, even as it puts on stage a political authority who ostensibly affirms the status quo. Indeed, the play condemns the foundations of seventeenth-century political and social life: by demonstrating that the king is the head of an impossibly complex system, the play argues instead that these irreducible systems muddle and distort perception and comprehension and prevent access to truth. By examining blood and the creaturely perspective, we can move away from many of the either/or questions that have dominated Médico’s critical history. Is Pedro cruel or just? Is Gutierre justified or unjustified? Is Mencia guilty or innocent? These questions, viewed in light of the meanings blood accumulates, misdirect our attention and trap us, along with Pedro, Gutierre and Mencía, in a profane world from which there is no escape. By instead looking outside this limited frame, we can approach the play more precisely and historically.

This reading of Médico also helps shed light on the climate of reform in Spain beginning in 1618. The intellectual response to perceptions of decline and decadence very often dealt in the same medical metaphors of Calderón's play. But while almost all intellectuals of the first quarter of the seventeenth century could agree that some kind of
reform was necessary, "there was much less agreement as to the nature of the illness and yet less still as to the physician who should be summoned or the remedies which might logically be expected to cure the patient" (Kennedy 281). In the 1624 El curial del Parnaso, Matías de los Reyes satirizes many of these approaches, taking the diseased, dying century as a patient attended to by a variety of Greek and Roman sages. Seneca, Chilon, Solon, Tacitus and others diagnose the Siglo with all manner of ailments: the attachment to vice, the inability to know other men's hearts and minds, private property and the use of money, the insatiable appetite for war, and many others. Cato—whose proposed cure, incidentally, is to ask God to get rid of women—sees the situation as nearly hopeless: "tan innumerables son los males que fatigan nuestro enfermo siglo y afligieron los pasados, que igualan las estrellas del cielo y arenas del mar; y entre ellas mismas son tan diversas como lo son las flores de la primavera" (218). The diagnosis and cure are perplexing because the Siglo appears more or less healthy; but as the patient himself explains, "cuando tengo el rostro por defuera bueno, el mal está dentro. . . . [S]oy un cadáver vivo" (229-30). In Médico, this indecision and confusion are acted out on stage. While the final scene appears to offer a resolution, it instead conceals the continued corruption: the same violence will be repeated on Leonor because there is no earthly cure for the disease that afflicts the entire theatrical universe. Where all the sages in El curial del Parnaso are unable, Calderón reveals the hidden source of disease and diagnoses the underlying cause: the impossible, irreducible complexity of blood.
CHAPTER IV

Late Baroque Blood:

María De Zayas’s Impossible Immaculist Ideal

It would be impossible to carry out a study of literary blood in seventeenth-century Spain without considering the works of María de Zayas. In terms of intensity and sheer volume, her novelas, particularly the Desengaños amorosos (1647), have no peer. Zayas’s female characters are beaten, bled to death, stabbed, confined, and injured in every way imaginable. More often than not, women’s blood is not contained; fathers, husbands, lovers, and rejected suitors spill it. Even her revision of Calderón’s El médico de su honra, the eighth tale of the Desengaños, is gorier and more explicit in highlighting the problem of women’s blood and the paradox that requires it be spilled in order to affirm its purity.

Desengaño 8 is in many ways similar to Calderón’s play: at least initially, it appears that the main characters are Pedro—“hombre soberbio y de condición cruel” (371), just like the historical figure—Enrique, and Mencía. But Zayas changes their relationships: here, Pedro is Mencía’s father rather than her husband, and Mencía marries Enrique in spite of Pedro’s disapproval.58 Their marriage takes place in secret, and once again, their relation is problematic because of the quality of Enrique’s blood. Here, the problem is not bastard lineage, as in Calderón, but Pedro’s disdain for Enrique’s humble familial origins, “y esto nacía de saber no sé qué mancha en la sangre de don Enrique . . . que a la cuenta era haber sido sus abuelos labradores; falta que, supuesto que se cubría

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58 Although the descriptive titles given to Zayas’s works are commonly used—such as, in this case, Al fin se paga todo—they are not the author’s; they come from a 1734 edition of Zayas’s collected works. I will refer to the desengaños primarily according to the order in which they appear: D1, D2, and so on.
con ser cristianos viejos, y con tanta máquina de hacienda, no fuera mucho disimularlo”
(373). After the wedding, as Mencía writes a letter to her now-husband—a perfectly
seemly thing for her to do—her brother, Alonso, bursts into the room, steals the half-
written letter, and, unlike Pedro of Médico, correctly surmises what’s going on. Alonso,
with his father’s blessing, takes his revenge for his sister’s disobedience by stabbing her
to death. That night Enrique approaches the house, thinking he will speak to Mencía
through the grill, as usual, and instead finds an unexpected sight:

[A]penas puso en [la reja] la mano, cuando las puertas se abrieron con
grandísimo estruendo, y alborotado con él, miró por ver que en el pequeño
retrete había gran claridad, no de hachas ni de bujías, sino una luz que sólo
alumbraba en la parte de adentro, sin que tocase a la de afuera. Y más
admirado que antes, miró a ver de qué salía la luz, y vio al resplandor de
ella a la hermosa dama tendida en el estrado, mal compuesta, bañada en
sangre, que con estar muerta desde mediodía, corría entonces de las
heridas, como si se las acabaran de dar, y junto a ella un lago del
sangriento humor. (382)

This Mencía’s death is even more spectacular than that of the comedia: the peculiar
sounds, the unearthly lighting, the miraculously, continuously bleeding corpse, and even
a ghostly voice that explains her murder render the scene fantastical; it is also explicit
rather than merely suggestive or allusive, as in Calderón. In case there was any doubt that
the spectators of this scene should focus on the blood, Alonso leaves an explanatory note:
“‘Yo la quité la vida, porque no mezclase mi noble sangre con la de un villano’” (384).

As in El médico de su honra, the spectacle of Mencía’s death reveals a disturbing, violent
obsession with maintaining the purity of blood through the murder of women.

But Zayas does not end her version of events where Calderón does. In fact,
Mencía’s death takes place about halfway through the novela, and the remainder is
entirely Zayas’s invention, exploring the relationships between the characters that do not
appear in Calderón’s play. In particular, Zayas focuses on Alonso’s friendship with Marco Antonio, whom he meets in Naples after fleeing punishment for murdering his sister and attacking Enrique. Marco Antonio is an “hombre perdido y vicioso, tanto en glotonerías como en lo demás” (386). The two become fast friends when Marco Antonio helps Alonso court the beautiful, virtuous, but poor Ana. Alonso fails to note the irony of the situation: he, with his wealth, does not care that Ana brings no dowry, just as Enrique was not bothered by Pedro’s refusal to endow Mencía. Pedro remains true to form and is furious that his son’s marriage has not increased the family’s wealth, and he threatens to cut him off. Marco Antonio and Alonso take drastic action together: they kill Ana to restore Alonso to his father’s good graces. Francisca, the narrator of this desengaño, refers to the two as Ana’s “dos enemigos,” a perversion of the “los dos amigos” trope Zayas visits in other tales, particularly the third (393). Justice finally catches up with Alonso, given that God is “ofendido y cansado de aguardar tan enormes delitos,” and he is executed for his crimes (396). Pedro, upon hearing the news, foreshadows the blasé response of Félix in José de Espronceda’s *El estudiante de Salamanca*: he calmly continues playing cards and drily remarks, “Más quiero tener un hijo degollado que mal casado” (398). Thus Zayas’s Pedro, like Calderón’s, disinterestedly affirms the violence of the existing social order. Unlike Calderón’s Pedro, however, Zayas’s also receives his punishment when Alonso’s secret son with Ana inherits the entire family’s estate.

For all they have in common, then, Zayas’s tale diverges significantly from Calderón’s play. While *El médico de su honra* ends with a tragic death and a tenuous affirmation of the status quo, the eighth desengaño provides a more just resolution. While the characters of Calderón’s world are creaturely and removed from the possibility of
salvation, God intervenes directly in the lives and affairs of Zayas’s characters. Although Mencia still suffers, her miraculous bleeding clearly signifies her heavenly reward in a way the play leaves ambiguous. Earthly justice is also more obviously effective: both Alonso and Marco Antonio are punished for their crimes, and the innocent son of Alonso and Ana is rewarded with land and wealth. In the comedia, a neat love triangle between Pedro, Enrique, and Mencia is neatly resolved with the deaths of two of its nodes. With Zayas, the situation becomes more complex. She displaces the story’s primary tension in the second half of the novela: rather than straining between lovers and spouses, it strains between fathers, sons, and male friends. Instead of a Girardian love triangle, Zayas creates an Oedipal fever dream of a romantic quadrangle: Alonso, in his pursuit of Ana, alienates himself from his father; only his friendship with Marco Antonio can overcome this obstacle and restore the filial bond. Zayas’s retelling thus incorporates the marriage plot—the desirability and consequences of marriage are, after all, the purpose of the entire collection of tales—and adds to it a drama whose protagonists are men, and whose bonds are filial, fraternal, or paternal. In a novela about the danger the contemporary world poses to women, in other words, Zayas pointedly writes about men.

Of course, women are not left out in the retelling. In both Calderón and Zayas, both men and women suffer. The difference is that, in Calderón’s world, everyone is as irreparably cut off from salvation as everyone else, and the punishments inflicted on women are unavoidable, the consequences of a particular way of viewing the world; in the Desengaños, innocent women suffer more than anyone else, and they suffer excessively. In order to make sense of the relationship between women’s suffering and the bonds between men, we need to look at how Zayas links the two. In D8, one moment
in particular reveals the connection: Enrique’s surprising survival and his exit from the tale.

The last the reader sees of Enrique takes place just after Mencía’s death. After Alonso’s brutal attempt on his life—the narrator notes that Enrique was stabbed precisely twenty-two times—Enrique miraculously survives due to divine intercession. The narrator is equally precise about how this intercession takes place:

Don Enrique llegó muy al cabo; mas Dios, por intercesión de su Madre Santísima, a quien prometió, si le daba vida, ser religioso, se la otorgó, y así lo hizo, que se entró fraile en un convento del seráfico padre san Francisco, y con mucha parte de su hacienda labró el convento, que era pobre, y una capilla con una aseada bóveda, donde pasó el cuerpo de su esposa, habiendo muchos testigos que se hallaron a verle pasar, que, con haber pasado un año que duró la obra, estaban las heridas corriendo sangre como el mismo día que la mataron, y ella tan hermosa, que parecía no haber tenido jurisdicción la muerte en su hermosura. (385)

Mencía’s beauty in death recalls, as Greer notes, contemporary artes del bien morir and martyrologies; it signifies her innocence (Greer, María de Zayas 268-70). But Greer’s explanation of the intervention of Mary is more opaque: “His survival instead is attributed to the intervention—presumably silent—of the Most Holy Mother. She who is (not) Queen of Heaven, to whom, of whom, and for whom men speak, and whose efficacy (for men) is spoken by male cadavers” (280). This interpretation minimizes Mary’s presence, regarding her, like the women in Zayas’s tales, as a mere intermediary for more important relations: those between men. This reading underestimates Mary’s power in the novela and, I think, Zayas’s skills as an author. As a master of perspectivism and revision, even Zayas’s seemingly casual allusions can take on more importance if they connect to other tales or the frame narrative, and become even more so in the

59 As Stratton notes, Franciscans were particularly known for their organization in support of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (73).
context of the narrators’ lives. Mary’s appearances throughout the Desengaños, though often brief, are significant. In this case, the inclusion of the Virgin’s intercession is not arbitrary or incidental. It rewrites both a well-known play by a well-known author, and at the same time, even rewrites the historical record. More significantly, it occurs at the very moment Zayas definitively breaks with Calderón’s play and introduces a new set of concerns and relationships. In other words, the moment the Virgin Mary intervenes is the same moment the focus of the tale shifts from marital bonds to homosocial bonds.

The intersection of the Virgin Mary’s explicit intervention with a focus on homosocial bonds occurs in two other tales in the Desengaños: the third and ninth tales. In D3, a clear revision of the “los dos amigos” trope and Cervantes’s telling of it in El curioso impertinente in particular, the intense friendship between Juan and Pedro is challenged by Pedro’s marriage to the beautiful, virtuous Roseleta. When Juan falls in love with her, she remains steadfast in her honor. Through trickery, Juan is lured to the outskirts of town where he thinks he will meet and finally consummate his love with Roseleta. En route, he offers a last-minute prayer, “pidiendo a la Virgen María, nuestra purísima Señora, que no mirando la ofensa que iba a hacerle, le librase de peligro” (213). A miraculously resuscitated hanged man takes Juan’s place and suffers a vicious attack from Pedro and his friends. The next day, Juan begs his (surprised) friend’s forgiveness, sees the errors of his ways, and takes religious vows, “tomando el hábito de aquella purísima Señora que le había librado de tan manifiesto peligro” (219). In another author’s telling, Juan and Pedro’s friendship would have been unsalvageable; the story would end with one or both their deaths. But here, Mary’s timely intercession achieves the impossible: their friendship is renewed, and both men survive to the end of the tale and
beyond. Roseleta, of course, is not so fortunate. Like Calderón’s Mencia, as well as
Mencia of D8, she is bled to death by her husband. The ninth tale, on the other hand,
offers a more hopeful revision of the third. In this case, the disrupted bond is between
brothers: Ladislao, king of Hungary, and Federico. The latter falls in love with the
former’s wife, Beatriz, who, like Roseleta, is unmoved by his illicit passion. When
Ladislao must leave his wife to go to war, Federico pursues Beatriz, who tricks him into
being locked in a golden cage for the duration of her husband’s absence. When Ladislao
returns, Federico lies, claiming Beatriz locked him up for refusing her advances; Ladislao
punishes her by blinding her and leaving her in the wilderness to die. In this scenario, and
several other seemingly disastrous situations involving Federico and an evil magician, a
mysterious woman saves Beatriz and even restores her sight. Given that the narrator of
the tale, Estefanía, is a concepcionista nun—a member of the Orden de la Inmaculada
Concepción, founded with the help of Isabel of Castile—it comes as no surprise that the
mysterious woman is the Virgin Mary herself. When a plague strikes Hungary, she gives
Beatriz a magical cure, and as she cures the kingdom—including Federico—thanks to an
apparition of Mary, Ladislao learns the truth about Beatriz’s fidelity. He is willing to take
her back, but she prefers to enter a convent. After ceding his kingdom to Federico, who
marries Beatriz’s younger sister, Ladislao himself takes religious vows and retires from
court. In this tale, then, the falsely accused wife lives, thanks to Mary’s intercession, and
the fraternal bond is restored by the same means. In both D3 and D9, when earthly
women are unable to prove their innocence themselves, Mary offers the possibility of
redemption. More specifically, as I will argue, it is not simply Mary herself who does
this; the redemption and restoration stem from the purity of her blood—that is, her immaculate conception.

Although the Immaculate Conception had royal and ecclesiastical support in Spain as early as the thirteenth century, the doctrine gained considerably in popularity alongside the spread of limpieza de sangre statutes (Stratton 5; Martínez 57). The statutes’ influence can be seen in conduct guides for women, such as Fray Luis de León’s La perfecta casada (Perry 30; Dopico Black 114; Vollendorf 46-7). These guides, including works by Juan de Espinosa, Juan Luis Vives, and Juan de la Cerda, “invariably stressed virtuous sexual behavior, enclosure, and obedience,” and they “appeared as the Virgin Mary was being transformed from a symbol of fertility to one of passive motherhood and as the cult of her immaculate conception began to grow” (Martínez 57).

Martínez concludes, based on this concurrence, that in the first half of the seventeenth century, Mary “became a powerful symbol of female purity, a transformation that was probably not unrelated to the Spanish society’s concerns with safeguarding Old Christian lineages through control of women’s sexuality” (57).

Drawing on this context, I argue in this chapter that Zayas links the Immaculate Conception to the fate of Roseleta and Beatriz. In both cases, Mary intervenes to restore order at precisely the moment that male homosocial bonds seem to be most endangered—at the moment when adultery is attempted or suspected—thus throwing the bloodline into question. Using an oblique, negatively rendered aesthetic, Zayas writes D9’s more hopeful dénouement as a corrective revision to Roseleta’s bloody death. Ultimately, the Virgin’s spiritual authority and purity challenge precisely the structures that inhibit Zayas’s characters and contemporary women. By providing a model of pure women’s
blood, I show how Zayas offers a pathway out of the misogyny and violence her characters suffer.

My reading of desengaños 3 and 9 is indebted to several insightful scholars of Zayas’s work. Greer’s historically and culturally informed work on Zayas highlights how her work fits into the culture the contemporary fascination with death described by Martínez Gil, as well as the presence of Immaculist symbolism and language (María de Zayas 257; 25, 323). I draw particularly on the way she reads Zayas’s well-documented political conservatism as “facilitat[ing] rather than restrict[ing] her freedom in crossing other barriers,” such as when she incorporates supernatural elements (239). This boundary-crossing allows me to read the novelas’ Immaculist program as both a literary and a political project, one that articulates a mutually constitutive and influential relationship between text and culture. Vollendorf rightly notes the centrality of the female body and the aestheticized meanings ascribed to it in Zayas’s works; it is at once “a site of simultaneous overinvestment and devaluation” (27). She also notes the political import of the female body, arguing that its perception as a threat “to the social fabric lies at the center of many laws and religious doctrines of the period,” including “a rising concern for limpieza de sangre” (50, 51). However, Vollendorf does not explore this avenue, focusing instead on a Foucauldian reading of the auto de fe (51-2). Brownlee, too, notes the context of blood purity, which she calls “a literary staple of the time” (3). Although her primarily interest in blood purity is as it relates to the subject of gossip in Zayas’s works, elsewhere, she does recognize its concern with race and purity (81-2). More recently, Rhodes has analyzed the cultural literacy of Zayas’s readership, particularly their literacy with religious texts and debates (32). Rhodes also illuminates Zayas’s
literary strategies and the culture of reading they shape and respond to. Following Gracián and Cristóbal Suárez de Figueroa, Rhodes analyzes difficulty as a poetic practice, and novelas in particular as appropriate vehicles for this poetics (22). Zayas’s writing requires us to “practise a hermeneutics of suspicion” because Zayas, and many of her contemporaries, “press[ed] a variety of meanings into very close proximity to each other” (6, 24). Finally, Perry draws attention to the stakes of Zayas’s arguments; her focus on the treatment of women, especially in the Desengaños, views violence against women not as an individual problem but a systemic one, one “so deeply embedded in society that it could not be changed without shaking the very foundations of her world” (24). From these analyses, then, I draw on Zayas’s cultural context, her literary practices, and her understanding of gender in relation to other systems of power.

Throughout my readings of both desengaños, I draw also on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s classic reading of male homosocial desire in English literature. Beginning with the concept that “homosocial” describes “social bonds between persons of the same sex” (Sedgwick 1), Sedgwick articulates the continuum of “‘men loving men’ and ‘men promoting the interests of men’” (4). As in the cases Sedgwick analyzes, “desire” rather than love is appropriate to analyzing Zayas’s works (Sedgwick 2). The narrators and characters of the Desengaños repeatedly, vociferously decry the fickle, inconstant love of men, highlighting instead the thrill of the chase, of desire itself. Francisca, the narrator of D8, for example, describes desire in terms that uncannily resemble the Lacanian libido: “que lo que poseo, no lo puedo desear” (370). The men—and sometimes women—of these tales are motivated by the drive to desire, by the pull of their appetites. Estefanía, for example, describes Federico’s “libidinosos apetitos y civiles y desordenados deseos”
These appetites continuously multiply, with desire breeding more desire:

“viéndose de todo punto privado del bien, creció con más fuerzas el deseo de alcanzarle [Beatriz]” (414). Propelled by their “lascivos apetitos,” Federico and other false men can shift quickly from intense desire to hatred before moving onto another love object (430). This is because they are not motivated by virtuous, legitimate love; their desire for conquest is the same as any other appetite. Marco Antonio, for example, is described as a kind of jack-of-all-trades degenerate, “tanto de glotonerías como en lo demás” (386). Thus the relationship of men to women in the *Desengaños* is finite, while the relationships between men are geared towards sustaining and promoting men’s economic and political interests and toward long-term desire and support. In D3, Juan takes religious orders both because he sincerely repents and to protect Pedro’s reputation. In D8, Pedro, Alonso, and Marco Antonio work tirelessly—and kill freely—to keep Pedro’s vast estate intact, rather than dividing it up equally between his inheritors. Finally, in D9, Ladislao and Federico’s restored bond maintains the integrity of Ladislao’s kingdom and ensures a peaceful succession. In all three cases, the bonds between male characters motivate the plot.

I am mindful of Sedgwick’s call for historical specificity; she rightly notes that Freudian and Girardian readings of love triangles have tended to ignore the cultural determination of gender and sexuality, while overly historicist literary analyses have ignored the structure of desire (22, 25). She focuses primarily on novels in the mid-eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries because they marked a period of “condensed, self-reflective, and widely influential change in economic, ideological, and gender

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60 As Yllera notes, in this context, “civil” in this context means “[d]esestimable . . . de baja condición y procederes” (qtd. in Zayas 414 n4).
arrangements” (1). Spain in the mid-seventeenth century was, of course, undergoing its own significant economic changes during this period: bad harvests, deflation, trade imbalances, and real and threatened revolts at home caused persistent economic distress and contributed to a perception of decline (Elliott, *Imperial Spain* 334-49). Furthermore, the intense interest in self-reflection is a mainstay of Baroque culture. More precisely, we see self-analysis in literature that critiques contemporary social structures, as in the case of picaresque novels, or, politically, in calls for widespread reform (Kennedy, Perry). While this period in seventeenth-century Spain shares many of the characteristics that made mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth century England appropriate for an analysis of male homosocial desire, I will focus on the specificity the context of limpieza de sangre ideology contributes. As Sedgwick argues, “we may take as an explicit axiom that the historically differential shapes of male and female homosociality . . . will always be articulations and mechanisms of the enduring inequality of power between women and men” (5). The “historically differential shapes” of these relations will be determined by this context.

I do not mean to consider, however, the sexual practices of this period, nor to suggest that the relationships between Juan and Pedro in D3 or Ladislao and Federico in D9 are really or truly sexual in nature. Like Sedgwick, I am less interested in actual sexual practices than in “the structure of men’s relations with other men” (2). In the tales I analyze, these structures, and the way Mary’s intercession intersects them, provide fruitful ground for analyzing how the homosocial continuum “functions as a signifier for power relations” (7).
In studies of seventeenth-century Spanish literature, the concept of homosocial desire has been studied primarily in relation to the concept of honor and with specific attention to Zayas’s works. Anne Cruz, in an insightful analysis of Calderón’s *A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*, argues that “the play . . . discloses the tensions implicit in the friendship bond between males, and the utilisation of that bond by Calderón as a sociopsychological force” (155). Cruz shows how those bonds lead to competition for limited political power, and hence destruction for the men who pursue them. Diana de Armas Wilson, as we will see below, intriguingly analyzes male bonds in two Cervantine examples, *El curioso impertinente* and the Barbaric Isle episode of the *Persiles*. Eavan O’Brien, meanwhile, focuses on female homosocial bonds in Zayas’s novelas, particularly the mutually empowering relationship between Lisis and Zelima/Isabel. Gamboa-Tusquets considers both male and female homosocial desire, concluding, “Resulta evidente que la homosocialidad masculina recibe un tratamiento muy diferente que la homosocialidad femenina en la obra de María de Zayas y parecería que condenara la primera y aprobara la segunda” (142). Although Gamboa-Tusquets is correct that the two desires operate differently, I will argue that their relationship is somewhat more complicated than this.

By tracing the creation and dissolution of bonds between men, and focusing particularly on how Mary’s purity intervenes in them, this chapter provides more thorough readings of both tales while further exploring the specifically literary qualities of limpieza de sangre ideology. Reading “in the black light of Zayas’s negative aesthetic,” I contribute to the criticism of Zayas’s works by illuminating her cultural
context more fully and showing the precision with which she critiqued contemporary society (Rhodes 38).

1. The Immaculate Conception in the Age of the Desengaños

As I will show, it is not only Mary’s status as mother of God that matters in both D3 and D9; in both cases, characters appeal specifically to and benefit from Mary’s purity—which, for Zayas, resides in her immaculate conception. The belief that Mary was conceived without sin was widespread in seventeenth-century Spain, although it did not become Church dogma until 1854. Stratton traces its development through the support of the Spanish royal family, noting, “All members of the Spanish Habsburg family supported the Immaculate Conception” (90). Under their rule, and likely with their tacit support, Immaculist art proliferated (37). This proliferation should be understood “not as an expression of popular fervor, but as a means of propaganda” (71). The interest in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception came not from “the people,” but from on high; “from early in the thirteenth century, both the kings and clergy of Spain together supported the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception. It was this dual support that gave the doctrine its special prominence in Spain and in Spanish art” (5). Processions were an especially effective method of organizing popular support; celebrations in Seville in 1615, for example, drew twenty thousand participants in a parade devoted to the Immaculate Conception (Saint-Saëns 22). The doctrine’s support thus began in elite circles but quickly spread, and by the mid-seventeenth century, when the Desengaños were published, enjoyed broad support.

This support was indeed popular, but it was also directed toward specific goals. Philip IV was particularly supportive of the doctrine, determined to fulfill his father’s
desire to see it made dogma (Stratton 87). He supported a great deal of Immaculist art and often appeared in it (89-90). For Philip and other supporters, a common argument took its approach from the results of the Council of Trent, in which it was decided that Church traditions could be raised to the level of dogma (70-1). Immaculists’ efforts to spread the celebration of the Immaculate Conception sought to take advantage of this, hoping that its history and popularity would qualify it as one such tradition (71). The Immaculist cause took on new urgency in 1642, when a bull issued by Urban VIII, Universa per orbem, did not include the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in its list of required celebrations (98). Immaculists viewed this as a setback and took advantage of the bull’s allowance for individual provinces, kingdoms, towns, and cities to establish a feast “in honor of one of its principal patron saints” to celebrate Mary’s Immaculate Conception (98). By 1645, this push resulted in a bull that established the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in all of Spain’s territories (99). At the same time, inquisitorial decretals criticizing certain expressions and representations related to the Immaculate Conception added fuel to the fire, provoking intense scholarly debate and popular responses (100-1). Thus the early 1640s—the years just before the Desengaños were published—saw an outpouring of interest, art, debate, and writing about the Immaculate Conception.

Given the doctrine’s popularity, particularly among elites, as well as limited documentary evidence, Zayas herself was likely a supporter. Although very few details about Zayas’s biography can be confirmed, it is clear that she belonged to elite spheres. She was most likely well read and educated (Brownlee 8-9). Greer, among others, considers it likely she belonged to the nobility (María de Zayas 19). Rhodes highlights
Zayas’s strict loyalty to the nobility, noting, “The Desengaños are not a defence of women; they are a defence of noblewomen” (28). Given the contemporary writers who praised her, which include Lope de Vega, Alonso Castillo Solórzano, Juan Pérez de Montalbán, and Ana Caro, she certainly moved in the most elite literary circles (Greer, María de Zayas 21). For Castillo, Zayas’s status as a “conservative feminist” is well known enough to be a “commonplace” (34). One of the few pieces of physical evidence of her life and beliefs, however, confirms her devotion to the Immaculist cause; her signature appears among those of a 1617 document expressing support of the Brotherhood of the Defenders of the Immaculate Conception (Greer and Rhodes 6). Given her social position, the prevalence of support for the Immaculist cause among her peers, and the available documentary evidence, it is possible to read the Desengaños’s support of the Immaculate Conception alongside the biographical evidence; in both her life and her written work, it is likely that Zayas championed the doctrine.

In spite of elite and popular support, as mentioned above, writing about the Immaculate Conception was not a straightforward matter. A 1644 decretal of the Inquisition prohibited using the word “immaculate” to describe “conception” in Mary’s case, although less direct approaches—such as “Conception of Mary Immaculate”—were permitted (Stratton 101). In other media, however, there was more leeway; Pope Paul IV banned defending Mary’s Immaculate Conception in sermons and lectures, but not in art (71). Indeed, in the early seventeenth century, the most recognizable visual representation of the Immaculate Conception emerged, described in Francisco Pacheco’s El arte de la pintura:

Hase de pintar, pues, en este aseadísimo misterio esta Señora en la flor de su edad, de doce a trece años, hermosísima niña, lindos y graves ojos,
nariz y boca perfectísima y rosadas mexillas, los bellísimos canbellos tendidos, de color de oro; en fin, cuanto fuere posible al humano pincel. . .
Hase de pintar con túnica blanca y manto azul, . . . vestida del sol, un sol ovado de ocre y blando, que cerque toda la imagen . . . coronada de estrellas; doce estrellas compartidas en un círculo claro entre resplandores, sirviendo de punto la sagrada frente. (576-7)

Zayas draws on contemporary visual rhetoric to establish the Immaculist program of both D3 and D9. In D9, when Mary finally reveals herself to Beatriz, she appears in terms borrowed directly from Pacheco:

[E]n el diáfano manto azul, que aunque de este color, más era sol que manto, en los conturnos de la plateada luna, en la corona de estrellas, en el clarísimo resplandor de su divino y sagrado rostro, en los angélicos espíritus que la cercaban, conoció Beatriz aquella soberana Reina de los Ángeles, Madre de Dios y Señora nuestra. (457-8)

Here, there can be no doubt that Mary’s intervention affirms an Immaculist program; Zayas’s framing of the scene conforms almost exactly to Pacheco’s specifications. To articulate the tales’ Immaculist angle, Zayas relies on the indirect methods offered by contemporary painting.

Zayas draws not only on the rhetoric of painting, but also on contemporary literature of the Immaculate Conception, which favors allusion, allegory, and inference to address the subject. Lope de Vega’s 1618 La limpieza no manchada provides an instructive comparison. Even the play’s title does not explicitly announce Mary’s Immaculate Conception; it notes only that her purity is not stained, affirming the doctrine negatively. In the play itself, St. Brigid suspects that Mary was conceived without sin, and allegorical characters such as El género humano, Pecado, and Duda eventually affirm her suspicion through a play about Ahasuerus and Esther. As Stratton notes, “Esther was considered a type of the Virgin Immaculate because Ahasuerus exempted her from his law . . . as God exempted the Virgin from the law by which all are born in sin” (10). La
limpieza no manchada places this metonymy at its center, asking the audience to follow Brigid’s journey from ignorance to certainty by staging a play within the play. Alegoría, presented as a veiled woman, promises to explain Mary’s purity to Brigid through a play about Esther; at the end of the play, Brigid will remove Alegoría’s veil and understand the truth. As Alegoría explains,

Hay en las letras divinas,
Brígida, muchos sentidos.
La historia es lenguaje llano,
Como cada paso al arte. (42)

Brigid’s task, along with the help of Duda, is to find the divine truth, the meaning, of Mary’s purity.

The play within the play moves through the events of Chapter 15 of the Book of Esther, with Haman requesting that Ahasuerus, who is willing, kill all the Jews in his kingdom. Esther goes to speak to the king, in direct violation of his decree that only those summoned can have an audience, and in fear, she faints. Ahasuerus gives her his hand, at which point Alegoría asks Brigid if she now understands the miracle of Mary’s immaculate conception. Perhaps surprisingly, Esther immediately does:

Venciste mis dudas todas:
Ya entiendo lo que dudaba [. . .]
Fuiste a caer, y el Rey,
Desde su trono de gloria,
Bajó a teneros, de un salto
Que salvó la tierra toda.
Llena de gracia os dejó,
Siempre limpia, siempre hermosa; [. . .]
¡Oh, Virgen santa! ¡Aquel punto
Quede siempre en mi memoria
De tu limpia Concepción! (57-8)

At just this moment, the character Duda transforms into Desengaño, who now also knows the truth of Mary’s conception. Brigid, Desengaño, and the play’s audience all arrive at
this truth obliquely, through allegory both personified and staged. The play thus argues that the truth of the Immaculate Conception, like its representation, cannot be directly stated; it can only be implied. In literature, as in painting, readers and viewers must be familiar with certain types to understand an Immaculist program. They must be like Brigid, critically examining the scene before them to illuminate their interpretation.

Zayas, too, asks her readers to critically assess the content of her desengaños, considering the tales themselves, the teller who narrates them, the commentary of the listeners, and the links between tales. As in La limpieza no manchada, the reader or listener must recognize the Immaculate Conception as the turning point of the plot, at the precise moment its characters are saved or enlightened. Without this recognition, the tales do not cohere, and their connection is invisible. With this historical context and these visual and literary strategies in mind, I now turn to the way D3 and D9 deploy the Immaculate Conception to reframe or repair homosocial bonds.

2. Two of a Kind: Male Friendship Bonds in D3 and D9

The third tale’s sources are deeply invested in male homosocial bonds. Greer (María de Zayas), de Armas Wilson, Brownlee, and others all note the indebtedness of the third desengaño to El curioso impertinente. In Cervantes’s account of the “los dos amigos” trope, dated by Avalle-Arce to at least the twelfth century, Anselmo begs his best friend, Lotario, to test his wife’s fidelity. The two friends are so close, they match each other even in their desires: “cuando se ofrecía, dejaba Anselmo de acudir a sus gustos, por seguir los de Lotario, y Lotario dejaba los suyos, por acudir a los de Anselmo; y desta manera, andaban tan a una sus voluntades, que no había concertado reloj que así lo anduviese” (399). When Anselmo marries Camila, however, Lotario discreetly begins
spending less time at his friend’s house, thinking it improper for a married man. Anselmo is devastated, explaining to Lotario, “si él supiera que el casarse había de ser parte de no comunicalle como solía, que jamás lo hubiera hecho,” and begging him “que volviese a ser señor de su casa” (400). For Anselmo, the most important bond is with Lotario. Even after he marries, he cannot break his habit, and his means of wife-testing—essentially, having Lotario replace him in his calculated absences—brings Anselmo closer and closer to becoming Lotario. In *El curioso impertinente*, the marriage plot is at odds with Anselmo and Lotario’s friendship; Cervantes highlights the impossibility of a continuum of male homosocial desire in a society (and a literature) organized around the preservation of women’s sexual purity. Thus when Camila and Lotario do become lovers, the tale can only end in tragedy; all three die.

In D3, Juan and Pedro’s friendship strongly resembles that of Anselmo and Lotario. They live as close to the same life as possible: “Juntos paseaban, de una misma forma vestían, y en no estando don Pedro en su casa, le hallaban en la de don Juan, y si faltaba éste de la suya, era seguro que estaría en la de don Pedro, porque en un instante no se hallaban divididos, aunque vivían en casas distintas, todo lo más del tiempo estaban juntos” (201-2). When Pedro marries, just as happened with Anselmo and Lotario, he regrets the decision when he realizes it will mean less time with Juan: “si entendiera que por casarse le había de perder, aunque los méritos de su esposa eran tantos, lo hubieran excusado” (202). In “este extremo de amistad,” Juan and Pedro’s primary attachment is to each other (202).
This remains the case even when Juan begins courting Roseleta; his friendship with Pedro remains the focus. In a poem Juan writes to his friend’s wife, his language is revealing:

Pónesme pena de muerte;
mas ¡qué importa que me mates!,
pues morir a causa tuya
muerte es que pueda envidiarse. (210)

The majority of the poem is a list of tropes: the standard “bella ingrata” complaints and contrasting imagery of burning desire and icy rejection. Nise, the tale’s narrator, even comments on Juan’s lack of invention; when Pedro praises his friend’s poetry, she dismissively remarks, “no me espanto, que era tan apasionado de las cosas de don Juan, su amigo, que aunque fuera peor, le parecería bien” (208). But what is interesting about the poem is its relations to Roseleta and Pedro. While Juan complains of a metaphorical death by being excluded from his beloved’s favor, Roseleta’s death will be quite literal, and it will be “a causa suya”—that is, Juan’s fault—despite her innocence. The poem thus reverses the fortunes of lover and beloved, placing Juan in Roseleta’s position and articulating her complaint against her husband.61 This parroting of Roseleta’s legitimate complaints implies a marriage-like bond between Pedro and Juan. The poem thus reinforces their friendship at the same time that it seems to address Roseleta. The poem also foresees the denouement of this love triangle quite clearly. Roseleta does, in a sense, impose a death sentence on Juan by showing his letters to Pedro. Further, Juan expresses desire to have the sentence carried out; this enviable death will be planned for him, and

61 Here, as in De Armas Wilson’s analysis of *El curioso impertinente*, Juan, like Anselmo, seems to desire “a perverse form of ‘communion’” with his beloved (21). While De Armas Wilson argues that this desire pairs Anselmo with Camila, I argue that this replacement serves to highlight Juan and Pedro’s relationship.
by Pedro. Even unwittingly, then, and even when it spells his own doom, Juan and Pedro’s desires align perfectly.

Later in the same poem, Juan mimics the narrator’s description of his friendship with Pedro to describe romantic love:

\[
\text{Es tanto lo que te quiero,} \\
\text{que amaré lo que tú ames;} \\
\text{estimaré lo que estimas,} \\
\text{sólo porque tú lo mandes.} 
\] (210)

Zayas’s perspectivism here is essential to interpreting the poem; if this articulation of desire appeared in isolation, it could easily be read in terms of heteronormative romantic love. Because it appears after the remarkably similar description of Juan and Pedro’s friendship, however, we must read the latter in terms of the former. Juan and Pedro’s bond is the ideal, Juan and Roseleta’s the imitation; the male homosocial bond is the model, and the bond of romantic love is merely an instantiation. Juan’s articulation of desire, then, in spite of its apparent dedicatee, primarily underscores his friendship with Pedro.

Comparing the relationship between *El curioso impertinente* and D3, Greer argues that one element Zayas “subtracts from Cervantes’s version of events” is “the intriguing study of homosocial bonding and sexual desire as the desire of the Other that Cervantes traces between Anselmo and Lotario” (*María de Zayas* 435 n24). While it is true that Pedro, unlike Anselmo, does not express himself using “the language of male hysteria” (De Armas Wilson 19), Juan and Pedro are linked in other ways. Furthermore, far from subtracting the focus on homosocial bonds, Zayas in fact doubles it: when Juan sets out to meet what he thinks will be Roseleta, the hanged man becomes Juan’s second double. In the temporary absence of his friend—on his way to betraying Pedro and
rupturing their bond—Juan finds a temporary placeholder in the hanged man. As in the “los dos amigos” trope, Juan and the hanged man are linked by their triangulated bond via Roseleta. The hanged man insists on taking Juan’s place in the same way Juan sought to replace Pedro. The language the hanged man uses to link the two also recalls the narrator’s description of Juan and Pedro’s friendship. He insists to Juan, “he de ir yo adonde tú vas,” just as Pedro and Juan were never without each other (216). The hanged man is featureless, with no identity outside of is relationship to Juan—the perfect double.

This doubling from beyond the grave has precedent in fantastical popular writing. The ephemeral relaciones de sucesos and other miscellanea, which widely circulated monstrous, shocking, or supernatural tales, use resuscitated dead men to explore the continuum of male homosocial desire and male homosexuality in particular. David Castillo cites an example from Antonio de Torquemada’s popular 1570 Jardín de flores curiosas. Two friends, one of them gravely ill, begin a journey to some curative baths; however, the ill friend dies. After the funeral, the friend who lives receives a visit from his dead friend’s ghost:

> El muerto se llegaba a él, dando muestras de querer abrazarlo; y viéndose en este estrecho, y estando ya en lo postrero de la cama, adonde se había retraído, sacando fuerzas de flaqueza y poniendo la ropa en medio para que no pudiese llegar a él, comenzó a resistirle. El difunto, viendo su resistencia, y que se le defendía, mirándole con un gesto airado y mostrando muy gran enojo, se tornó a levantar, y vistiéndose y calzándose, se tornó a ir, sin que jamás pareciese. (Torquemada qtd. in Castillo 53)

Castillo notes that the ghost not only “defies the laws of nature by crossing the boundaries between the world of the dead and that of the living,” he also demonstrates “another type of boundary crossing” in “the form of a homoerotic affection” (53-4). In this tale, the two men’s friendship quite clearly becomes sexual. Although this is not the
case with Juan and Pedro, Torquemada’s tale nevertheless articulates male friendship along a continuum, one that has been perverted by fantastical, improper boundary crossings. These boundary crossings have significant impact; Castillo argues, “The scandalous dimension of the monstrous is contemporarily discussed in connection with moral perversion, monarchical authority, and the rule of law” (83). Zayas’s use of the hanged man as Juan’s double similarly suggests an unbalanced world order, one in which male bonds take such precedence over those of marriage that the dead can be raised to maintain them, and in which even an innocent wife like Roseleta suffers.

The function of the second double, the hanged man, also reveals Juan’s structural links to Pedro. He serves no purpose other than to restore their relationship. Even though Juan swears that no harm will come to him—“te prometo, como caballero, no desampararte mientras viviere, por que la necesidad no te obligue a hacer por donde te veas otra vez en tan desventurado lugar como te has visto” (215)—as soon as Pedro exacts his revenge, the hanged man returns to his place, now well and truly dead (218). In spite of Juan’s promises, the hanged man’s similarity to Pedro signifies his status as a mere stand-in; once his purpose has been realized, the narrative no longer requires him. His function, then, is a mere stand-in, a male figure whose sole purpose is to restore Pedro and Juan’s friendship to its original state.

Although Edwin Place cannot find a precedent for the specific means of this hanged man’s resuscitation, the story of miraculously saved and resuscitated hanged men has ample precedent. In miracle narratives and saints’ lives throughout the medieval and early modern period, saints intervened to save hanged petitioners, either by preventing their deaths by hanging or by resuscitating them after (Bartlett, *passim*). Often, the
petitioned saint supported the condemned, holding them up at the feet or legs to prevent asphyxiation (Bartlett 48). It also should not surprise us that Juan’s petition is successful even though it is in the service of a forbidden act. Bartlett, following the work of Friedrich Lotter, shows that, often, even those guilty of the crimes for which they were hanged were saved if they knew to ask the right authority (50). Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, for example, was particularly known for supporting hanged men from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries (50). In this case, Bartlett notes two features important for our interpretation of Zayas’s hanged man. First, in the cases of Nicholas of Tolentino and the primary case Bartlett considers, that of the thirteenth-century Welshman William Cragh and his role in the canonization of Thomas of Cantilupe, the petitioner had to be precise about whom he petitioned; it was not enough to ask for divine aid generally. Cragh, for example, claimed to have petitioned Thomas of Cantilupe particularly, as had a noblewoman named Lady Mary de Briouze on Cragh’s behalf; it was taken as significant that their stories matched (8-10). Second, Bartlett notes, in the case of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino, the petitioner sometimes followed in the footsteps of the petitioned saint. In the final, sixteenth-century case of Saint Nicholas’s intervention on behalf of a hanged man in Bologna, the man used his second chance to enter an Augustinian hermitage, as Nicholas had (51). The specificity of the request, as well as its influence on the life of the petitioner, thus mattered a great deal.

With these two factors in mind, we can see Zayas’s contribution to the hanged-man narrative. Juan is precise in his petition; he requests the aid not just of God, or even of the Virgin Mary, but specifically of Mary’s purity:

[A] salir de la ciudad, tocaron al Ave María, que oyéndolo don Juan, aunque divertido en sus amorosos cuidados, pudo más la devoción, y
parando adonde oyó la campana, se puso a rezar, pidiendo a la Virgen María, nuestra purísima Señora, que no mirando la ofensa que iba a hacerle, le librase de peligro y le alcanzase perdón de su precioso Hijo. (213)

When the hanged man comes to Juan’s aid, he acknowledges the reason for divine intervention was his particular request: “Y mira lo que los cristianos pecadores debemos a la Virgen María, Madre de Dios y Señora nuestra, que con venir, como venías, a ofender a su precioso Hijo y a Ella, se obligó de aquella Ave María que le rezaste, cuando, saliendo de la ciudad, tocaron la oración, y de una misa que todos los sábados le haces decir en tu capilla” (217). Juan’s petition, and its success, seem due to this specificity. In terms of the outcome, after the miracle occurs, and after Juan apologizes to Pedro, we learn, “se fue a un convento de religiosos carmelitas descalzos, y se entró de fraile, tomando el hábito de aquella purísima Señora que le había librado de tan manifiesto peligro” (219). The order of the Descalzas, as in the case of the Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales in Madrid, is strongly associated with promoting the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (Stratton 92); Juan thus fulfills his obligation to Mary by following in her footsteps as much as possible. Zayas thus hinges the hanged man narrative on Mary’s purity; the restoration of male homosocial bonds depends on her freedom from original sin.

The tale’s treatment of women confirms that, in D3, Mary’s intervention salvages male bonds, but the women do not fare as well. They are not the focus of the narrative, and they do not benefit from divine aid. Nise’s narrative style, in terms of what she focuses on and what she glosses over, confirms the centrality of men’s relationships with men in the tale. When Juan falls in love with Roseleta, his suffering is obvious; in order to explain its cause to Pedro, Juan claims to be in love with another woman, Angeliana,
whom “había ya gozado . . . con palabra de eposo” (205). For Juan, this detail is incidental; for Angeliana, it determines the entire course of her life. Similarly, the telling of Roseleta’s death is terse; it could almost be overlooked entirely. The entire account of her murder is as follows:

Roseleta cayó mala de achaque de un mal o aprieto de garganta, de que fue necesario sangrarla, como se hizo. Y esa misma noche el ingrato y cruel marido, después de recogida la familia, viendo que Roseleta dormía, le quitó la venda de la sangría, y le destapó la vena, por donde se desangró, hasta que rindió la hermosa vida a la fiera y rigurosa muerte. (221)

If we compare Roseleta’s death by bleeding to Mencía’s of Médico, the differences are clear: whereas Mencía’s death, meticulously plotted and carried out in secret, dominates the dialogue of the second and third acts, Roseleta’s identical murder barely warrants a mention. Although all of the Desengaños are meant to instruct women, Nise, like Estefanía, the narrator of D9, spends more of her time describing and commenting on the actions of men.

Furthermore, relationships between women, unlike those between men, lead only to suffering and death. Whereas Juan and Pedro’s friendship can, with a true deus ex machina, be restored, there simply are no friendships between women in D3. Roseleta’s clear foil, rather than double, is the devious, calculating, and ultimately alive Angeliana. Angeliana replaces Roseleta twice, both as Juan’s feigned love interest and, eventually, as Pedro’s wife. Unlike Roseleta, however, Nise notes, Angeliana “[e]ra libre y había errado” (220). While Roseleta is truthful and reveals Juan’s inappropriate advances to her husband, Angeliana is cunning and deceitful; to get her revenge, she even swears to Pedro that Roseleta and Juan truly were lovers, although she knows the opposite to be true (221). Brownlee goes so far as to assert that Angeliana’s jealousy more directly
results in Roseleta’s death than anything else (115). Although this claim overemphasizes Angeliana’s agency and deemphasizes the relationships between men that encourage violence toward women, Brownlee is right to note that the clash between Angeliana and Roseleta is significant. Their rivalry signals the rupture in the homosocial continuum among women. In the frame narrative, and within the tales of the *Novelas ejemplares* and the *Desengaños* themselves, Zayas explores these bonds between women. However, in the case of D3, there are no cases of, to borrow Sedgwick’s phrasing, women promoting the interests of women. D3, in sum, uses the intervention of Mary’s purity to restore male homosocial bonds while highlighting the impossibility of forming such bonds between women. In a marriage plot dependent on women’s isolation and sexual purity, such bonds cannot exist.

In the ninth desengaño, however, Zayas rewrites homosocial bonds between both men and women. In this tale, the Virgin Mary’s intervention to save a faithful, wrongfully accused wife is even more explicit. Although, as in D3, the outcome for the male characters is likewise positive and their seemingly broken bonds are restored, Beatriz does not suffer the same martyrdom as Roseleta; instead, Mary appears in the story as a pivotal character, rather than working through an intermediary like the hanged man. This intervention shifts many of the relationships from D3: instead of using the hanged man as a double for the would-be adulterer, Federico’s double, the dark magician, is painted in a clearly negative light when he is defeated by Mary’s holiness. And instead of the resuscitation of a character linked to one of the male bonds, as in D3, in D9, the resuscitated character is linked to no one more than Beatriz. Finally, the ending of the tale

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62 Gamboa-Tusquets, for example, explores the relations between the women of the frame tale, 142.
is both more hopeful and more dire than that of D3. While Beatriz, unlike Roseleta, survives, the frame characters’ discussion of the tale reveals the impossibility of achieving Beatriz’s fate in their world. If D3 offers a rewrite of the “los dos amigos” trope via El curioso impertinente, D9 rewrites D3. In the ninth tale, Mary’s increased intervention shows how male homosocial bonds could be refigured to, at the very least, preserve women’s lives, while at the same time highlighting the impossibility of achieving this state.

Estefanía’s tale shares many traits with the third desengaño, beginning with the way it elaborates the strength of the bond between two men: Ladislao and Federico. That the brothers are not merely friends, as in D3, has significant consequences for the outcome of the tale, but their relationship is nevertheless described in similar terms. As with Juan and Pedro, Ladislao’s love for Federico is a serious deterrent to his marriage: “Era Federico un año menos que el rey, y tan amado de él, que muchas veces estuvo determinado (si no fuera por la importunación de sus vasallos) a no casarse, porque quedara, después de sus días, Federico rey” (412). Nevertheless, when Ladislao eventually marries, Federico predictably falls in love with his brother’s new wife, and the language he uses to chastise himself recalls that of Juan, who wonders, “¿Pues qué dirá de ti el mundo, si llegase a saberlo, sino, o que no eres de sangre noble, o has perdido el juicio?” (203). Federico likewise wonders about public opinion and acknowledges the distance between his desires and his position: “entre sí se reprendía y decía: ‘¿Qué locuras son éstas, mal aconsejado príncipe? ¿Es posible que te dejes llevar de tan mal nacidos y infames deseos? . . . ¿En qué me tendrá el mundo? ¿Qué dirá Beatriz, si los unos y los otros llegasen a saber mi locura? ¡No, no; no ha de ser así, mal nacidos
deseos!” (412-3). Also like Juan, Federico initially hides his true object of desire, confessing it to Beatriz in the guise of a case taking place at court (417). Beatriz, meanwhile, imitates Roseleta, who knows the true identity of Juan’s beloved long before her husband; Beatriz correctly intuits Federico’s true intentions long before he articulates them (412). Roseleta, upon learning of Juan’s infatuation, is furious: “estaba fuera de su sentido de enojo” and “rabiando de cólera” (206). Beatriz, upon receiving Federico’s declaration, “con el enojo, hizo el papel menudos pedazos” (418). Finally, when the threat Beatriz poses to the brothers’ homosocial bond reaches its climax, when Ladislao punishes her by having her eyes removed and abandoning her in the wilderness, a well-timed, precise petition brings the aid of Mary. Beatriz, now blind, “que como la [muerte] sentía tan cerca, no hacía más de llamar a Dios, y su divina y piadosa Madre,” who restores her sight (431). The ninth tale thus incorporates many of the same plot points and structural elements as the third, but, as we will now see, points them toward a different outcome.

The primary difference between the two tales is the increased role of Beatriz in the latter. This can, in part, be explained by Zayas’s source material, including *El curioso impertinente*. Several critics have noted the debt of *El curioso impertinente* to the tale of Candaules and Gyges as told by Herodotus, in which Candaules, the king, brags to his favorite guard, Gyges, of his wife’s beauty. Eager to prove that what he says is true, Candaules urges Gyges to spy on his naked wife. When the queen learns of her husband’s betrayal and the dishonor it implies, she convinces Gyges to kill her husband and take his place (De Armas Wilon 14-5). De Armas Wilson notes, as time passes and different versions of the story are told, “the woman's agency or subjectivity is increasingly
regarded as intrusive,” and their role diminishes (16). In D9, however, Beatriz’s role is active; Zayas foregrounds her agency in determining her fate. She goes far beyond the passive, silent Camila of D2, and even further beyond Roseleta, who tasks her husband with addressing Juan’s behavior. Like Herodotus’s queen, Beatriz is the author of her own revenge. She perceives the threat Federico’s intentions pose to her honor, and upon imprisoning him, notes, “porque de otra suerte, ni tú dejarás de ser traidor, ni yo perseguida, ni el honor de mi esposo puede estar seguro” (424). After she secures her and her husband’s honor, she continues to demonstrate her agency by skillfully ruling the kingdom alone.

Furthermore, while Roseleta and Angeliana play only minor roles in the narrative of D3, Beatriz is D9’s protagonist. The narrative follows her thoughts and progress more closely than those of any other character, from her reaction to Federico’s advances, through her response, and through each of the trials she faces—the loss of her eyes, a physical confrontation with the disguised Federico, and the death of the young German prince, seemingly at her hand. Foregrounding her role even further over that of Roseleta in D3, in D9, one of the male doubles is exchanged for a meaningful relationship that features Beatriz. Whereas the miraculously resuscitated hanged man serves as Juan’s alter ego, a stand-in who restores male homosocial bonds, the German prince serves a different function. He, too, is miraculously resuscitated through Mary’s intervention, but unlike the hanged man, his return is permanent: just as he is about to be entombed, “había resuscitado levantándose sano y bueno” (455). His resuscitation thus signals a true triumph over death rather than a temporary reprieve, and the bond he and Beatriz share is
maternal rather than homosocial. From the moment the prince lays eyes on Beatriz, he is miraculously attached to her:

Mirándola estaban el emperador y la emperatriz mientras ella hablaba, maravillados de su gracia y belleza, cuando sucedió una maravilla bien grande, y fue que el niño que junto a su padre estaba, acercándose al estribo de la carroza, como Beatriz estaba tan junto, que tenía las manos puestas en él, la echó los brazos al cuello, y juntando su rostro con el suyo, la empezó a besar con tan grande amor como si toda su vida se hubiera criado en su compañía. (449)

Beatriz becomes the prince’s full-time caregiver, acting as a surrogate mother. As we saw in D3, Mary’s intervention prompts Juan to take religious orders in her honor; in this tale, however, Beatriz follows the model of her petitioned aid much more closely. Not only, as we see at the end of the desengaño, does she take concepcionista orders, her life also mirrors that of Mary; she is, to put it mildly, strongly associated with a son who dies and returns to life. The tale’s inclusion of the German prince, and his attachment to Beatriz, thus show Beatriz to be even more closely aligned with Mary than the characters of D3.

Beatriz’s connection to Mary is not merely suggestive or imitative, however; the two meet in person, providing one of the only examples of positive relationships between women within the Desengaños. Mary directly appears in the story four times, first to save Beatriz from harm, and finally to reveal herself. Before this revelation, Estefanía refers to Mary simply as Beatriz’s “amiga” and “defensora” (453, 457). In spite of Mary’s anonymity, she and Beatriz form a close, personal bond, one that is more direct than Juan’s association with her through the hanged man. D9 thus extends the involvement of Mary over that of D3, rewriting the intervention narrative to highlight Beatriz’s proximity to Mary.
Because of this increased proximity, D9 in some ways offers a correction to the injustices of D3. As discussed above, the frame characters’ reactions to the ending of D3 underscore its moral ambiguity, while D9 offers redemption within the lives of its characters. Both Beatriz and the German prince—whose counterparts in D3 do not survive—live. Further, in this revision, Mary’s increased presence not only restores damaged male homosocial bonds, it disrupts those that cause problems. In D3, Juan and Pedro’s friendship is restored, but at the cost of Roseleta’s life. In D9, however, Ladislao and Federico reconcile, and the dangerous relationship between Federico and the magician is halted. At the very end of the tale, Mary gives Beatriz the cure for a disease plaguing Hungary. It only works as a cure, however, if the diseased person confesses all of his sins to Beatriz first. Federico suffers from this plague, and he has previously promised to take the secrets of the magician to the grave; however, when threatened with the possibility of death without having made a full confession, Federico reneges and gives his former friend up (464). Ladislao, who promises to forgive Federico even before hearing the confession, keeps his word, and the brothers’ bond is restored. By having Mary appear at precisely this moment, the tale highlights Beatriz’s proximity to the Virgin as the cause of this restoration:

[L]a Madre de Dios, Reina de los ángeles y Señora nuestra, tenía puesta su divina mano sobre el hombro derecho de la hermosa Beatriz a cuya celestial y divina vista el doctor, que sentado en una silla estaba cerca de la cama de Federico, dando un grande estallido, como si un tiro de artillería se disparara, daba grandes voces, diciendo: venciste, María, vencista, ya conozco la sombra que ambaraba a Beatriz, que hasta ahora estuve ciego; y desapareció, dejando la silla llena de espeso humo. (465)
The framing and phrasing of the scene—Mary with her hand on Beatriz’s shoulder, and the repetition of their status as queens—insist on the relationship between Beatriz and Mary as the catalyst for the brothers’ reconciliation.

As a result, Ladislao follows through on his inclination to turn the kingdom over to his brother, an even more complete reconciliation than that of D3, in which Juan and Pedro go their separate ways. After Beatriz enters a convent, Ladislao follows her example, after ceding the crown peacefully to Federico. Federico, no longer in love with Beatriz, and having repented for his sins, marries Beatriz’s younger sister, the equally beautiful Isabela. D9 thus ends with both a happy marriage and the promise of political stability. Instead of the violent fate Roseleta meets, Beatriz’s connection to Mary results in a happy outcome for (just about) all: Beatriz lives and her fidelity is finally recognized; she and Ladislao peacefully begin new lives; Federico marries a beautiful, prudent wife, and their progeny promise political stability to the whole kingdom. In this way, D9 rewrites the unbalanced ending of D3, in which only Juan finds redemption. The ending of the tale also, curiously, corrects the endings of both El médico de su honra and La fuerza de la sangre. By providing a clear, uncontested line of succession, Federico and Isabela’s marriage promises the continuity of both Beatriz and Ladislao’s bloodlines, in contrast to the impending threat Enrique poses to Pedro. Instead of the silence imposed by the narrator at the end of Fuerza, in D9, the reader knows every marital unhappiness Beatriz experiences, from Federico’s improper advances to Ladislao’s physical violence. Beatriz’s connection with Mary, and Mary’s direct, repeated intercession in Beatriz’s life can reconcile men and provide a positive example of relationships between women, one in which women do, indeed, promote other women’s interests.
Of course, as Estefanía notes, the solution to Beatriz’s troubles is not available to the women listening to the tale. At the tale’s end, before her audience has a chance to debate the outcome, she notes the improbability of the Virgin Mary intervening in every woman’s life: “El poder de la Madre de Dios es menester para librar a Beatriz de un hombre,” she says, and without this power, what hope can her audience have (459)? For the listeners, and for Zayas’s contemporary readers, the hopeful ending of Estefanía’s tale is unattainable. But this does not suggest that the tale offers no practical interventions.

As noted above, many critics have argued that the Desengaños do promote reform, even as they constantly remind the reader of their role as literature; the very setting, the *sarao*, ensures that we read each tale as part of “a portrayal of an ideal literary gathering” (Paun de García 42). Even if “real” women—Estefanía’s audience or Zayas’s readers—cannot be helped individually by the tales, they nevertheless point out a change that could have more widespread effects: the recognition of Mary’s Immaculate Conception. The power of Mary’s purity, these tales argue, can right what is wrong in a world that views blood suspiciously, that faults women for its supposed impurity, and whose most basic institutions—the Church, through marriage; the state, through disorder and crumbling empire—are imperiled because of the ideology of limpieza de sangre. Elevating Mary would recognize her purity and provide a counterweight to the demands blood purity placed on women, allowing that their impurity is not inevitable or absolute. The fact that Zayas’s tales stage and restage Mary’s Immaculate Conception, making it more visually and textually explicit each time, argues for a more explicitly textual approach to the doctrine itself—that is, to raise it to the level of dogma. Zayas is not the only woman writer of her age to make this point. In letters to Philip IV, Sor María de
Agreda argued that Mary could help restore the Spanish monarchy to its former glory; she implored him to ensure official recognition of the Immaculate Conception “not only because of its faith in the doctrine, but as a desperate attempt to restore the monarchy through the Virgin’s intercession” (Stratton 100-1). Zayas, however, makes a literary appeal. Rhodes argues that Zayas’s negative poetics, when applied to the body of the tales’ wives, reveals “a cause and effect relationship, not between what the innocent wife does and what happens to her, but rather between what shows on her body and what her guilty tormenters believe of her” (94). Through Roseleta’s punishment and Beatriz’s triumph, we see the possibility of believing a woman to be pure. The tales thus mimic calls for the Immaculate Conception to be recognized because of its status as custom, as a longstanding tradition that revealed a divine truth. In revising and representing the two women’s fates, Zayas presents a brief but compelling tradition—one that, with the proper textual authority, could become an unassailable truth.
CONCLUSION

The possibility of reform Zayas’s ninth desengaño suggests the necessity of literature in effecting change; this thread, however, has been present throughout my analysis. This dissertation began with an analysis of how the language of lineage, genealogy, and racial and religious difference found their way into even the most high-minded, seemingly disembodied literary discussions. This co-opting of the discourse of blood purity by Góngora’s supporters and critics demonstrates the pervasiveness of the language of limpieza, as well as some of its contributions to poetic practices. In the second chapter, I showed how these intersections affect our interpretation of genre in Cervantes to reveal the growing awareness of limpieza de sangre as fiction, in addition to the ways literary fiction, in the form of the novela, could shape truth as a textual construct. With El médico de su honra, interpreted through the lens of pure blood, we saw how different ways of looking allow blood to signify differently, while at the same time providing the means of distinguishing between those ways of looking. Finally, my analysis of the relationships between men in Zayas’s Desengaños, and their violent consequences for women, demonstrates the imbrications between the discourse of blood purity and contemporary theological questions. This reading of the intervention of Mary’s Immaculate Conception suggests how, as the fiction of limpieza de sangre shapes literary fiction, literary fiction might shape the fiction of limpieza by influencing Catholic doctrine.

Throughout, my analysis of these works and their contexts has revealed several important points of continuity that both unite them and indicate future avenues of research. For example, the language of infection and contamination links limpieza de
sangre, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century views on the danger of fiction, and the threat women’s impurity poses to lineage. Further investigation of physiological understandings of the body, particularly gendered bodies, in contemporary Spain would likely shed light on these connections. The difficulty of interpretation, too, has been a central theme, tying together early criticisms and defenses of the Soledades, the significant absences in La fuerza de la sangre, the missing semiotic stabliser of El médico de su honra, and the obliqueness of Mary’s interventions in Zayas’s tales. This difficulty suggests broader questions about the epistemology limpieza de sangre authorizes that merit further investigation.

As I continue to research the discourse of limpieza de sangre, I hope also to broaden the discussion of race in this project. As Weissbourd notes, one consequence of the field’s focus on limpieza has had the result that “another significant influence on developing discourses of race in early modern Spain and England has remained occluded: Spain's substantial sub-Saharan slave population” (Weissbourd 6-7). While there is still significant archival and analytical work to be done in understanding blood purity statutes, as well as their reach in literature, visual culture, and elsewhere, this research must also be paired with the growing analyses of discourses of blackness in early modern Spain. I particularly look forward to Erin Rowe’s forthcoming work on sub-Saharan African saints in the Hispanic world to help guide this research, and John Beusterien’s analyses of the theater’s engagement with blackness also provides an important beginning.

Additionally, although this project has considered contemporary theological debates and religious discourse, sacred literature remains an understudied and, especially, undertheorized field. Readings of autos sacramentales, in particular, tend to flatten their
meaning into authoritative, unassailable pieces of Catholic teaching. As Lu Ann Homza reminds us, however, “Spanish ecclesiastics envisioned religious authority in eclectic ways,” and it should not surprise us to find eclectic literary takes on theological matters (74). Given the centality of the Eucharist to the auto sacramental, and the many visions of blood they demonstrate, counter-readings of these works are likely to produce intriguing insights about sacred blood.

The readings I advance in this dissertation present each of these works in a new light, while, I hope, contributing to a broader understanding of the discourse of early modern Spanish blood purity, emphasizing its centrality, complexity, and flexibility.
APPENDIX

VC/952/45  1627
Relación verdadera, de un caso raro y maravilloso, sucedido en el Reino de Polonia, para confirmación de nuestra Santa Fe Católica, y confusión de los herejes, que con Santa instancia han procurado, y quieren contradecir a ella: donde trata como los herejes tiraron de balazos a un Santo Cristo, el cual manó sangre por espacio de siete días del lado, y el grande milagro que nuestro Señor hizo en favor de los Cristianos: escrita desde Madrid a un Religioso desta Ciudad.

Con Licencia en Barcelona por Esteban Liberos, Año 1627.

LARGA Experiencia pueden tener todos los fieles Cristianos de los casos raros, y portentosos, que en todos tiempos y en todas las ocasiones que ha sido conveniente, para confirmar la verdad, de nuestra santa Fe, que profesamos; han sucedido por todas las partes del mundo; queriendo Dios, a más de la revelación, que ha hecho de dichos Misterios, a la santa Iglesia, confirmarlo, con extraordinarias maravillas.

Pero entre todos los que han sucedido, no entiendo haya ninguno, que a este que voy refiriendo, le exceda en ser maravilloso; ni que más confirme la verdad de la doctrina Católica: fue el caso, que a los últimos de Mayo deste presente año 1627 que teniendo noticia el serenísimo Rey de Polonia, de los graves daños que los herejes de Suecia hacían por aquellas partes, así en lo temporal por tener ellos un ejército de más de diez y ocho mil hombres que iban dando vuelta ya por unas partes ya por otras, causando gravísimos daños, y lamentables ruinas, en muchos lugares de católicos sujetos a su Majestad: como también en lo espiritual, procurando con halagos que negasen la obediencia al Pontífice Romano, y siguiessen sus malditas sectas, y perniciosísimas herejías, movido del ardiente celo de la santa Fe Católica, el cual han tenido siempre sus progenitores, juntó un grueso y poderoso ejército, de veinte mil Infantes, y seis mil

63 I have transcribed this relación from the manuscript in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, modernizing spelling throughout. For a facsimile of the manuscript, see Ettinghausen.
Caballos, con muchas piezas de artillería, e invenciones de fuego, bien necesarias, en
desejantes ocasiones, para defenderse y ofender al enemigo, y teniendo noticia de
ejército contrario, determinó seguirle lo cual sabido por los herejes resolvieron de tomar
un paso de mucha consideración para guardarse que no tuviesen ocasión los Católicos, de
ofenderles, antes bien la tuviesen ellos de desbaratarles la infantería, y salir con su
dañado intento que era apoderarse de unos lugares de Católicos, vecinos suyos, que les
impiden la comunicación de otros herejes sus aliados.

Para con más comodidad, y menos riesgo apoderarse del passo que pretendían, se
desvieron los herejes, por ciertas partes de cristianos, que como era tierra pobre y no
estaban prevenidos no repararon en los daños, que dellos les podían venir, y así entraron
sin temor ninguno por aquella tierra, y a la que entraron en ella, como sea costumbre casi
en todas las partes de Cristianos de poner en medio de los caminos cruces para que los
caminantes viendo la cruz se acuerden del singular beneficio, que recibieron de Jesús
Cristo nuestro Salvador, que quiso para satisfacer por nuestras culpas morir en ella, y
para que la respeten y reverencien como es razón, pues ella ha sido instrumento de
nuestra redención hallaron en aquella tierra un crucifixo de bulto dentro de vna capilla o
oratorio, que estaba cerca del camino, viendo al santo Crucifijo los perversos herejes, y
movidos de su venenosa rabia, y estimulados del rencor y aborrecimiento que tienen al
nombre de Cristo: tomaron la determinación mas inicua y perversa, que podía
persuadirles Satanás con toda su infernal industria; que a la santa Imagen le tirasen
muchos balazos para desa manera vengarse en su figura ya que no podían en su propia
persona, como lo resolvieron lo ejecutaron aquellos perversos demonios encarnados con
la crueldad que de su infernal rabia se ha podido esperar, y así de hecho le tiraron muchos
balazos, hiriendo a la santa Imagen en su costado de lo cual quiso hacer sentimiento grande Cristo Señor nuestro, y así luego que hubieron herido el costado de la imagen manó del agujero que habían hecho las balas grande copia de sangre por siete días continuos sin parar un punto, y hasta hoy presevera cada día manando sangre muy a menudo: si bien no de continuo como de antes, y en pena del atrevimiento tan grande que habían tenido, y para que no quedase tan grave delito sin riguroso castigo, sucedió una cosa muy particular y no de menos consideración que la pasada, y fue que todas las balas cuando daban en el Santo Crucifijo se volvían con el mismo ímpetu, contra los mismos herejes hiriéndoles en la misma parte del costado en que el Crucifijo fue herido, y fueron tantos los heridos, que llegaron hasta catorce mil todos, todos los cuales murieron en pena de sus gravísimos pecados, que desta manera sabe Dios volver por su honra cuando se ofrece ocasión, viendo los que quedaban una matanza tan grande en su ejército; y considerando que no era cosa que pudiese hacerse con virtud natural, y que los que les mataban no eran hombres: sino que era Dios que tomaba venganza del desacato e irreverencia que habían tenido a su figura y de la crueldad que habían usado con ella, pasaron cuatro mil dellos al ejército contrario de los Católicos, arrepintiéndose gravemente de sus enormes pecados, y pidiendo al mismo Señor a quien ofendieron misericordia y perdón de todo su corazón confiando en la infinidad deste su atributo, y en la palabra que tiene dada de perdonar, al que humildemente le pidieren perdón.

Quedaron pasmados los Católicos cuando supieron una tan gran maravilla y como atónitos y espantados estaban mirándose unos a otros sin poder contener las lágrimas de contento, viendo que había Dios prevenido con su infinito poder lo que ellos pensaban hacer con sus armas, dieron luego aviso al Rey de lo cual quedó consoladísimo viendo el
favor tan grande que Dios le había hecho, y mandó dar gracias a Dios en todo su reino por una merced tan señalada, las cuales hemos de dar nosotros también a Dios, y suplicarle pase adelante en confundir y acabar a esta vil canalla que con sus falsas y heréticas doctrinas van procurando sembrar cizañas entre el rebaño de Cristo sea para siempre alabado. Amén.

Con Licencia del Ordinario en Barcelona por Esteban Liberos en la Calle de Santo Domingo. Año M.DC.XXVII.
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Blancalana, Bernardino. *Historia de la sagrada imagen de Christo crucificado que esta en la nobilísima ciudad de Luca, cuia copia esta en N. S. de Atocha*. Madrid: Imprenta del Reyno, 1638.


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Relación verdadera de vn caso raro y marauilloso sucedido en el Reyno de Polonia, para confirmación de nuestra Santa Fé Catholica, y confusion de los herejes, que con Santa instancia há procurado y quieren contradezir a ella: donde trata como los hereges tiraron de balassos a vn Santo Christo el qual manó sangre por espacio de siete dias del lado, y el grande milagro que nuestro Señor hizo en favor de los Christianos: escrita desde Madrid a un Religioso desta Ciudad. Barcelona: Estevan Libros, 1627.


VITA

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She has participated in academic conferences on a variety of subjects in the United States and Canada, and her first published academic article is forthcoming in *Cervantes*. As a graduate student, along with Amanda Smith, she co-founded and organized the latinx author series American Voces, which featured Junot Díaz, Giannina Braschi, Cristina García, and Quiara Hudes. During the same time, she received fellowships to perform archival work on the Sheridan Libraries’ Special Collections and in the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid.

After defending her dissertation, “Bloodworks: Poetics, Purity, and the Body in Early Modern Spanish Literature,” she will remain at Johns Hopkins as a post-doctoral fellow in the Expository Writing Program, where she will direct the University’s Writing Center.