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Introduction



1. SPAIN AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY (1600)

When Calderón was born in 1600, Spain was the most powerful country in the world, but the seeds had already been planted of a decline that would take it, by the time of his death in 1681, to the humiliating status of a second-tier power. The story of Spain's rise and fall is the sobering tale of a country that collapsed under the burden of its own achievements. Rather than chronicle that process in detail, which would occupy much more space than this Introduction allows, I will begin with three salient general features of early modern Spanish society: religious intensity, inequality before the law, and a deep sense of national pride that suffered serious blows throughout the seventeenth century. These three characteristics are important because they forcefully underpin the ideology of Calderonian Spain and, more broadly, of what is known as the Old Regime, that is, the set of social and political norms that held sway across Europe prior to the French Revolution in 1789. Thus, although none of the characteristics is unique to Spain, they all imply assumptions about the world strikingly different from those that inform modern liberal democracies (including present-day Spain), and their examination will provide an essential preface to the survey of Spanish literature and culture with which I end this section of the Introduction.



CALDERÓN WAS BORN IN AN AGE of deep religious conviction. It may be difficult for westerners of the early twenty-first century, anesthetized by the

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freedom of worship that all liberal democracies guarantee, to grasp the significance of this fact. Especially in Spain, whose Middle Ages were defined by a long struggle to reunite the peninsula under Christian rule, religious belief was not a matter of choice, and Catholicism permeated all aspects of life and determined the course of history. Even language reflects the omnipresence of religion: to speak Spanish became (and remains) synonymous with speaking “Christian,” and official correspondence of the period referred to “both Majesties” in deference to God as well as the king. Early modern Spanish identity, to the extent that one can generalize about it, was forged in a crucible of religiosity that never wavered.

Many of the major events and institutions associated with this period came about as a result of that religiosity. The Spanish Inquisition was founded in 1478 with the purpose of rooting out heresy, especially among Jewish (and later Muslim) converts to Christianity. Unlike the Papal Inquisition, which had been in place in other parts of Europe since 1233, the Spanish Inquisition was placed under almost exclusive control of the Spanish kings; the pope’s power was limited to naming the Inquisitor General. Because its jurisdiction was limited to baptized Christians, its power was considerably increased when all unbaptized Jews were forced either to convert or to leave the peninsula in 1492.¹ Also in 1492, the pope honored King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella with the title *Catholic Monarchs* upon their reconquest of Granada, the last independent Muslim kingdom on the peninsula; in 1609 the Moriscos (Moorish converts to Christianity) suffered the same fate the Jews had in 1492. In 1540 Ignatius of Loyola founded the Jesuit Order, dedicated to an active (rather than a speculative) pursuit of faith. The Jesuits provided great impetus to the Counter Reformation, which had come into full swing as Spain united with Rome to stay the rising tide of Protestantism. Costly religious wars between Catholics and Protestants ensued across Europe, exhausting the Spanish treasury in its struggle against countries like England (which it tried to invade) and the Low Countries (part of its Hapsburg patrimony, which it was able to hold only by force) in addition to its traditional Mediterranean rival, France. Finally, a great cost in manpower and wealth was imposed by the evangelization of the indigenous peoples of the Americas.



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AS MODERN READERS, we also take for granted the legal sanctity of individual equality and political representation, a product of Enlightenment thought that has become the cornerstone of liberal democracy. But in early modern Europe, no such principles existed in practice. A few examples from Calderón's Spain must suffice.

First, the distribution of power was not equitable. At the top, of course, reigned the king and his court. The powerful nobility, concentrated in the countryside, had its own estate in Parliament, as did the clergy, which, along with the military orders (religious in character), wielded considerable influence. A third parliamentary estate was occupied by the major municipalities, which were considerably diverse in structure and tended to represent a democratizing force. Above the municipal level, however, citizens had no political representation; nor was there trial by a jury of peers, for the king was the ultimate arbiter in cases of injustice. Private property was held primarily by the crown and the first two parliamentary estates, whereas the municipalities were allowed to lease land from the crown for public use. Taxation was regressive, with the poor shouldering the burden of contributions to the state treasury. The inferiority of women, peasants, slaves, Indians, and the unbaptized was routinely (although not universally) asserted, and discrimination against such groups not only prevailed but was also legally sanctioned. For example, in the wake of the expulsion of the Jews, as those who chose to convert rather than leave the country began to occupy civil and clerical positions of authority, promulgation began of the famous "pure-blood" statutes—analogueous to the English anti-Catholic laws—which excluded anyone of non-Christian lineage from occupying positions of power. The anguish subsequently felt by the many writers and intellectuals of the period who were of Jewish descent became, according to the twentieth-century Spanish historian Américo Castro, a defining feature of early modern Spanish literature.²

Despite all these factors, the term *absolute monarchy* gives an incorrect impression of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spain, which was actually "one of the freest nations in Europe, with active political institutions at all levels. Remarkably free discussion of political affairs was tolerated, and public controversy occurred on a scale paralleled in few other countries."³ The fact that the system was inequitable does not mean its inequities were not perceived, and the literature of the period amply documents many diverse perspectives regarding

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justice and equality. As far back as the thirteenth century, St. Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225–1274) had argued for the radical equality of all human souls, and his principles were now invoked in Spain to defend the rights of Indians and women. Typically, however, such arguments were directed against individuals who abused the system or against particular manifestations of the system rather than against the system itself. This is an important distinction. Men like Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566) and Francisco de Vitoria (1492–1546) argued for humane treatment of the Indians, but they firmly supported the effort to convert them to the Catholic faith. Hence the New Laws of 1542—promulgated largely in response to Las Casas’s unpublished manuscript, *A Brief Account of the Destruction of the Indies* (*Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*)—abolished the *encomienda* (the land-tenure system that required the natives to pay rent or to work in exchange for the right to continue living on their ancestral territories), the abuse of which had turned the Indians into de facto slaves.⁴

Teresa of Ávila (“Saint Teresa,” 1515–1582), for her part, notes in the first chapter of her autobiography that her father’s caring nature led him to pity the plight of slaves (ownership of which was legal throughout sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe); yet rather than question the system that permitted slavery to exist, he simply refused to own them himself and treated those owned by others with kindness. Similarly, the lesson that María de Zayas apparently intends to teach her female readers through the harrowing tales of her *Eye-Opening Love Stories* (*Desengaños amorosos*, 1647) is not to rebel against male authority but simply to dissociate themselves from men altogether, as does the character Lisis upon entering the convent at the end of the last story. Finally, regarding the inherent inequality believed to exist between lords and vassals, it is telling that when the peasants of Lope de Vega’s *Sheep’s Fount* (*Fuente Ovejuna*, 1619) rise up to overthrow and murder their tyrannical master, literally tearing him to pieces, they do so with shouts of “Long live King Ferdinand! Death to evil Christians and traitors!”

Lest there be any doubt, however, the occasional *real* threat to the values of the Old Regime was met with a severity that tended to discourage future attempts: the Comuneros revolt of 1520, the Morisco uprising of 1568, the Catalanian insurrection of the 1640s (in which Calderón himself fought on the side of the king), the Pueblo rebellion of 1680, and so on.

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IN MOST PEOPLE'S MINDS, the year 1492 is associated with Columbus's maiden voyage to the Indies, an event that richly deserves all the importance attached to it. Although Columbus (1451–1506)—who was financed by the Spanish crown and wrote his diary in Spanish but was not Spanish by birth (he was born in Genoa and later moved to Portugal)—died insisting he had reached India, it soon became apparent that he had come upon two great continents previously unknown to Europeans. Spain's primary claim to those continents and to whatever riches and natural resources they contained catapulted it almost immediately from its traditional, Mediterranean sphere of influence onto the center stage of European politics, forever changing the course of its history. Eventually, Spain's pretensions in the New World would put it at odds not only with its traditional Mediterranean rival, France, but also with two rising Atlantic powers, Holland and England, toward whom its animosity only grew with the success of the Protestant Reformation.

Columbus's voyage, together with the other momentous events of 1492 and several that soon followed,⁵ cemented in Spaniards' identity a proud nationalism bound to a profound sense of manifest destiny. By the seventeenth century, however, national pride was coming under increasing strain. An ominous portent was the catastrophic defeat of the Invincible Armada by the English Navy in 1588. More important, the shiploads of gold and silver that flooded into the country from the New World, much to the envy of Spain's European enemies (and subject to relentless pirate attacks by those enemies), were not nearly enough to finance the staggering military expenditures of the Spanish crown against those same European enemies on the continent; and the treasury was forced to declare bankruptcy at least eight times between 1557 and 1680. At the same time, the influx of American bullion into the peninsula came about without a corresponding rise in productivity, thus creating a galloping inflation that necessitated a seemingly endless series of currency devaluations throughout the seventeenth century, popularly known as the "currency dance" (*baile del vellón*). Intelligent observers interpreted these factors as dire warning of the country's political decline, confirmed in 1648 when the Peace of Westphalia (which ended the Thirty Years' War) formalized Spain's surrender of European hegemony to France. By the time of Calderón's death in 1681, Spaniards could look back to

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the time of the Catholic Monarchs only with nostalgia, as a golden age of their country's history from which they had been forever expelled.



SPAIN'S LITERARY GOLDEN AGE also took root in the time of Ferdinand and Isabella, although it did not reach fruition until much later. In this sense, the year 1492 is yet another milestone. Antonio de Nebrija (1444–1522), a renowned humanist and professor at the University of Salamanca, published in that year his *Grammar of the Castilian Language* (*Gramática de la lengua castellana*), the first grammar of a modern vernacular language, which prophetically argued for the use of Spanish as an instrument of empire. In December of the same year, Juan del Encina (1468–1529), a student of Nebrija's, composed and performed several short nativity sketches, which he called eclogues, in the palace of the Duke and Duchess of Alba outside Salamanca. In the history of Spanish drama, which had no significant medieval tradition upon which to build, these unrefined plays are tremendously important and can be seen as the starting point of an unbroken dramatic tradition that eventually culminates in Calderón and *Life's a Dream*. (More detail on the evolution of Spanish theater is offered in the next section of the Introduction.)

Spanish poetry and prose also flourished during this period. In 1496 Encina published his eclogues together with a treatise titled *Art of Spanish Poetry* (*Arte de poesía castellana*), the first manual of poetry written in Spanish, in which he argues for the beauty and poetic potential of the Spanish language. He was proven right only a few decades later: through incorporation of traditional Italian Renaissance meters, Garcilaso de la Vega (1501–1536) conferred on Spanish poetry a previously unknown prestige. A hundred years later Luis de Góngora (1561–1627), although much maligned during his time, gave seventeenth-century poetry its most unique voice with his sixty-three-stanza *Myth of Polyphemous and Galatea* (*Fábula de Polifemo y Galatea*, 1613). In narrative, landmarks included the anonymous picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1558), a devastating critique of laxity and corruption at all levels of society, as well as the two volumes of Cervantes's masterpiece *Don Quixote* (1605, 1615). Straddling both poetry and prose are the sublime writings of three of sixteenth-century Spain's most intensely spiritual authors: Saint Teresa of Ávila (1515–1582), Fray Luis de León (1527–1591), and Saint John of the Cross (1542–1591)—all of them,

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significantly, from families of Jewish origin (as were Nebrija, Encina, Góngora, and possibly Cervantes). Of great importance for historiography, finally, is the first generation of New World chroniclers to follow in Columbus's footsteps: Las Casas (1474–1566), Fernández de Oviedo (1478–1557), Cortés (1485–1547), Cabeza de Vaca (c. 1490–c. 1557), and Díaz del Castillo (c. 1495–1584).

By Calderón's time, Spanish literature had assumed a set of characteristics that later critics, borrowing from art history, termed *Baroque*. Formally speaking, the Spanish Baroque in all literary genres employed elaborate or highly stylized syntax, frequent use of Latin- and Italian-based neologisms, and a heavy dependence on greatly exaggerated metaphors and wordplay. The first two of these characteristics are usually associated with the term *culteranismo* and the latter with *conceptismo*. Rather than opposed, as many critics tend to view them, the two phenomena are intricately connected and represent two sides of the coin that is Baroque language, of which the poetry of Góngora is perhaps the prime example. Thematically, Baroque writers came to terms with their disappointment over Spain's political decline by emphasizing the deception and uncertainty of earthly existence, harking back to the biblical view of life as a walk through "the valley of the shadow of death" (Psalms 23.4); such a life was a mere illusion that could be shattered only through the liberating embrace of death. To emphasize the illusory nature of this existence, the Spanish Baroque relied on three central metaphors: life as art, life as theater, and, most important for Calderón, life as a dream.

Apart from literature, Spain's contribution to written culture (I leave aside painting and music) in this period can be grouped into three main areas: theology, philosophy, and science. To begin with, it is instructive to point out that this distinction would not likely have been made in Calderón's time, which considered philosophy and science as two branches (one theoretical, the other practical) of the same tree of knowledge. Theology, furthermore, given its perceived relationship to truth, had been thought of in the Middle Ages as the "Queen of the Sciences" and was still referred to that way in Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, although its popularity as a course of study notably declined in the Renaissance.⁶

In Spain, as in the rest of Europe prior to the Protestant Reformation, theology owes its existence to scholasticism, the peculiarly medieval attempt to

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imbue faith with rational content. Scholasticism was perfected in the thirteenth century by Thomas Aquinas through a harmonization of Christian dogma with the philosophical principles of Aristotle, whose entire corpus, thanks largely to scholars working in Spain, had just been translated into Latin from Arabic. (Previously, only the early works of Aristotle had been available in Latin.) In Spain, the scholastic method continued to be the basis of important writings in theology throughout the Renaissance, and the universities in Salamanca and Alcalá de Henares were major centers of scholastic thought. The rational subtleties and nuanced details characteristic of Calderonian drama, in fact, owe much to scholasticism's influence.

Scholastic-based theology was given new impetus in Spain by the Council of Trent (1545–1563), which convened to deal with Protestantism at a theological level and was dominated by Spaniards in its closing years. The council's pronouncements, reached through classic scholastic debate, neatly summarize the essence of Catholic theology and elucidate its major points of conflict with Protestantism. Of particular importance for the interpretation of *Life's a Dream*, the council reaffirmed the traditional view of *justificatio* (transformation of the sinner from a state of unrighteousness to one of holiness) through the exercise of individual free will; this view contrasted sharply with Protestantism's (especially Calvinism's) emphasis on salvation by predestination. Predictably, the council also upheld the authority of popes and councils in the determination of doctrine, whereas Protestantism gave sole authority to the Bible. The council reaffirmed the number of sacraments at seven, which Protestants had reduced to two; and it reiterated that the sacrament of communion implies the transubstantiation of the body of Christ in the communal bread and wine. The council also upheld belief in purgatory, the use of indulgences (although it called for an end to obvious abuses), the worship of saints, and the veneration of relics and icons.⁷ All these dogmatic points surface in Calderonian drama.

Because scholasticism always subjects reason to faith, it is not philosophy in the sense that we know it today. For many years, however, the conclusions of philosophy and theology were considered complementary and compatible, one focused on the natural order and the other on the supernatural order. Yet by the Renaissance, a new metaphysics permitted a break between theology and philosophy. A major result of this break was political philosophy, best exemplified by Machiavelli's *The Prince* (1513). In its exclusive concern with the history and

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government of human affairs, Machiavelli's treatise represented a radical departure from the theocentrism of medieval thought.

In Spain, where Machiavelli never took deep root (despite the fact that *The Prince* based its model of the ideal ruler on the shrewd policies of King Ferdinand), an interesting blend of traditional scholasticism and the daring new political philosophy is found in the writings of Francisco Suárez (1548–1617). Considered the last of the great scholastic thinkers, Suárez was also at the forefront of political thought in his defense of the concept of national sovereignty. In his Latin treatise *On the Defense of Faith* (*De defensione fidei*, 1613), he rejected the divine right of kings and insisted that political power resided in the people. Even more radical is the position of Juan Mariana (1536–1624), whose book *On Kings and Kingship* (*De rege et regis institutione*, 1599) defended the right of the people to murder despotic kings. The response to both Suárez's and Mariana's works, especially abroad, was dramatic. *On the Defense of Faith* was burned in London; *On Kings and Kingship* suffered the same fate in Paris. Neither book was banned in Spain, however; the crown tolerated such writings presumably because it assumed they were directed toward the Protestant monarchies of northern Europe, which it had an interest in undermining. In any case, because the authors of both treatises were Jesuits, it is almost certain that Calderón was familiar with their ideas and, moreover, that he addressed those ideas in *Life's a Dream*.

Another branch of thought that had a profound impact on early modern society, if not on philosophy itself, was Humanism, the educational program initiated by Petrarch and based on the rigorous study of ancient Greek and Latin texts. Because Humanist approaches to ancient texts required a thorough knowledge of Greek and Latin, it was only a matter of time before they were applied to the New Testament—originally written in Greek but transmitted throughout the Middle Ages in Latin—as well as to theology and canon law, written exclusively in Latin. In his momentous *Treatise Against the Donation of Constantine* (*Declamazione contro la Donazione di Costantino*, 1440), for instance, the Italian scholar Lorenzo Valla—relying on a knowledge of Latin that Humanism had taught him—demonstrated that the document known as the Donation of Constantine, on which the church based its rich patrimony and territorial claims to Italy, was a forgery. Valla was only the first of many Humanists who would inevitably bring to the surface the many errors and contradictions buried in Christianity's long stewardship of textual transmission. As the

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Spanish Humanist Hernán Núñez so aptly explained over a century later (1566), “[W]hen a humanist corrects an error in Cicero, for example, the same error has to be corrected in Scripture.”⁸

Such methods obviously represented a serious threat to the church’s authority, and thus the tools of Humanism—in a way many Humanists would never have wished—precipitated and bolstered the claims of the Protestant Reformation. Nowhere is this contradiction more evident than in the remarkable life and work of Thomas More (1478–1535). More’s early association with prominent Humanist and reform-minded circles in England earned him a recognition that would ultimately gain him entry into the inner circle of King Henry VIII. But More, always a faithful Catholic, refused to support Henry’s divorce from Catherine of Aragon and the resulting break with Rome; and the king had him beheaded for his opposition.

In Spain, Humanism flowered in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries in figures like Antonio de Nebrija and Juan del Encina (see above, p. 6). Before the Protestant Reformation, the church supported the goals of Humanism and even sponsored the University of Alcalá’s publication of the Polyglot Bible (1514–1517), which contained the first New Testament printed in Greek. After the Reformation, however, as Spanish authorities watched the rapid advance of Protestantism across Europe, Humanism came to be identified with the Reformation, and the position of Humanists became untenable. This was especially the case with the brand of Humanism associated with the great Dutch scholar Erasmus (c. 1466–1536), who had made a particularly profound impact in Spain. In 1530 an outstanding Spanish Humanist, Juan de Valdés (c. 1510–1542), fled the country for Italy to avoid arrest related to his *Dialogue of Christian Doctrine* (*Diálogo de doctrina christiana*, 1529), which smacked of Erasman influence. Three years later, in a chilling letter written to Juan Luis Vives⁹ from Paris, Rodrigo Manrique, son of the Inquisitor General, commented on the state of the country from which both now lived in exile:

You are right. Our country is a land of pride and envy; you may add, of barbarism. For now it is clear that down there one cannot possess any culture without being suspected of heresy, error and Judaism. Thus silence has been imposed on the learned. As for those who have resorted to erudition, they have been filled, as you say, with great terror. . . . At Alcalá they are trying to uproot the study of Greek completely.¹⁰

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Manrique's letter is uncannily prophetic. The Council of Trent, among its other rulings, soon reaffirmed the sole authority of the Vulgate (the Latin Bible) in an attempt to insulate it against the tools of classical philology that Humanism espoused; it also rejected Humanist education for priests even though clerical education was widely acknowledged to be in desperate need of reform. From this point on, to be a Humanist in Spain almost certainly meant rousing the ire of the Holy Office. This was the case of Fray Luis de León, who, besides authoring some of the sixteenth century's most beautiful poetry (see above, p. 6), was also an excellent scholar of Hebrew at the University of Salamanca. Ignoring the council's wishes regarding the Vulgate, he insisted in his classes on the authority of the Hebrew Bible, for which he was ultimately denounced and imprisoned. By the time Calderón wrote *Life's a Dream*, Humanism had been virtually extinguished—although not forgotten—in Spain, eclipsed by its ideological opposite, neostoicism. Best represented in the brilliantly sardonic writings of Francisco de Quevedo (1580–1645) and in striking contrast to Humanism's optimism and engagement, neostoicism counseled detachment and resignation as remedy to the disillusioned reality of seventeenth-century Spain.

Regarding the early modern scientific tradition in Spain or the lack thereof—Spain produced no equivalent to Copernicus (1473–1543), Galileo (1564–1642), Kepler (1571–1630), or Newton (1642–1727)—one must bear in mind two important points. First, Spanish science was dominated early on by Jews and Jewish converts to Christianity; their persecution, consequently, was one of the factors that negatively impacted the scientific tradition in Spain.¹¹ Second, a series of restrictive measures taken in 1558–1559 as part of the Counter Reformation, although not intended to impede scientific development, could not but negatively impact it. The measures included a formalization of censorship procedures, leading to the publication of the first Index of Prohibited Books; a ban on the importation of foreign books; and a prohibition against teaching or studying at foreign universities.¹² The last measure was particularly harmful, considering that 25 percent of the 228 scientific authors who flourished in Spain at the beginning of the sixteenth century (prior to the ban) had studied abroad.¹³ With these facts in mind, we can now turn to the individual disciplines.

Spain was never at the vanguard of original work in theoretical mathematics. Its most important sixteenth-century contribution, Juan Pérez de Moya's

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Practical and Speculative Arithmetic (*Aritmética práctica y especulativa*, 1562), is entirely derivative. The situation did not change in the seventeenth century, even though in the rest of Europe this was the age of coordinate geometry (Descartes), differential calculus (Newton), and integral calculus (Leibniz). Whether the poverty of the Spanish mathematical tradition was a consequence of the association that, as Américo Castro has suggested, early modern Spaniards made between the exercise of the intellect and the impurity of blood (i.e., intellectuals were identified with Jews) matters little.¹⁴ Whatever the cause, the result was far-reaching: “[W]ithout a basis in mathematics there can be no astronomy or physics with a scientific grounding, and thus the physics that was taught in [Spanish] universities continued to be Aristotelian, a mass of philosophical abstractions not only without relationship to reality but also, in many occasions, closed to reality and experimentation.”¹⁵

These attitudes explain why the works of key figures such as Copernicus, Galileo, Kepler, and Newton were not widely understood in Spain even though they were available. Copernicus, in fact, was on the reading list at the University of Salamanca when Calderón studied there in the early seventeenth century. And yet the Spanish view of the universe, which forms the basis for Vasily’s astrological predictions in *Life’s a Dream*, continued to follow that outlined by Ptolemy in the second century A.D. At its center lay the earth: fixed, immobile, and immediately surrounded by the other three primal elements (water, air, and fire). At a greater distance, eight concentric spheres hung in suspension. The first seven spheres contained, respectively (in order of proximity to the earth), the moon, Mercury, Venus, the sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. The eighth sphere, called the firmament, contained the fixed stars and constellations. Beyond it, an unseen “prime mover” (*primum mobile*), to which all the spheres were tethered, revolved around the earth once every twenty-four hours, dragging everything along with it.

In addition to the stagnating effect it produced on astronomy, the lacuna in theoretical mathematics helps explain why modern philosophy, so dependent on theoretical mathematics (Descartes’s work in geometry, for example, was crucial to his philosophical principles), never flowered in Spain. In contrast, Spaniards were at the forefront of applied math and science. Driven by the imperative to explore and conquer the New World, cartography achieved great distinction in Spain, and Pedro de Medina’s *Art of Navigation* (*Arte de navegar*,

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1545) is a key text in which the Atlantic Ocean assumes an outline very close to reality. Cartography was complemented by work in natural history, that is, the cataloging of the flora and fauna of the Americas, as evidenced in early chroniclers such as Fernández de Oviedo (see above, p. 7) and in later ones such as Francisco Hernández, a physician appointed by Philip II in 1570 to lead the first modern scientific expedition to the New World. Spain also led the way in reforming the old Julian calendar. A Spaniard, Pedro Chacón, was among the three authors of the final document that Pope Gregory XIII approved in 1582—the import of which, judging by the jokes made in *Life's a Dream*, was still remembered in Calderón's time. When Philip II founded, during the second half of his reign (1556–1598), Madrid's Academy of Mathematics—whose mission was entirely practical in nature—he confirmed the Spanish preference for the applied sciences.

An important fruit of this preference was medicine, which flourished in the first half of the sixteenth century in figures such as Pedro Jimeno, who in 1549 published his discovery of the third bone of the inner ear. The enigmatic figure of Miguel Serveto (a.k.a. Michael Servetus, 1511–1553) also deserves mention in this context. Born in Navarre, Serveto seems to have fled Spain some time after the publication of a heretical theological treatise, *On the Errors of the Trinity* (*De Trinitatis erroribus*, 1531), which disputed the nature of the Trinity. He resettled in France, studying medicine in Paris and Montpellier, and became quite distinguished in anatomy. Convinced that the soul resided in blood, he was the first to discover the principles of pulmonary circulation. Serveto's theological views, despised by Catholics and Protestants alike, eventually caught up with him, and he was arrested in Geneva and burned at the stake by order of Calvin.

Even with the restrictive measures of 1558–1559, the end of the century still produced several Spanish figures worthy of note, such as the surgeon Francisco Díaz, whose treatise on kidney disease in 1588 is considered a foundation of modern urology. And in 1575, Juan Huarte de San Juan published his monumental *Assessment of Intellectual Endowments* (*Examen de ingenios para las ciencias*). An intriguing, multifaceted treatise that confirms the pre-Enlightenment permeability of the disciplinary boundaries now imposed between medicine, philosophy, and political science, Huarte's work was based on the idea that the faculties of the soul as well as one's professional inclinations are influenced by the four bodily humors. It had an enormous impact on the development of

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psychological profiling of literary characters in the following century, and Calderón was almost certainly familiar with it.

The theory of the four humors on which Huarte's treatise is based provides an excellent opportunity to examine the state of scientific knowledge and the modes of rational thought current in the seventeenth century. Like the Ptolemaic view of the universe, the theory of the bodily humors dates back to the ancient world, specifically to the Greek physician Galen (second century A.D.). It posits a body composed of four basic humors, each associated with a certain temperament. In the healthy individual blood predominates, but a disproportionate rise in one of the other humors brings about an ailment related to the characteristics associated with that humor. By the Renaissance, each humor had become linked through analogy to a series of other paradigms such as the four elements of which all matter was believed to be composed, as shown in Figure I.1.¹⁶

FIG. I.1 RENAISSANCE VIEW OF THE COSMOS

<i>Humor</i>	<i>Temperament</i>	<i>Primary Qualities</i>	<i>Element</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Planet</i>
blood	sanguine	hot, moist	air	childhood	spring	Jupiter
phlegm	phlegmatic	cold, moist	water	middle age	autumn	moon
choler*	choleric	hot, dry	fire	youth	summer	Mars
melancholy†	melancholic	cold, dry	earth	old age	winter	Saturn

* yellow bile; † black bile

The connections between the different parts of this elaborate system served as a guide to interpreting man's relation to the cosmos, which was viewed as an organic, meaningful whole: hence Sigismund's reference to man as "a world unto himself" in act 2 of *Life's a Dream* (p. 119). The theory is thus important not only because of its prevalence but also because it demonstrates the great gap between a rational process predisposed to draw connections based on analogies and surface similarities and that of the modern scientific method, which seeks to break down and classify on the basis of natural physical laws and inherent characteristics.

The intellectual background of Calderón's play is living testament to the period in which these two fundamentally opposed scientific approaches were

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engaged in an active contest for legitimacy. Indeed, the play's reliance on the Ptolemaic universe and the theory of the four humors shows that although certain intellectual fields undoubtedly suffered in Spain as a result of the Counter Reformation, what we now call the pseudosciences—alchemy, astrology, chronology, the study of emblems—all flourished. It is almost as if, along with literature—which reached its maximum brilliance *after* the restrictive measures of 1558–1559—the pseudosciences became the prime expression of the creative energies that no longer found an outlet in philosophy, the natural sciences, or even theology (after the Council of Trent's pronouncements, which it took to be definitive, the church preferred to consider closed any discussions regarding dogma). The only thing left to do with received knowledge was to popularize it, and this was the role now assumed by the public theater, whose greatest representatives—Lope de Vega, Tirso de Molina, and Calderón—were all men of the cloth. We can now consider their dramatic formula in some detail.

2. THE SPANISH COMEDIA

Comedia is a generic term used to refer to Spanish secular drama—whether tragic or comic—in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the most prolific national theater in the history of world literature. Its history dates back to Juan del Encina, who, as noted earlier (p. 6), performed his first eclogues in the palace of the Duke of Alba in December 1492. Encina's early eclogues were nativity pieces, but the evolution of his theater coincided with extensive visits to Italy, inviting a gradual secularization that culminated in a veritable glorification of classical mythology in the *Eclogue of Plácida and Vitoriano* (*Égloga de Plácida y Vitoriano*, 1513; banned by the Index of Prohibited Books in 1558). Encina's contemporaries—Bartolomé de Torres Naharro, who spent a significant amount of time in Italy as well, and Gil Vicente, a Portuguese national who often wrote in Spanish—also contributed to the secularization of the theater.

Encina's generation of playwrights is characterized by the courtly venues of its performances and the noble standing of its spectators. By the mid-sixteenth century, following successful tours of several Italian theater companies through the peninsula, a more middle-class theater audience began to develop. A key figure during this period was Lope de Rueda (d. 1565/1566), whose success as an actor and owner of a theater company led him to write his own plays as well. In the 1570s, immediately prior to the success of Lope de Vega's new dramatic

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formula, a brief experimentation with tragedy (especially Senecan tragedy) appeared in figures such as Juan de la Cueva and Cristóbal de Virués. By this point, however, popular tastes had invaded the early aristocratic framework of Spanish theater, and the narrow precepts of classical tragedy found less fertile soil in Spain than they had in Italy and France.

At this point Calderón's immediate predecessor, Lope de Vega (1562–1635, often referred to simply as “Lope”), entered the scene and consolidated the tradition into a fixed formula that, insofar as the public theater is concerned, forever vindicated popular over aristocratic sentiment. In his *New Art of Writing Plays in This Age* (*Arte nuevo de escribir comedias en este tiempo*, 1609), presumably written as a defense against those who would attack his populism, de Vega outlines the general formula of his dramaturgy, by now assiduously followed throughout Spain: plays are divided into three acts and written exclusively in verse; they assign primacy to plot, which is to be dizzying in detail; they freely mix serious and comic elements; they disregard what were known as the classical unities¹⁷ and frequently employ subplots; and they tend to eschew tragic denouements in favor of happy and often moralizing endings. Thematically, de Vega's formula draws from history and legend, Italian drama and novellas, classical mythology, the Bible, and the lives of saints; and the subject matter is generally presented as realistically as the highly condensed plots will allow. The themes of love and honor are particularly privileged, and tension between the two often gives rise to the plays' basic conflicts. Honor in particular seems to have had something of a cathartic effect on audiences, as de Vega's own words in *New Art* attest: “Issues of honor work best because they move everyone deeply.”¹⁸

By the time Calderón began writing plays, the immense success of de Vega's formula had assured its hegemony—although it can be argued that Calderón perfected the formula by introducing more economical plots, greater subtlety of thought, and, in some cases, deeper character development. As is the case with *Life's a Dream*, moreover, his plays often include an important allegorical or preternatural dimension designed to test moral and philosophical premises, and thus they are not always best served by rigorously realistic or literal interpretations.

The ideology of the Comedia tends to be conservative by contemporary standards, as it naturally reflects the values of the Old Regime outlined in the

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previous section. However, I believe it is a mistake to go as far as those who, like José Antonio Maravall, wish to see it merely as a tool used by the state to solidify its own interests.¹⁹ Such views ignore the fundamental power of the artist to resist authority. In Counter-Reformation Spain, of course, few writers would have risked open critique of royal power, although such a stance was tolerated, as we have seen, in the Jesuit writings of Suárez and Mariana (see above, p. 9). Calderón had to be particularly careful because his livelihood was intimately connected to and dependent on the court of Philip IV. But the best writers of any period state their case subtly rather than overtly, and I firmly believe that *Life's a Dream*, on one level at least, represents a subtle critique of certain practices of the Hapsburg monarchy (see below, pp. 30–32, for more detail).

The language of the Comedia is a product of the exclusive verse format in which it is written. Tellingly, playwrights of Calderón's period were known as poets rather than dramatists; consequently, all poetic figures, including many of the excesses of Baroque poetry, were incorporated into drama. Metaphor in particular was stretched to the limit through the use of *conceptismo* (see above, p. 7). Many verse forms were cultivated, but the conventional eight-syllable verse in assonant rhyme, a favorite of the traditional ballad, predominated. When read aloud, this form does not stray far from the rhythms of prose and was easily understandable in the oral context of performance. Furthermore, audiences were accomplished listeners and spoke of going to “hear a play” rather than to see it, demonstrating the great gulf that separates them from present-day patrons of theater (not to mention those of film).

In fact, in the primary importance it assigned to plot and to the spectator's ability to listen, classical Spanish drama was closer to the principles of Aristotelian theory than the lack of tragic elements would first lead one to believe. Aristotle noted that plots “ought to be so constructed that, *even without the aid of the eye*, he who hears the tale told will thrill with horror and melt to pity at what takes place.”²⁰ Whereas Lope de Vega and Calderón were less concerned with provoking horror and pity in the spectator—although it is significant that Rossaura mentions precisely these two elements after overhearing Sigismund's first monologue (see p. 94)—it is clear that for them, as for Aristotle, elements such as costume, scenery, and special effects (what Aristotle called “spectacle”) were secondary. As a consequence, staging techniques were, as in Shakespeare's

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England, extraordinarily simple. By the 1560s—the period associated with Lope de Rueda and the beginnings of a middle-class dramatic ethos—public plays were being performed in the courtyards (*corrales*) of hospitals run by charitable institutions (*cofradías*), where space and mobility were limited. The first permanent public theaters arose around 1580, just as Lope de Vega's formula was taking hold.²¹ Similar in blueprint to the hospital courtyards, the permanent theaters were built in the inner patios of preexisting buildings; hence they continued to be known as *corrales*. They attracted rowdy, heterogeneous audiences that were segregated by class and sex. (Actresses, by contrast, were from the beginning allowed onstage alongside actors.) Although more advanced than the hospital courtyards, they still did not favor elaborate staging techniques; and, being open air like the courtyards, they were at the mercy of the elements.

Beginning in the early 1980s, the outstanding work of three theater historians in particular—J. E. Varey, J. M. Ruano de la Haza, and John J. Allen—has considerably advanced our understanding of the seventeenth-century Spanish stage and allowed us to reconstruct its details. A platform stage, about six feet high and roughly twice as long as it was deep (a common ratio was 12' by 24'), projected into the audience. On the two ends were lateral platforms that could be used for seating in more conventional productions or as an additional staging area if required. Across the back of the central stage, and perhaps extending along the lateral platforms, ran a permanent five-story structure commonly referred to as the *vestuario* (dressing room) because the basement level, hidden from the audience's view, served as the men's dressing area (as well as a space for managing special effects) whereas the stage level provided access to the women's dressing room. Balconies with detachable railings projected from the second and third levels and were supported by two sets of columns that rose from the stage. The top level, hidden in an attic area, housed stage machinery.

Each of the *vestuario*'s three exposed tiers, which measured about eight feet tall and several feet deep, was curtained off and divided horizontally (superficially by the columns and internally by thin partitions) into three separate sections. This arrangement created a total of nine independent, recessed cells that could be used for a variety of scenic effects. The left and right curtains of the bottom tier generally served as the main entrances and exits, whereas the middle curtain (but sometimes the left or right one) could be drawn back to reveal a "discovery space" such as an allegorical setting, a cave, or a prison. The second

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tier of the *vestuario* could be used to play balcony or window scenes; the third tier might represent additional windows, the top of a castle wall, or a mountain peak. Mountains could be simulated, with varying degrees of realism, by a ramp leading from one of the balconies onto the lateral platforms or, alternatively, onto the center stage providing it did not block access to the lower-tier entrance and exit curtains. In principle, any of the nine niches could be used as a discovery space or “inner stage,” creating a dynamic, multidimensional flexibility that often led to an inversion of natural spatial relationships.

Because the plays were performed in broad daylight (local statutes prohibited night shows), the recessed niches of the *vestuario* would have provided a distinct lighting contrast to the brighter surroundings of the main stage. Costumes, gestures, and textual cues were used to compensate for the general lack of scenery, requiring a strong suspension of disbelief on the part of the audience to complete the theatrical illusion. Although Italian innovations in set design had made possible more elaborate staging techniques by the time Calderón wrote *Life's a Dream*, the limited stage directions of the text appear to call for little beyond the description just offered. As Ruano de la Haza concludes in his excellent reconstruction, “[W]ith the help of the curtains, a simple background décor and one spatial inversion, *La vida es sueño* was probably staged . . . simply, efficiently, with a minimum of disruption and without unduly straining either the imagination or the credulity of the audience.”²² (More ideas regarding the staging of *Life's a Dream* are offered in the Suggestions for Directors.)

In conclusion, it is worth noting that the formulaic structure of the Comedia favored prodigious output. De Vega's biographer, Juan Pérez de Montalbán, claims he wrote an astonishing 2,000 plays, of which “only” around 500 have survived (in contrast to the 38 we possess of Shakespeare). Tirso de Molina (1583–1648), author of the original Don Juan play, claimed over 400 dramatic works, of which about 80 are known today. The balance of Calderón's literary production includes 108 full-length secular plays, 73 short allegorical plays, and a few isolated poems and interludes. Although the formulaic structure of the genre led to a number of ill-conceived plots and some tenuously developed characters, many of the plays are still worthy of study; and the best of them rank with the best of Shakespeare. Among the latter, Calderón's *Life's a Dream* is the undisputed gem.

3. CALDERÓN THE MAN: A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

- 1598—The Spanish throne passes from Philip II to Philip III, the first of the Hapsburg kings to actively patronize the theater. The golden age of Spain's dramatic tradition, under the leadership of Lope de Vega, is in full swing.
- 1600–1606—Calderón is born on January 17, 1600, to noble parents in Madrid, the third child of six. In 1601 his family moves to Valladolid, where the Spanish court has briefly relocated. By 1606 both he and the court are back in Madrid to stay.
- 1608–1613—Following his father's wishes that he become a priest, Calderón receives an excellent Jesuit education at the Colegio Imperial of Madrid, where he masters Latin and learns the rudiments of New Testament Greek.
- 1610—Calderón's mother dies giving birth to her last child (which also dies). The event may be behind the horrific description of Sigismund's birth in *Life's a Dream* (pp. 102–103).
- 1611—Francisco, an illegitimate son of Calderón's father, who has lived with the family with only the father aware of the blood relationship, is banished from the household and disinherited; at the same time, Calderón's sister Dorotea (age thirteen) is sent to a convent in Toledo, and his brother Diego (sixteen) is entrusted to the care of a relative in Mexico. When the father dies four years later, Francisco's biological relationship to the family is revealed, and his banishment is explained as punishment for an act of violence. One critic has seen in these events an attempted rape of Dorotea by Francisco with the possible collusion of Diego, instilling in Pedro a horror of incest that haunts several of his works including *Life's a Dream*.²³
- 1614—Calderón enrolls in the University of Alcalá. His father remarries.
- 1615–1620—Calderón's father dies in 1615; his will reveals an authoritarian character that may have informed the troubled relationship between Vasily and Sigismund in *Life's a Dream*. His father's death prompts Pedro to interrupt his studies at Alcalá because of a fight with his stepmother over the inheritance, which is finally settled in 1618. Calderón abandons his plans of becoming a priest and continues his education at the University of Salamanca, where he studies law, history, theology, and philosophy, receiving his degree in canon law. In 1620 he composes a sonnet for a literary contest and is mentioned favorably by Lope de Vega.

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- 1621—In the spring, Philip IV ascends to the throne, initiating a lavish patronage of the theater that will ultimately shower Calderón with attention. In the summer, Calderón and his brothers are accused of murdering a servant of the high constable of Castile; seeking refuge in the house of the German ambassador, they are eventually convicted and forced to pay a crippling fine to the victim's father.
- 1622—Calderón again composes poems for various literary contests.
- 1623—Calderón writes his first play, *Love, Honor, and Power* (*Amor, honor y poder*). Some biographers suggest he may have spent several years around this time in the service of the king in Milan and Flanders, but it has proved impossible to document such assertions.
- 1629—An enraged Calderón pursues the assailant of one of his brothers (it is not known which) into the Convent of the Trinitarians in Madrid, where he joins several ministers of justice in irreverently stripping the nuns of their veils and searching their cells in a futile hunt for the aggressor. Lope de Vega, whose daughter Marcela is a member of the convent, complains of the incident in a letter to the Duke of Sessa. The famous court chaplain, Father Hortensio Félix Paravicino de Arteaga, delivers a sermon in which he uses the incident as a pretext to attack playwrights. Calderón is later placed under brief house arrest for poking fun at Paravicino in a passage from his play *The Steadfast Prince* (*El príncipe constante*). According to Ruano de la Haza, an early version of *Life's a Dream* was fully under way by this point.
- 1633—Calderón writes *Devotion to the Cross* (*La devoción de la Cruz*), an unsettling and highly influential play that centers on the incestuous desire of a brother and sister who are unaware of their relationship, recalling the events of 1611.
- 1635—On St. John's Eve (June 23), Calderón stages an elaborate production of *Love, the Greatest Enchantment* (*El mayor encanto, amor*). The play is performed before the king on a floating stage, designed by the Florentine engineer Cosme Lotti, in the pond of the Retiro Park in Madrid. Calderón also writes *Secret Affront, Secret Vengeance* (*A secreto agravio, secreta venganza*) and *The Doctor of Honor* (*El médico de su honra*), two deeply disturbing works about jealous, honor-driven husbands who murder their wives on the basis of suspicion and innuendo, recalling Shakespeare's *Othello*.

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Lope de Vega's death in August confirms Calderón's supremacy in the theater.

- 1636—Calderón publishes, with significant personal involvement, many of his most important works in *Comedies, Part One* (*Primera parte de comedias*), in which *Lifé's a Dream* is assigned first place in the order of plays. He is named Knight of the Order of Santiago by Philip IV. Documentation suggests that an allegorical version of *Lifé's a Dream* was performed in the village of Fuente el Saz for the Feast of Corpus Christi.²⁴
- 1637—Calderón writes *The Wonder-Working Magician* (*El mágico prodigioso*), the chilling tale of a student of metaphysics who sells his soul to the devil to win the woman he desires.
- 1640s—A difficult period for the playwright on all levels, this decade is marked politically by the uprising in Catalonia, in which Calderón participates (on the side of the king) in 1641–1642. As the revolt continues unabated, a somber mood takes hold in Madrid. The moralists, long enemies of the theater, succeed in severely restricting performances. The queen's death in October 1644 furthers their cause, and public theaters are closed (as was customary) in an act of mourning. The prince's death almost exactly two years later (October 1646) extends the closure until the king remarries in 1649; theaters are then reopened but never recover the spirit of the 1620s and 1630s. In stark contrast to the more than forty plays he penned during the previous ten years, Calderón's literary production throughout the 1640s amounts to fewer than ten works. One of his most important, however, is probably from this period: *The Mayor of Zalamea* (*El alcalde de Zalamea*), a searing indictment of abuse of power and the resulting erosion of boundaries between public and private life. Also during this period, Calderón fathers an illegitimate child, Pedro José (the mother's identity remains unknown), who dies by age ten. Calderón initially calls the boy his nephew but confesses the real relationship when he is ordained; he makes almost no reference to the child in his writings.
- 1651—This year marks a turning point in Calderón's life: he suffers a serious illness, witnesses the death of both his brothers as well as his mistress, and decides to be ordained a priest, belatedly fulfilling his father's wishes. From this point until his death on May 25, 1681, Calderón devotes all his energies to composing short allegorical plays based on Catholic theology (*autos*

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sacramentales) and extravagant mythological pieces for the court. In 1673, eight years before his death, he writes an allegorical version of *Life's a Dream* (perhaps a revision of the one performed in 1636).

4. *LIFE'S A DREAM*: ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

(Those not already familiar with *Life's a Dream* are encouraged to postpone reading this section until finishing the play itself.)

Love, dishonor, vengeance. Kingship, loyalty, rebellion. Knowledge, control, choice. Dreams, illusion, reality. These are the themes that haunt *Life's a Dream* and make it the peer of such plays as *Oedipus* and *Hamlet*. That Calderón's play belongs with Sophocles's and Shakespeare's atop the dramatic canon is also reflected in the sheer volume and diversity of the critical response it has inspired, as documented by Jesús A. Ara Sánchez's superb annotated bibliography (see Bibliography, section 5), to which I am heavily indebted in the preparation of these pages. The immensity of this secondary literature and its heterogeneous, often conflicting content prevent any exhaustive treatment in this Introduction. Instead, I have limited myself to a brief survey of three levels of analysis that I consider crucial to the play's interpretation—the human, the political, and the philosophical—along with a sampling of the bibliography most relevant to each area (regardless of whether the references cited corroborate my own readings).



THE HUMAN LEVEL OF *LIFE'S A DREAM* informs the play's basic dramatic structure through an intense interrogation of the boundaries of traditional social and familial roles, giving pride of place to the themes of love, honor, and vengeance that so thrilled audiences of the Comedia. As king, Vasily has sought to rob Sigismund of his birthright to the throne; as father, he has acted toward him in a way that “denied me my humanity,” as the prince furiously exclaims in act 2 (p. 118). The first action is unlawful, for kings have a duty to educate princes in a manner that prepares them for governing. The second act is immoral, for Christians have a duty to raise their children with compassion and understanding. Sigismund is consequently consumed with rage and a desire for revenge, expressed in a remarkable passage in which he dreams out loud that “Clothold shall die by my hands! My father shall kiss my feet!” (p. 130).

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The prince's dream emphasizes the archetypal similarities between the story of Sigismund and the myth of Oedipus, popularized in antiquity by the Greek playwright Sophocles and the Roman dramatist Seneca (the latter, a favorite of Calderón, is mentioned by Vasily at the end of his long speech at court in act 1 [p. 104]). In both stories a father, in attempting to avoid fulfillment of a prophecy that predicts his overthrow by his own son, ends up precipitating the events he wishes to avoid. In the Greco-Roman plays, Oedipus unknowingly kills his father and, again unknowingly, marries his mother. In *Life's a Dream*, Sigismund symbolically kills his mother when she dies giving birth to him, and, as the passage quoted in the previous paragraph demonstrates, he desires to humiliate his father.²⁵ A disastrous outcome is averted only when the king, recognizing his error, decides to confront his fate rather than run from it. This act enables—without requiring—Sigismund's conversion and points the play toward a happy end.

Like Sigismund, Rossaura has never known her father, Clothold, who abandoned her mother, Viola, and violated his secret marriage vow to her. Rossaura now faces an eerily similar situation as she finds herself abandoned by her lover, Aistulf, Duke of Muscovy, who has left her to claim the Polish throne. Unlike Sigismund, Rossaura is hindered by her sex. With no known male guardian to avenge her dishonor, she must disguise herself as a man and seek justice on her own. Her arrival in Poland brings her into contact with the prince, who is spellbound by her beauty even as she is dressed as a man.

Rossaura also meets Clothold, and, probably suspecting he is her father, speaks a series of double entendres that, as Ruano de la Haza suggests in the Introduction to his edition of the play,²⁶ are aimed at forcing a confession from him: "You have given me, sire, my life," she tells him after he frees her and Bugle at the end of act 1 (p. 105). When this approach fails, she reveals her gender to him in a further appeal for his help; especially if she suspects he is her father, this move would have struck her as a particularly effective way to gain his support, for her sex places a special obligation on her father as her only male relative. Indeed, Clothold recognizes his debt to Rossaura in an aside but refuses to admit it to her directly. Furthermore, he is unwilling to act publicly on her behalf because the Spanish honor code dictated that the dishonor of an unmarried daughter also disgraced her closest male guardian. He is further handicapped when he becomes indebted to the duke for saving him from the

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wrathful Sigismund, and, ultimately, all he can offer Rossaura is life in a convent. She rejects his offer and pleads to the prince. At this point the two threads of the plot are united as the symbolically orphaned protagonists come together in their struggle for justice, both fighting against their fathers in the chaos that envelops the country in act 3.

It is surprising that Rossaura, as one of the play's more complex characters, has not generated more critical interest.²⁷ Her male disguise in act 1 and her strong will and independent streak throughout the play recall several of Shakespeare's most famous comic heroines. Like Viola in *Twelfth Night* and Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Rossaura proves attractive to the opposite sex even while dressed as one of them; like them and like Portia in *Merchant of Venice* (another cross-dresser), she also displays great ingenuity and wit as she maneuvers through a male-dominated world, particularly in her bold confrontations with Clothold and Aistulf. Such actions make for highly captivating drama and might even be taken as a sign that Calderón believed in some degree of equivalency between the sexes; but any such interpretation must be balanced by several important facts.

First, Rossaura leaves Poland to search for Aistulf only at the suggestion of her mother, Viola, who gives her Clothold's sword—a symbol of male authority—knowing that he, as Rossaura's closest male guardian, is the only one who can legitimately restore her honor; the masculine disguise is simply a means of ensuring safe passage to Poland so the plan can be put in motion. Second, when Clothold proves unable to assist Rossaura in the way she desires (by killing the duke), she recognizes that her plan to take matters into her own hands is “madness” and “self-destruction” (pp. 141–142). Third, what ultimately convinces Aistulf to marry Rossaura is not the latter's feminine independence but rather the male authority of Sigismund and Clothold. Finally, Rossaura accepts a solution that reunites her with the very man who abandoned her and whom she, just one scene earlier, had threatened to kill.²⁸ None of these points, however, detracts from the sympathy and depth of Rossaura's characterization.

Rossaura's sidekick Bugle is a less complex figure, governed by many of the traits commonly associated with servants of the period: self-interest, intolerance for physical hardship, loquaciousness (hence his name), quick wit, and a certain intuition that appears to have allowed him to deduce the real relationship between Rossaura and Clothold, as he suggests in act 3 (p. 148). Although

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it is unclear precisely when or how he made this connection, he hints at it when, at the beginning of act 2, he blackmails his way into the service of Clothold, who evidently perceives him as enough of a threat to order his imprisonment along with Sigismund at the end of act 2. Officially, Clothold might justify Bugle's incarceration as a reason of state: to prevent him from exposing Aistulf's role in Rossaura's dishonor and thus spoiling the king's plans for the duke. Unofficially, if Clothold suspects that Bugle has inferred his relationship to Rossaura, jailing him also becomes a convenient way to silence him and thus protect Clothold from the dishonor that would stain him as Rossaura's closest male guardian. At any rate, Bugle's syllogistic conclusion that he is being punished for having kept quiet (p. 133)—in contrast, he insists, to the typical servant—rings a bit hollow and perhaps serves to preempt sympathy over his sudden and surprising death two scenes later (servants rarely die in the *Comedia*). His demise, furthermore, proves useful in confirming the king's recognition that he has caused the current chaos by attempting to avoid it.²⁹

The other relationship of note in the play is that of Aistulf and Stella. First cousins who have never met, they harbor competing claims to the Polish throne, and their initial exchange, far from following the protocol of the period, is charged with sly innuendos and double entendres. Aistulf, for example, compares Stella's gaze to a comet that lights the night sky: regal and spectacular but also whimsical and fleeting, not to mention that in antiquity comets were frequently associated with calamity and especially with the fall of kings.³⁰ They agree to marry as a peaceful solution to their conflicting claims to the throne, revealing the importance of arranged marriage among royal families and also perhaps hinting at the Hapsburg propensity toward intermarriage. The revelation of Sigismund's existence throws the plan into doubt, however, and Rossaura destroys it for good when, employed as Stella's lady-in-waiting, she makes a fool out of Aistulf in front of the princess. The matter is settled only when Sigismund restores Rossaura's honor by forcing Aistulf to marry her. Thus the duke is punished for his arrogance, losing the crown he had so relentlessly pursued. In a final insult, Sigismund offers his own hand in marriage to Stella, whom Aistulf must now watch inherit the throne without him. This act of poetic justice, which ostensibly cements the play's happy end, nevertheless leaves a nagging suspicion regarding a marriage between relatives (Sigismund and Stella). A discussion of the work's political and historical dimensions will clarify this point.

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ON A POLITICAL LEVEL, *Life's a Dream* demonstrates the vulnerability of the institution of monarchy in the early modern era, especially in transitional periods when there was no clear heir apparent or when, as in the play, there were several competing claims to the throne. By laying bare this Achilles heel of monarchy, Calderón raises important questions about the role of kingship and about the limits of knowledge and power. Aistulf's observation to Stella that Vasily is "more inclined to academic pursuits than to women" (p. 100) is not to be taken lightly. The pursuit of academic questions is fine for academics, but in a king, who should be concentrating on the affairs of state—part of which includes ensuring and properly raising a legitimate heir—it is a serious error. When, moreover, academic pursuit comes to dictate the affairs of state, as when Vasily's astrological predictions determine the prince's barbaric education, the results prove catastrophic.

Vasily is punished for his foolishness with a civil war that divides the country. On one side is the mob that liberates Sigismund from prison, described by the king as "willful and reckless" (p. 138) and by Clothold as "impulsive and blind" (p. 139). Perhaps because of the historical rivalry between Russia and Poland or perhaps because of the common people's traditional role in monarchy—as guarantor of legitimate succession—the mob strongly prefers the natural heir to the throne, the Polish Sigismund (despite his obvious incompetence), to the foreign-born Duke of Muscovy. Against the mob stands the aristocracy, which supports the king's brokered solution. Even though, as noted earlier (p. 9), the Jesuit treatise of Father Mariana authorized popular rebellions against tyrannical kings (or against more benign kings who, like Vasily, made tyrannical decisions), Calderón knew he was dealing with an explosive issue given his close connections to the court of Philip IV. His dilemma was how to use a popular rebellion to punish the king's error without appearing to justify popular rebellion *per se*.

At the center of the problem is the extent to which monarchy must be absolute. The issue is concisely summarized in Sigismund's exchange at court with Servant 2: "[Sig.] When the law isn't just, the king needn't be obeyed. [Serv. 2] It wasn't for him to decide whether it was just or not" (p. 114); later, in his dream at the end of act 2, Sigismund goes even further in asserting that "[a]

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proper prince is he who punishes tyrants” (p. 130). The prince’s words clearly reflect the treatise of Father Mariana, whereas the servant’s imply an unquestioning loyalty that is best embodied in Clothold, who prefers to die rather than betray the crown: “You would wage war against your father, but I cannot counsel you or come to your aid against my king. I am at your mercy; kill me,” he tells the prince when the latter is liberated from the tower in act 3 (p. 137). It matters not that Clothold disagrees with the king’s tyrannical act; as a vassal he considers himself bound by the laws of fealty and, for the same reason, is prepared in act 1 to kill Rossaura even knowing that she is his offspring.

Clothold’s conflict is similar to the one Shakespeare develops between John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster, and his son Harry Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford. Lancaster, even with the knowledge that the king is guilty of murder, refuses to accuse him openly: “God’s is the quarrel; for God’s substitute, / His deputy anointed in his sight, / Hath caused his death; the which if wrongfully, / Let heaven revenge, for I may never lift / An angry arm against his minister.”³¹ Harry, by contrast, ends up overthrowing Richard and proclaiming himself Henry IV. That a legitimate monarch should be so boldly overthrown provoked such controversy in Shakespeare’s time that the lines in which Richard loses his crown were omitted in all sixteenth-century texts of the play (and perhaps in performance).³²

Calderón attempts to contain such controversy in several ways. First, the instigators of the rebellion are identified as “outlaws and peasants,” as the soldier tells Sigismund at the beginning of act 3 (p. 135). Second, Sigismund asks his father’s forgiveness at the end of the play and even offers him his life. Finally, the soldier who led the rebellion and liberated Sigismund from prison is punished with life imprisonment by Sigismund himself. This final act has struck many critics as excessively cruel and ungrateful, but to leave the rebel soldier unpunished or, worse, to reward him for his rebellion (as he requests) would be to strike openly at the very foundation of monarchy: the notion of the king as “God’s substitute” and, hence, the idea that his word must never be questioned. Although Calderón may have been critical of royal power, he could not have risked such a brazen affront to royal authority.

Another way Calderón attempts to contain the potential impact of the theme of rebellion is by setting the play in Poland. If the plot could be interpreted—at least in part—as unique to a remote country that lay, in most Spaniards’ minds,

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at the margin of the civilized world, then there was less chance that it would be seen as applicable at home. Although any quasi-exotic setting might seem to satisfy this condition, the choice of Poland in particular is not gratuitous. The fact that there were three Polish kings named Sigismund (see Translator's Notes, pp. 57–59) suggests a closer connection. Sigismund I fought intermittently with Vasily III of Moscow, whereas Sigismund III invaded Russia and held Moscow for two years. These events, although not paralleled explicitly, are echoed in the play in the prince's rivalry with his father Vasily, a common Russian name (Basilio in Spanish), and with the duke, a Muscovite. Furthermore, Poland's reconversion to Catholicism was one of the great successes of the Counter Reformation, thanks in no small part to Sigismund II who, among other measures, introduced the Society of Jesus (the Jesuits) in 1565. What better country in which to set Sigismund's ostensible triumph of free will (Catholicism) over Vasily's foolish belief in predestination (Protestantism)?

From a Catholic perspective, however, the prince's triumph is somewhat vitiated by the fact that the king, whose obsession with "subtle mathematics" (p. 101) is based on the Ptolemaic system, represents the old order of knowledge that the Counter Reformation wished to preserve (or reinstate)—and this in the country that gave birth to Copernicus, no less. In this way the play foregrounds the clash between the two approaches to science outlined earlier (pp. 14–15). Vasily's defeat at the hands of Sigismund, who in some sense represents the new philosophy of Descartes (see below, pp. 33–34), parallels the threat that the Copernican system represented to the old order—a threat made resoundingly clear by the church's public condemnation of Galileo (a follower of Copernicus) in 1633. Calderón's excellent university education almost certainly provided him with enough background to draw these connections, and one critic even suggests that he could have become aware of further historical details through contact with ambassadors at the court of Philip IV.³³ At any rate, his gift for subtlety allows him to emphasize the more evocative contours of history without forcing them toward facile resolution or bogging the play down in detail.

Although Calderón makes few specific references to Poland's geography, at least two critics have identified the mountainous setting of the prince's tower with the hilly, forested terrain around Krakow.³⁴ One passage that has caused much controversy is the scene in act 2 in which Sigismund throws the servant

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“from the balcony to the sea below” (p. 117). Some editors, following a footnote in Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch’s Spanish edition of *Life’s a Dream*,³⁵ have asked whether Poland bordered the sea in Calderón’s time. In fact, prior to the partitioning of the country at the end of the eighteenth century, Poland had always possessed a port on the Baltic Sea; moreover, during the reign of Sigismund II, Poland formed a commonwealth with Lithuania (1569) that effectively pushed its boundaries to the Black Sea. Hartzenbusch’s misunderstanding may stem from that fact that at the time he was writing (1848), Poland was a landlocked country. The real question, however, is how the Polish royal palace, which before 1596 was located in Krakow and afterward in Warsaw (neither a seaport), could have been conceived of as bordering the ocean.

One critic suggests that Calderón’s Baroque fondness for exaggeration led him to magnify the River Vistula into the sea in the same way he turned the hills around Krakow into mountains.³⁶ Another points out that the reference to the sea would not have struck readers of the period as odd because many of them associated the seventeenth-century Polish state with the naval policies that King Wladislaus IV pursued from 1632 until his death in 1648.³⁷ Some of the play’s Spanish-language editors feel that Calderón should not be held to strict geographical accuracy and that natural features such as the mountains of act 1 and the sea of act 2 are more literary than real.³⁸ I believe the truth lies at an intersection of all these opinions: Calderón intends the play’s geographical references to represent Poland; but, recalling the subtlety with which he employs references to Polish history, he is interested in broad, evocative allusions with some basis in reality rather than in letter-of-the-law accuracy.

In addition to its Polish echoes, *Life’s a Dream* may reflect Spain’s own past. At the beginning of the reign of Philip II (1556–1598), considerable uncertainty existed regarding the issue of succession. Philip’s first wife, the Portuguese Infanta Maria, gave birth to a son, Charles, who early on showed signs of mental instability and had to be excluded from affairs of state or any position of authority. Moreover, the prince “had several violent fits, engineered bizarre plans to escape, and even plotted against his father. Finally in January 1568 Philip ordered him to be arrested and confined; an action taken, as he explained to the pope, ‘with sorrow and grief, since he is my only son and first born.’ Six months later [Prince Charles] died in confinement.”³⁹ Are we to see in Sigismund a reminder of this sad episode? A limited but significant number

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of critics has said yes.⁴⁰ But would Calderón have been drawn to the event for any reason other than its inherent dramatic appeal?

The question becomes all the more intriguing when one considers that Prince Charles, like many Hapsburg offspring, was the product of poor mixing of the gene pool, for Maria was Philip's first cousin. Although such marriages were not considered incestuous and were actually quite common among all social classes of Calderón's time, they were (and still are) considered by the Catholic Church to be a diriment impediment to marriage as far as the fourth degree of kinship (i.e., first cousins), and special dispensation is required to perform them. Furthermore, astute observers such as Calderón may have intuited what modern genetics has confirmed: that close inbreeding tends to produce offspring who, like Prince Charles, are mentally or physically unfit.⁴¹ For his fourth wife, in fact, Philip II chose his niece, Ana of Austria, twenty-two years younger than he—a union that produced the incompetent Philip III, whose reign coincided with the playwright's youth. As both a faithful Catholic and a court insider with a vested interest in the institution of monarchy, Calderón may have felt strong opposition to such marriages on both religious and political grounds; furthermore, he appears to have had an unusually strong revulsion to incest based on an obscure event from his childhood that has been plausibly reconstructed (see the entry for 1611 in the previous section, p. 20).

In light of such facts, I believe Calderón's peculiar choice of the name Clorilyn for the king's sister (p. 100) and wife (p. 102) is more than an error or oversight, although that is the way many editors and translators have preferred to view it (see Translator's Notes, n. 47). On the contrary, the repetition of the name is significant regardless of whether it is interpreted to mean that Vasily married his actual sister. If he did, then the intertextuality of the story of Oedipus (see above, p. 24) as well as the allusions to the myths of Prometheus and Uranus—all of which involve incest and end in tragedy—could be interpreted as a sinister reflection of the king's own actions and as a warning of the possible consequences.⁴² Are these the "details that have no place here" to which Aistulf mysteriously refers in act 1 (p. 100)? If the two Clorilys are one and the same, furthermore, then Sigismund and Stella—who end up marrying at the end of the play—are half siblings, possibly even full siblings given that we are never told who Stella's father is and must at least entertain the possibility that it is Vasily. Finally, even if the name Clorilyn is understood to refer to two separate

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women, the uncanny repetition could be taken as an indication that the king, in true Freudian fashion, married someone who *reminded* him of his sister, that is, a substitute. In this case the dark omens that foreshadow the prince's birth and his repeated identification with monstrosity would take on new meaning, as a sign of the king's suppressed incestuous desire.⁴³

Interestingly, the Prince Charles legend has inspired a long line of literary works, perhaps the most famous being Friedrich Schiller's *Don Carlos*, in which another pseudoincestuous desire is manifested, in this case between the prince and his stepmother, Elizabeth of Valois. Do such works somehow confirm or build upon Calderón's transformation of the first-cousin kinship between Philip and Maria into the mysterious relation between Vasily and Clorilyn?⁴⁴ In any case, the coincidences between Sigismund and Prince Charles—both the products of an incestuous or symbolically incestuous marriage, both judged unfit to govern, both locked away in prison, both conspirators against the king—are too numerous to overlook; and I believe that on one level *Life's a Dream* represents a veiled critique of the deleterious effects of endogamy, which the Hapsburg monarchy (like all European monarchies of the period) routinely practiced.⁴⁵ The fact that the "happy ending" of *Life's a Dream* is cemented by a marriage between first cousins (Sigismund and Stella)—perhaps between siblings—comes as final confirmation of this interpretation. Like the traces of Polish history in the play, those that point to Spain's own past deserve more attention than they have received from commentators, who have generally been more interested in the work's philosophical and religious implications.



YET THE FOCUS ON THE INTELLECTUAL CONTENT of *Life's a Dream* is not misplaced, for the play represents the fruit of a mature mind's wrestling with the deep philosophical and religious issues of its time. The play's very title echoes a profoundly unsettling question that has often preoccupied Western philosophy and that even today has no satisfactory answer. As Sigismund asks in act 3, "Are pleasures so akin to dreams that the real ones are taken for lies and the fake ones for authentic? Is there so little difference between the true and the false that it's debatable whether what is seen and enjoyed is real or made up?" (p. 146). Might we be simply the figments of someone else's imagination or the characters of someone else's dreams, as in Jorge Luis Borges's short story "The

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Circular Ruins” (“Las ruinas circulares,” 1942)? In Calderón’s time the question was a favorite among Baroque writers (see above, p. 7), having been foregrounded by the advance of science, the spread of Protestantism, and the rapid decline of Spain’s European hegemony—all of which seemed to represent a threat to previously accepted truths. In considering Calderón’s response to this question, embodied in *Life’s a Dream*, it is instructive to compare it to René Descartes’s *Discourse on Method*, published only a year later.

In investigating the nature of reality, Descartes formulates a skeptical approach that begins with the mind as the basis of existence—hence his famous axiom “I think, therefore I am,” which goes on to become the cornerstone of modern philosophy. Descartes’s approach is revolutionary because, at least in its first step, it rejects everything outside the self, including God. Although Descartes later affirms God’s existence through classic scholastic arguments, he does so as a *second step*. This distinction may seem like splitting hairs, but it is crucial to an understanding of the conservative character of Calderón’s philosophical approach, which, in *beginning* with a sure knowledge of God’s existence and a firm conviction regarding all the doctrinal points of Catholicism, remains essentially medieval and scholastic.

In making this point, however, one must distinguish Calderón’s perspective as creator of *Life’s a Dream* from that of Sigismund as its main character. The process Sigismund employs to arrive at a knowledge of reality may, in fact, be compared to the Cartesian method precisely because it depends on a radical doubt that deeply marks the prince’s character. “What is life? A frenzy. What is life? A vain hope, a shadow, a fiction. The greatest good is fleeting, for all life is a dream and even dreams are but dreams” declares Sigismund in his famous soliloquy at the end of act 2 (p. 132). This Cartesian doubt has interesting parallels in Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, as when the protagonist finds himself paralyzed by deep skepticism regarding the legitimacy of his father’s ghost:

Yet I,
A dull and muddy-mettled rascal, peak
Like John-a-dreams, unpregnant of my cause,
And can say nothing—no, not for a king
Upon whose property and most dear life
A damned defeat was made. Am I a coward? . . .

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The spirit I have seen
May be the devil, and the devil hath power
T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps,
Out of my weakness and my melancholy—
And he is very potent with such spirits—
Abuses me to damn me.⁴⁶

Yet whereas Hamlet ultimately resolves his doubts by staging a play “[w]herein [to] catch the conscience of the King,”⁴⁷ even at the very end of *Life's a Dream* Sigismund harbors the sinking feeling that “one day I shall awaken to find myself locked away in my cramped prison” (p. 152).

Such gnawing doubt is inconceivable in the minds of Calderón's spectators because the play's fundamental dramatic irony makes them privy to a perspective that is beyond Sigismund's reach. And although the prince's doubts about reality are almost certainly meant to parallel the audience's own experience in the real world, in the audience's case such doubts are more literary than real, reflecting an old, popular metaphor that becomes central to the Spanish Baroque and that again finds a parallel in Shakespeare: “We are such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with a sleep.”⁴⁸ Life is a dream, a pitiful imitation of eternity, filled with confusion and despair, from which we must awaken (that is, die) in order to experience things as they really are (i.e., eternity); this is the basic meaning of the contrast between the Spanish terms *engaño* (deception) and *desengaño* (a coming to awareness of that deception) that was so dear to Calderón and his contemporaries. Moreover, because we may awaken at any moment—for death can come when we least expect it—we must always live according to Christian principles and be on guard against temptation lest we risk condemnation.

Before such truths as these, Calderón's play offers no doubt of the Cartesian type for the spectators, who, although they may compare the confusion experienced by the prince to the uncertainty of their world, remain certain of their uncertainty; that is, they remain certain of the essential dividing line between dreams (this life) and reality (the eternal). The protagonist, by contrast, doubting to the very end, remains something of a Cartesian; and this curious tension between the inner and outer perspectives on the action of the play goes unresolved. Thus, whereas Calderón hints at a radical new epistemology confirmed by Descartes the following year, he takes care to do so in a character

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whose perspective is severely limited. The medieval marriage of philosophy and theology is strained but not broken.

What is the role of the stars in this picture? Far from being an arcane theological matter, the thrust of this question is one that, in slightly different terms, continues to spark fierce debate today and whose definitive answer continues to elude us—at least as of yet. Simply put, the issue is this: to what extent is human choice mediated—by genetics, by environmental factors, or, yes, even by the stars (the widespread existence of astrology columns in the twenty-first century necessitates inclusion of the latter term)? In short, to what extent is *free will* free?

By Calderón's time, the Catholic Church had long recognized that astrology could predict events and measure one's inclinations, and it is noteworthy that all of Vasily's predictions in *Life's a Dream* are ultimately fulfilled. But two crucial points must be added to this observation. First, as in the many misinterpretations of the oracle in Greek tragedy (including the Oedipus plays), Vasily accurately foresaw the outcome or *effect* of events but misinterpreted the *cause* (a scholastic distinction), failing to see that he himself, in the barbaric way he proposed bringing up the prince, was precipitating precisely what he was attempting to avoid. Sigismund points this out in act 3 when he asks: "If anyone were told, 'One day you will be killed by an inhuman beast,' would it be a good solution to wake one up while it was sleeping?" (p. 150). In the second place, the church categorically refuted and prohibited what was called "judiciary" astrology—which counseled remedies that could be taken to avoid the fulfillment of prophecy—because such measures undermined the concept of free will so important to Catholic dogma. This is precisely Vasily's error, which Sigismund again clarifies: "Foreseeing a danger doesn't mean you can protect yourself or guard against it before it occurs; yes, you can always take a few humble measures to protect yourself, but not until the moment is upon you, for there's no way of forestalling its arrival" (p. 151). In short, the stars can influence the future but cannot determine it outright. The point is brought home when Sigismund—contrary to all expectations—apparently repents at the final moment, affirming Catholicism's emphasis on the redemptory power of individual free will.⁴⁹

One may, however, question the sincerity of Sigismund's sudden "conversion," viewing it as the product of a cynical *desengaño* and the culmination of a calculated quest for power in the spirit of Machiavelli's *Prince*. This is the play's

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last major unresolved question and, together with the related issue of Sigismund's incarceration of the rebel soldier, the one that has most divided critics.⁵⁰ On the one hand, a sincere conversion would foreground the legitimacy of Catholic doctrine. On the other, a cynical grab for power, although it would not *negate* the legitimacy of Catholic doctrine, would be more in line with the critique of the Hapsburgs suggested earlier (p. 32). Yet just as in the question of Clorilyn (is she or is she not Vasily's sister?); in that of Vasily's defeat (positive from a Catholic perspective because it refutes judiciary astrology, negative because it marks a threat to the old order); and in that of the difference between dreams and reality (clear to the spectators, hazy to the prince even at the end of the play), Calderón rejects a facile solution to this problem and leaves all doors open. The issue of Sigismund's conversion has no easy answer and, in truth, leaves much to the discretion of the director, for there are no stage directions to indicate the prince's manner or gestures at this crucial moment (see the Suggestions for Directors for ideas on staging this scene). That *Life's a Dream* resists final closure in this way is one mark of its enduring vitality; that it leaves the question in the hands of directors is a sign of its inherent dramatic value; that it does so within the formulaic structure of the Comedia, where happy ends are the norm, is final proof of the subtlety of the author's genius.



ANY INTERPRETATION OF *LIFE'S A DREAM*, however brief, would be incomplete without a reference to the image of the hippogriff, a crucial symbol not only because it is the first word in the Spanish original but also because it unites so many of the play's themes. Rossaura uses the word to allude to the swiftness of the horse that has just thrown her, for the hippogriff is, among other things, a horse with wings. But its symbolism comprises more than just speed. As the unlikely product of a horse (*hippos* in Greek) and a griffin (itself a combination of an eagle and a lion), the hippogriff is "monstrous" in the strict sense of the word: a chaotic union of naturally irreconcilable elements, a blurring of boundaries that many of the play's characters incarnate through an extension of the three basic themes studied earlier. On a personal level, the dishonored Rossaura, forced to take vengeance into her own hands, is half man, half woman, as her disguise in act 1 suggests. Sigismund, because of the savage conditions of his upbringing (and perhaps also because he is the product of incest), is half man,

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half beast. On a political level, the civil war that engulfs the country stems from the fact that the Vasily is half king, half astrologer whereas Aistulf is half Polish, half Muscovite. Even at the philosophical level, the blurring of boundaries between dreams and reality reaffirms the omnipresent symbolism of the hippogriff. It is altogether fitting, then, that some semblance of order is restored in the last scene of the play only after the king, rejecting Aistulf's advice, refuses to flee upon the "swift miscarriage of the wind" (p. 149) that catapulted Rossaura onto the stage in scene 1.⁵¹

NOTES

1. One estimate is that 175,000 Jews fled Spain in the spring and summer of 1492 and another 100,000 converted by the August deadline (Gerber 1992, p. 140 [Bibliography, section 7]). The total population of Castile and Aragón at the time was somewhere between 8 and 9 million (O'Callaghan 1975, pp. 604–605 [Bibliography, section 7]).

2. See especially Castro 1954, 1972 (Bibliography, section 7).

3. Kamen 1985, p. 99 (Bibliography, section 7).

4. The lax enforcement of the New Laws, however, led Las Casas to denounce the situation in 1552 by publishing his manuscript, which he dedicated to Prince Philip (soon King Philip II) to assure his awareness of the abuses.

5. For example, Spain's defeat of France and the consequent consolidation of its Italian possessions, confirmed in the Battle of Pavia (1525); and, upon the inheritance of the Spanish throne by Charles of Ghent (Charles I of Spain, Charles V of the Holy Roman Empire) in 1516, the addition of the German lands and the Low Countries to its European possessions.

6. By the seventeenth century, law students outnumbered theologians by over twenty to one in Salamanca and Valladolid (Kamen 1991, p. 154 [Bibliography, section 7]). Hence in the passage from *Don Quixote* alluded to, Don Diego laments the fact that his son, a student at the University of Salamanca, refuses to study theology (part 2, chapter 16).

7. See Ozment 1980, pp. 407–408 (Bibliography, section 7), for more detail.

8. Quoted in Kamen 1991, p. 188 (Bibliography, section 7).

9. Another outstanding Spanish humanist, 1492–1540, friend of Erasmus and tutor to Princess Mary of England, who was forced to flee Spain at age seventeen when the Inquisition burned his parents for being Judaizers (his mother, already dead, was disinherited for the occasion). The entirety of his works was written in exile in England, France, and Flanders.

10. Quoted in Kamen 1991, p. 117 (Bibliography, section 7).

11. López Piñero 1979, p. 77 (Bibliography, section 7).

12. There is some dispute as to the extent of the university ban. One historian notes that exceptions were made for certain colleges in Bologna, Rome, Naples, and Coimbra (Kamen 1985, p. 78 [Bibliography, section 7]). Another asserts that, in the second half of

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the sixteenth century, distinguished Spaniards were found in universities throughout Italy, Flanders, and France (Elliott 1963, pp. 223–224 [Bibliography, section 7]).

13. López Piñero 1979, p. 141 (Bibliography, section 7).

14. See especially Castro 1972 (Bibliography, section 7).

15. Domínguez Ortiz 1973, p. 389 (Bibliography, section 7).

16. The diagram is adapted from Murillo 1990, 22 (Bibliography, section 7).

17. Time, place, and action. Thought in the Renaissance to have been mandated in Aristotle's *Poetics* (which mentions time and action but not place), strict observation of the unities is actually a product of postclassical criticism.

18. Vega Carpio 1989, vv. 327–328 (Bibliography, section 3).

19. See Maravall 1990 (Bibliography, section 8).

20. Aristotle 1961, p. 78 (Bibliography, section 3), emphasis added.

21. The first permanent public theater was the Corral de la Cruz, built in Madrid in 1579. The Corral del Príncipe followed in 1582, also in Madrid.

22. Ruano de la Haza 1987, p. 58 (Bibliography, section 8).

23. Parker 1982 (Bibliography, section 8).

24. Pérez Pastor 1905, pp. 98–99 (Bibliography, section 6).

25. On the Oedipal resonances of *Life's a Dream*, see especially Valbuena Prat 1956; Parker 1966; Rozik 1989; Molho 1993, pp. 240–248 (Bibliography, section 8).

26. Ruano de la Haza 2000, pp. 49–57 (Bibliography, section 2).

27. Among the few studies focused on Rossaura, those of Whitby 1960, Lavroff 1976, and Bueno 1999 deserve special mention (Bibliography, section 8).

28. The great gulf that separates Rossaura's attitude from modern feminist sensibilities becomes apparent in Laird Williamson's adaptation of the play (2001 [Bibliography, section 1b]), which rewrites the ending to have Rossaura refuse Aistulf's hand and offer it instead to Sigismund.

29. For more on Clarín, see Bandera 1971 (Bibliography, section 8).

30. Ruano de la Haza 2000, p. 66 (Bibliography, section 2).

31. *Richard II* 1.3.37–41. All Shakespeare references are from the Norton edition (Greenblatt 1997 [Bibliography, section 3]).

32. Greenblatt 1997, pp. 943–944 (Bibliography, section 3).

33. Ginard de la Rosa 1881, pp. 296–297 (Bibliography, section 8).

34. Brody 1969, p. 43; Ziomek 1983, p. 992 (Bibliography, section 8).

35. Hartzenbusch 1918, p. 8n (Bibliography, section 2).

36. Brody 1969, p. 43 (Bibliography, section 8).

37. Strzalko 1959, p. 644 (Bibliography, section 8).

38. Morón Arroyo 2000, p. 137n; Ruano de la Haza 2000, p. 169n (Bibliography, section 2).

39. Kamen 1991, p. 123 (Bibliography, section 7).

40. Schevill 1903; Cotarelo y Mori 1914; Levi 1920; Millé y Giménez 1925; Lieder 1930; Ferdinandy 1961; Alcalá-Zamora 1978 (Bibliography, section 8).

41. That a knowledge of modern genetics (i.e., genetics since the discovery of the structure of DNA in 1953) would not have been necessary for Calderón to intuit the

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negative consequences of inbreeding is clear from the following statement, which appears in the article “Consanguinity” published by the *Catholic Encyclopedia* in 1908 (Bibliography, section 5): “Nature itself seemed to abhor the marriage of close kin, since such unions are often childless and their offspring seem subject to grave physical and mental weakness (epilepsy, deaf-muteness, weak eyes, nervous diseases), and incur easily and transmit the defects, physical or moral, of their parents, especially when the interbreeding of blood-relations is repeated” (qtd. from the on-line version). As evidence, the article cites multiple sources including an Encyclical of Pope Gregory XVI from 1836.

42. On the Prometheus myth in *Life's a Dream*, see, for example, Ginard de la Rosa 1881; Morales San Martín 1918; Valbuena Prat 1956; Navarro González 1977 (Bibliography, section 8). On Uranus, see Ruiz Ramón 1990 (Bibliography, section 8).

43. On Clorilyn and the issue of incest, see especially Vida Nájera 1944; Feal and Feal-Deibe 1974; García Barroso 1974; Rodríguez López-Vázquez 1978; De Armas 1986, pp. 111–113; Molho 1993, pp. 240–248; Soufas 1993; Sullivan 1993 (Bibliography, section 8).

44. Rank 1992 (Bibliography, section 8) offers a fascinating study of the incest motif in world literature, including a significant discussion of the Prince Charles theme; see especially pp. 33–50, 99–118.

45. Another interesting parallel occurs in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, where Claudius, upon murdering his brother the king and inheriting his crown, marries his widow, to whom he refers as “our sometime sister, now our queen” (1.2.8)—meaning, of course, “sister-in-law.”

46. *Hamlet* 2.2.543–548, 575–580. On the Cartesian parallels of *Life's a Dream*, see, for example, Ginard de la Rosa 1895, p. 130; Riquer and Valverde 1958, pp. 375–376; García Bacca 1964; Sullivan 1979; Resina 1983; Bradburn-Ruster 1997 (Bibliography, section 8). Comparisons between *Life's a Dream* and *Hamlet* (although not from a Cartesian perspective) are drawn by Blanco Asenjo 1870; Abel 1963; Morón Arroyo 1990 (Bibliography, section 8).

47. *Hamlet* 2.2.582.

48. *The Tempest* 4.1.156–158. See Rupp 1990 and Zaidi 1996 for recent comparisons of *Life's a Dream* and *The Tempest* (Bibliography, section 8). On the sources of the life-is-a-dream fable (Middle Eastern in origin), see Thomas 1910; Farinelli 1916; Olmedo 1928; Frenzel 1970; Richthofen 1970; Galmés de Fuentes 1986 (Bibliography, section 8).

49. For more detail on astrology and Catholic theology in the play, see, for example, Carrera Artau 1927; Febrer 1934; Lorenz 1961; Valbuena Briones 1961; May 1972; Howe 1977; Hurtado Torres 1983; De Armas 1986, 1987, 2001 (Bibliography, section 8).

50. The essence of the polemical debate over the rebel soldier can be gleaned from the initial dialogue between Hall 1968, who maintains that Sigismund's punishment of the soldier is unjust; Parker 1969, who defends the punishment as an example of poetic justice; and Hall 1969, who reaffirms his original stance (Bibliography, section 8). More or less in line with Parker's view are Connolly 1972; Halkhoree 1972; Heiple 1973; Rull

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1975; McGrady 1985; Fox 1989 (Bibliography, section 8). In opposition stand May 1970; Hesse 1977; Alcalá-Zamora 1978; Homstad 1989 (Bibliography, section 8).

51. For detailed studies of the hippogriff, see Valbuena Briones 1962; Maurin 1967; Cilveti 1973; León 1983; De Armas 1990 (Bibliography, section 8).