

THE ADULTERESS IN SPANISH TRAGEDY (1830-1930)

BY

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## ABSTRACT

The origins of the tragic adulteress in Spain may be traced back to ancient myths in western tradition, but her most potent theatrical appearance takes form during the height of the Baroque theater—that is, the Calderonian tragedy. For centuries, the Baroque framing of the adulteress is cherished and reiterated as late as the early twentieth century, which naturally begs the question: why is there a centuries-long obsession with the tragic adulteress, and why does the portrayal of her on stage vary so little with the passing of time? I will explore this question by examining several Spanish tragedies in four different periods: the height of Spain's belated Romantic period (1833-1840), Noeromanticism and Realism in the late nineteenth century (1870-1895), Miguel de Unamuno's experimental tragedies in the early twentieth century (1898-1910), and the avant-garde break with the Baroque model in the 1920s.

The tragedian's undying obsession with the adulteress refused to die out for centuries of Spanish theater, even to the extent that the dramatists of the twentieth century could not part with the construct for the first twenty years of the modern century. It is for this reason that I deem the adulteress a haunting construct rooted in the Baroque tragic tradition. The adulteress may haunt a tragedy in several different ways—thematically, textually (including the use of spoken dialogue), or visually (through the actress's body or through the use of other visual sign-systems such as props).

My intention is to analyze these tragedies not only as part of the Spanish tragic tradition, but also as works that absorb and display the social tone of their own specific periods. Each chapter's tragedians perpetuate traditional theatrical constructs in their plays, but also maintain a uniqueness that is linked with the perception of gender roles

and the nation in that particular time period. The result is that the adulteress as tragic convention becomes a synecdoche for Spain's conflicted position between tradition and modernity.

This dissertation serves three purposes: to trace and characterize the haunted nature of the adulteress in the Spanish tragedy, to analyze the way in which the Spanish tragedians used the adulteress as a visual sign on stage, and finally, to reveal the tragic adulteress's connection to the complex interplay of gender and nation during Spain's crucial century of modern development.

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## **Tracing the Tragic Adulteress: From the Baroque Model to Avant-Garde**

### **Rupture**

The Spanish honor code has remained an obsession within the Spanish literary tradition for centuries. The studies that elucidate the honor code as a cornerstone of Spanish Baroque literature in general and Baroque theater in particular are a key emphasis of Golden Age criticism. Yet this particularly Iberian obsession with the honor code did not fizzle out with the arrival of an “enlightened” or “modern” Spanish literature. Instead, the theatrical preoccupation with the honor code remained notably entrenched in the Spanish consciousness centuries after the first productions of Calderón’s tragedies. The obsession with male honor brought with it the fear of the destructive adulteress. Her characterization was not merely one of illicit sexual behavior; rather, her actions suggested a grave threat to the purity of the Spanish family and Spanish nation as a whole. The framing of the adulteress as a destructive and contaminating force appeared and reappeared in Spanish tragedy as late as the early twentieth century.

The remarkable staying power of the adulteress in the Spanish tragedy begs the obvious question: why are tragedians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries intent upon reiterating the Baroque model of the adulteress? This dissertation seeks to answer that question by examining a group of tragedies from 1830-1920 that feature the adulteress as a dangerous or destructive force on family, lineage, and the Spanish nation as a whole. As part of Spanish avant-garde theater in the 1920s, the dramatists of Chapter Four break with the Baroque framing of the

adulteress, and therefore end the longstanding depiction of the adulteress as a destructive force. The analysis of these tragedies is based on three criteria: the way in which the tragedians engage in tragic discourse and gender rhetoric in their framing of the adulteress, the way in which the tragedians visually frame the adulteress with their own unique theatrical aesthetic, and the sociopolitical context in which the tragedies were produced. This last criterion allows for a discussion not only of the possible motivations behind the use of the adulteress on stage, but also the reactions of the critics and spectators to the tragedies in question. Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the adulteress is a vehicle for expressing the fears of modern Spain— psychological angst, political instability, or the pitfalls of a growing economy become the modern backdrops of the adulteress's transgression. The adulteress, as a perennial figure of Spanish tragedy, illuminates the way in which tragedians expressed the anxieties of a modernizing nation through the traditional discourse, conventions, and visual sign-systems of a venerated theatrical tradition.

### **The Tragic Model in Baroque Spain**

How did the adulteress acquire her position as a theatrical fixture across centuries of Spanish tragedy? The theatrical origin of the Spanish adulteress is the glory of Baroque theater, whose masters were imitated long after Spain's glorious *Siglo de Oro* had waned. More than any other work, the tragedy that cemented the image of the dangerous adulteress was Calderón de la Barca's *El médico de su honra*



(1635). In this famous Baroque tragedy, the supposedly cuckolded husband (Don Gutierre) murders his allegedly adulterous wife upon suspecting her infidelity with a visiting nobleman. Despite the latter's desire towards the wife, Doña Mencía, the lady resists his advances and remains true to her husband. Nonetheless, Don Gutierre is insistent upon cleansing his honor, and therefore remains largely justified in his actions even after recognizing his late wife's innocence.

This text acts as the exemplar of the honor tragedy because it is a well-known *theatrical* manifestation and model for the adulteress construct on the Spanish stage. However, the Baroque model itself is undoubtedly presaged by former dangerous adulteresses. The possible antecedents for the Baroque model may include adulteresses from the Old Testament (Bathsheba, for example), infamous adulteresses of Greek mythology (Clytemnestra), or the scheming, nursing adulteress in the Spanish medieval text *El Corbacho* (cerca 1450). Regardless of its possible antecedents, the Calderonian form of the adulteress construct remains the centerpiece for tragic ghosting in Spain. *El médico de su honra* was and is arguably the most famous and recognized tragedy of the Baroque period, and therefore a powerful tool for spectator recognition.

Much of *El médico*'s reception power comes from the audience's recognition of the adulteress's actions and her body as a threat to male honor. Male honor, in turn, is inextricably linked with the Baroque obsession with *limpieza de sangre*. As Barbra Fuchs explains, both male honor and blood purity depend upon Spanish citizens displaying their Castilian cleanliness with complete transparency—that is,

no one may behave in an ambiguous, exotic or transgressive fashion without endangering their “clean” position in society (2-3). Although the fear of blood contamination usually pertains to xenophobia towards Jews or Moors, it also extends to women who defy traditional gender roles. As a result, race, gender, and culture are locked together in a Baroque “master discourse” that often condemns any threat to male honor and blood cleanliness (Blackmore and Hutcheon 12). In this sense, the adulteress becomes as dangerous a contaminant to society as a Jewish *converso*.

The nature of female adultery and sullied male honor has been fleshed out by several critics, including Melveena McKendrick and Thomas O’Connor. However, it is Georgina Dopico Black’s work *Perfect Wives, Other Women* that most directly explains how the female body (and particularly adulterous flesh) acquires such an aura of disaster in the Baroque Spanish consciousness. Initially, the female body is connected to her father’s honor; thus, her purity or contamination soils his blood. The connection between the female body and male dishonor, however, takes on a slightly different connotation within the construct of marriage. According to traditional constructs, the husband and wife form “one flesh;” that is to say, they are united literally and figuratively. The husband controls the united body and is impacted by the state of his wife’s body. Thus, the wife’s body acts as a receptacle of blood and blood purity. In this way, any contamination of the wife’s blood automatically circulates through the husband’s. As an extension of blood purity, the concept of honor depends largely on the “proof” that both bodies within the marriage

are pure, and the blood of both bodies remains clean. In this sense, the wife's body is automatically the site of honor construction and potential deconstruction.

The futility of maintaining honor becomes the primary source of obstacles for the male protagonist, as many critics have reiterated in their analysis of *El médico* and other honor tragedies. Esther Beth Sullivan even proclaims that the construct of honor immediately suggests dishonor (59). Within a structuralist binary, the concept of honor becomes a state without dishonor—a state which practically does not exist. Because of the fragility of his reputation, the male protagonist is willing to commit the greatest sin merely to evade dishonor or to restore lost honor. This conception of self dictates how men perceive themselves and their responsibilities as husbands. Much of the perception of self depends upon external reputation—that is, the amount of honor that society as a whole allows the male individual. Melveena McKendrick is quick to note that the obsession with reputation is a particularly Baroque definition of honor. In the medieval period, honor depended much more upon public virtue and “personal integrity” (318). These earlier definitions, however, appear to hold less importance for the seventeenth-century protagonist. According to Richard Pym, the Early Modern man bases his own identity on a subjective, public opinion. The strength of the societal gaze often constructs the man's view of himself from an internal perspective. In this sense, the individual's self definition becomes entirely dependant upon a collective view and moreover, a “collective will” (284). If public perception senses dishonor and marks the man with such a label, the individual has already become responsible for rectifying that perception. As a result, the

appearance of dishonor may severely damage the male reputation, regardless of whether the man or any member of his family has committed an inappropriate or immoral act. In this sense, one may argue that the seventeenth-century male, particularly within the hyperbolic context of tragedy, remains enslaved or trapped by external forces and societal pressure. In Pym's words, the male individual is subject to a "mutilation" of his "culturally constructed self" (289). Honor becomes such an unattainable state that dishonor may become manifest at any moment.

Not only is the wife's betrayal feared by the individual husband, but it also presents a danger to society as a whole. In order to maintain *limpieza de sangre*, all potential offspring must be clearly of Christian blood with no contamination. A bastard child by adultery, then, would constitute a similar transgression because of the possible contamination of the husband's legitimate line (Dopico Black 39). Even more disastrous is the notion that because man and woman share one flesh, a part of the male body is contaminated if the wife has been penetrated. As a result, adultery infects both bodies. In this case, there remains only one solution for the dishonored husband: the flesh of the adulteress must be "expunged."

Due to the powerful threat of dishonor, the husband must maintain a constant state of vigilance over his wife's body. His surveillance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Just as an examination of perfect honor will most definitely result in the discovery of dishonor, so does an intense perusal of the body reveal traces of adultery. Dopico Black is quick to point out that the innocence of the wife does little to protect a woman from the examination. If the husband has a

predisposition for doubt (as his paranoia would most likely allow him to have), he may easily “misread the signs” (27). Once the marriage has been consummated, any sign of sex immediately lends itself to suspicion (25). The fear and punishment of female adultery parallels a fear of disorder and immorality in general. Often the fear of adultery reflects the male individual’s insecurity and fear of lost honor. As a result, adultery becomes the most obvious threat to patriarchal stability and male pride.

It is this danger of the wife’s body that is reiterated throughout the history of Spanish literature, and reaches its apex during the first three decades of the seventeenth century. The overarching theme within Baroque theater is that the wife’s contaminated blood will eventually damage male honor, and this destruction usually commences with a real or imagined adulterous act. In effect, the adulterous wife offers the most dangerous contamination of the husband’s blood and honor.

### **Spanish Tragedy and the Spanish Adulteress—Towards Working Definitions**

Until the avant-garde rupture with theatrical tradition in the 1920s and 30s, the format for the Spanish tragedy remained closely linked with the Baroque model—that is, a tragedy that adheres more or less to the Aristotelian form.<sup>1</sup> Any definition of tragedy, including that of Spanish theatrical tradition, originates largely in Aristotle’s *Poetics*. In the seventh chapter of *Poetics*, Aristotle proclaims “Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is complete, and whole, and of a certain magnitude;” (Fergusson 65). Aristotle’s insistence on “magnitude” emphasizes the

need for a calamitous action or situation within an effective tragedy. While the action depicted in drama may have a beginning, a middle, and an end, it is not of a certain magnitude unless there is a monumental shift from “bad fortune to good, or from good fortune to bad” (66). This shift in fortune is achieved through the three steps of tragic downfall—reversal (the action turns towards its opposite), recognition (the protagonist becomes aware of the truth) and the scene of suffering (death or injury) (73). Within the Spanish tradition, the actions that create the most magnitude are those that involve a threat to male honor and blood purity. For the Spanish protagonist, especially in the Baroque context, the greatest reversal of fortune is the loss of honor and lineage. Thus, the adulteress, as a primary threat to that honor, becomes a favorite action for the Spanish tragedy. It is not uncommon in the typical Spanish tragedy, as I will demonstrate, that the husband “recognizes” his dishonor through actual or implied female adultery, and then proceeds to kill his wife or lover in a climactic scene of suffering. In this sense, the action of female adultery provides both the magnitude and the practical plot structure to adhere to an Aristotelian tragedy.

Although the Spanish tragedians continue to incorporate Aristotelian form in their dramas, they also adapt to the stylistic tendencies of their period. This evolution of the tragedy across various artistic movements becomes the focus of Raymond Williams’s text *Modern Tragedy* (1966). Williams explains how the development of the tragedy over time indicates how much tragedy as genre is dependant upon a sense of venerated tradition. On the other hand, each theatrical period brings its own

adaptation of tragic form and style. In this sense, Williams consistently defines tragedy as a perpetual “structure of feeling.” Rather than discarding newly acquired conventions, each new period of tragedians from the Neoclassicists onward incorporated the techniques of its predecessors, with the result that several norms of tragedy persist in twentieth-century drama (*Modern Tragedy* 29). In Neoclassic theater, for example, tragedians put further emphasis on the characterization of the tragic hero—his stature, position, and of course, the tragic flaw, or hamartia, that impeded his moral judgment. This enlightened form of tragedy, however, is more an invention of modern tragic form rather than that prescribed by Aristotle (26).

Williams also credits the Romantic tragedy as diminishing the importance of the tragic action in order to increase spectator catharsis:

In Romantic criticism, the tragic hero was remade in the image of the tragic spectator, whose assumed division of feeling was projected as a tragic cause...This essential detachment from the tragic action was masked only by the attempted absorption of the action, through the figure of the hero, into the conscious spectator (27).

The connection between hero and spectator, then, became a crucial part of tragic reception. Williams reiterates throughout his analysis that tragedy is intertwined with tradition, and thus tragedy itself is defined by tradition. In the context of Spain’s historical tradition, it is little wonder that the adulteress and her threat to male honor becomes a mainstay of the Spanish tragedy. However, the definition of the adulteress within this tragic context is not as straightforward as it may seem.

In its most basic definition, an adulteress is a married woman who has intercourse with a man other than her husband. Nonetheless, this definition does not encapsulate the myriad forms in which the adulteress appears in Spanish tragic tradition. In some cases, the most destructive adulteress is not necessarily a woman who consummates an adulterous relationship sexually. The whisper of illicit contact, even the verbal expression of desire, puts into motion the tragic events that destroy male honor, the family bloodline, and Spanish society as a whole. This rumor-based concept of dishonor may wrongfully tarnish a completely innocent wife, as is the case in the foundational Baroque tragedy of my case studies—*El médico de su honra*. Despite the wife's technical innocence, she is still branded as an adulteress for the purpose of tragic destruction. In this sense, the Spanish definition of the adulteress (at least in the context of the tragedy), may be expanded to any woman who contemplates, commits, or is accused of an illicit sexual relationship with a man who is not her husband. Moreover, the act of adultery may manifest itself in a number of ways: as a mere rumor or suggestion, as inappropriate interaction (either linguistically or physically) between the married woman and potential lover, or the actual consummation of the relationship. Within the Baroque model (and its continual reiteration throughout the nineteenth century), the *discourse* of adultery is enough to create an adulteress, even and sometimes especially when the wife in question has no physical contact with her “lover.” The continual reference to this sort of discursive adultery is a crucial aspect of the link between the Baroque model



of male honor and its reiteration in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tragedy.

### **A Critical Century: Spain's Struggle with Modernity**

With the concept of the adulteress well established in her Baroque form, it is necessary to determine how and why the dramatists of modern Spain reiterated Baroque frameworks throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The key to the obsession with Calderonian themes and techniques lies in the unique context of Spanish politics and social norms in these hundred years. Specifically, Spanish dramatists (and for that matter, Spaniards in general) were caught in a perpetual tug of war between the glory of Golden Age tradition and the lure of modernity. The duality between tradition and modernity became increasingly conflictive, with the result that Spanish tragedians combined traditional techniques with modern perspectives.

The overarching constructive force in Spain at this time is the desire to create and sustain a modern nation that is worthy of the rest of Europe. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the primary obstacles to modern development include political instability and the crisis of male subjectivity (to be explained in detail in Chapter One). During the Restoration (1875-1923), the definition of modernity changes slightly--the construct of the family unit (and the gender norms that accompany it), the construction of a viable economy, and the construction of an independent political system become essential components of a modern nation-state.

For her part, Jo Labanyi emphasizes the development of a capitalist system as the instigation of Spanish modernity:

It was capital-driven modernization which produced both modernity and modernism: modernity understood as the condition of life subjectively experienced as a consequence of the changes wrought by modernization, and modernism as an artistic / cultural response (across literature, theatre, painting, architecture, music, and later cinema and design) to that subjective experience (*Cultural Studies* 11).

The development of a distinctly Spanish literary corpus, including the construction of a high-quality Spanish theater, would constitute other valuable components of a modern society. As Victor Turner consistently proclaims in his study of theatrical performance, the theater is instrumental in presenting and maintaining a “community world view” specific to each community’s culture (*By Means* 1). A community world view, through the medium of theater, could shape a sense of modernity while also criticizing its folly. For example, theatrical productions could present a certain view of “modern” marriage and either proclaim its virtues or reveal its inevitable downfall.

The idea of newness provokes a retreat into traditional constructs within the theater, as a completely modern “Spanish” theater (separate from Spain’s glorious Baroque tradition and more recent dependence on French Neoclassicism) would present a virtually impossible task. This fear is particularly potent in theater, because its performative aspects depend on repetition and established cultural meanings that

spectators will instinctively understand. It is logical, then, that modern tragedians would find Golden Age constructs particularly inviting. As a result, the tragedians from 1830-1920 consistently employ textual and visual elements from the Baroque model so as to enrich their connection to glorified tragic tradition.

## Theatrical Haunting and the Adulteress: Performance, Gender, and Semiotic

### Approaches

Empieza el espectáculo... Todo es teatro, todo es arte escénico; el remedo de un hecho, como la exhibición de una figura, el canto lo mismo que la tramoya, todo está sujeto a una ley común, absolutamente distinta de la que rige a otro arte, en cuanto se exhibe en aquellas condiciones y ante un público. Desde luego, el arte escénico es un compuesto especial que participa de todos, y no se parece por completo a ninguno... su efecto es allí inmediato, casi repentino, sin retoque, sin revisión, ni atención sostenida (Yxart *El arte escénico* 2-3).

In this passionate excerpt from *El arte escénico* (a series of theatrical reviews), theater critic Josep Yxart eloquently describes the unique characteristics of the theatrical experience—namely, the relationship between dramatists, actors, and spectators. The unique dynamic of theater depends largely on the spectators' reaction to the theatrical presentation—a reaction which relies on the spectator's ability to connect emotionally with his cultural (and specifically theatrical) memory. It is this connection that is the first step towards the creation of ghosts on stage.

Although numerous theorists have described the way in which cultural ghosts haunt different genres of art and literature, the quintessential definition of *theatrical* haunting comes from Marvin Carlson's text *The Haunted Stage*.<sup>2</sup> Specifically, Marvin Carlson lays out the way in which theater spectators receive and create ghosts whenever they go to the theater. The more crucial aspect of haunting is the ability of the spectator to recognize or at least absorb the haunted feeling—an

experience Carlson defines as ghosting. The occurrence of ghosting is a frequent and easily evoked process in most theatrical contexts—in fact, any phrase or image that reminds the spectator of other productions, texts or art is part of the haunting process. In its most general form, haunting is the spectator's remembrance of cultural memory. Carlson explains:

This process of using the memory of previous encounters to understand and interpret encounters with new and somewhat different but apparently similar phenomena is fundamental to human cognition in general, and it plays a major role in the theater, as it does in all the arts...To this phenomenon I have given the name *ghosting*... Thus, the recognition, not of similarity, as in genre, but of identity becomes a part of a reception process, with results that can complicate this process considerably (6-7).

A large part of the complexity of ghosting is the myriad ways in which haunted encounters occur. Ghosting may be presented by the dramatist, actors or technicians in order to provoke a specific sense of cultural memory, or ghosting may spring up (either by design or by chance) when a knowledgeable audience makes a connection between their past theatrical experiences and the current performance.

This description of spectator-driven ghosting relies heavily upon reception theory, particularly Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the horizon of expectations. In his text "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory," Jauss explains how the addressees (in this case, the spectators) are a crucial component in establishing a text's "historical life" (190). The horizon of expectations arises from "...the

historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the forms and themes of already familiar works...” (191). Thus, the reception of the text depends largely on the spectator’s expectations and memories from past experiences. In the theatrical context, Carlson defines expectations as “the residue of memory” that the spectator brings to the new performance (5).

This residue becomes an important catalyst for the appearance of ghosts on stage. In fact, Carlson’s descriptions of ghosting in theater parallel the definitions of performance in Performance Theory. Marvin Carlson begins his explanation of the “haunted” stage by reiterating the innate repetition of theater—that performance is twice-behaved behavior, as Richard Schechner defines it. In this description of performance, Schechner explains how any given performance is repeated (never done for the first time) yet original (every time is different from the last): “Performance means: never for the first time. It means: from the 2nd to the nth time” (*Anthropology* 36). In this sense, performance is inextricably linked to memory of past behaviors (or past performances on stage). That the theater relies upon the known becomes the basis for Carlson’s concept of the haunted stage.

These concepts of haunting and ghosts also relate to Joseph Roach’s description of substitution in his landmark text *Cities of the Dead*. Roach explains how the death of a person or thing incites the need to undergo two performative processes: the first, to create a memory in which to mourn the lost person or thing, and then to substitute the loss with a suitable replacement. Although the substitution may fulfill the practical needs of replacing the position, the substitution cannot

compare to the memory of the original. The anxiety to replicate the past causes the survivors to “feel obliged more or less to reinvent themselves, taking into account the roles played by their predecessors” (1). In this sense, the substitute is automatically ghosted by the mourned predecessor. For the theater, the haunted substitution comes most vividly through the actor—his performance may be received as a surrogate of another performance, or he may act as a substitute for a well-known actor (Carlson 58).

These theoretical companions to theatrical haunting indicate that Carlson’s concept itself draws upon related texts in performance and reception theories. Nonetheless, Carlson’s account of the haunted stage is unique in that it itemizes a list of possible haunting mechanisms specifically for the theater. Carlson’s haunted sub-categories include: the haunted text, the haunted body, the haunted production, and the haunted house. Textually, a production is haunted in that each drama recycles other texts. If the drama itself is a well-known classic or has many revivals, the current production is haunted by the spectator’s knowledge or memory of the play. Whether a debut or a revival, the text conjures ghosts of the plays before it.

Although the concept of textual haunting is similar to intertextuality, Carlson contends that textual haunting works in a slightly different fashion. The most often quoted definitions of intertextuality tend to be those developed by Mikhail Bakhtin and Roland Barthes. Bakhtin’s intertextuality comes from the concept of the texts inter-relating as semiotic systems that exist within culture (11-12). Barthes’s definition is a text that dynamically works within itself or a body of texts, thereby

de-emphasizing the author (Barthes 122). Both definitions are highly invested in a narrative relationship between texts, and do not account for the theatrical reception process that is necessary for textual haunting. Carlson explains the distinction thusly:

Among all literary forms it is the drama preeminently that has always been centrally concerned not simply with the telling of stories but with the retelling of stories already known to the public. This process naturally involves but goes far beyond the recycling of references, tropes, even structural elements and patterns that intertextuality considers. It involves the dramatist in a presentation of a narrative that is haunted in almost every aspect—its names, its character relationships, the structure of its action, even small physical or linguistic details—by a specific previous narrative (17).

From the theatrical standpoint, the most crucial type of intertextuality is the knowledge of a repeated story within the spectator's mind—that is, the spectator's memory of past theatrical experiences. Without their memory of the other texts, textual haunting may not occur.

Along with textual haunting, there are numerous ways that the stage becomes a haunted space. Ghosting within the physical body depends largely upon the actor's choices—his voice, his movements, his expressions, and his decision to imitate or eschew famous styles or actors of the past. In some cases, the actor haunts himself because his former roles seep into his current one. Even when the actor attempts to escape typecasting, the spectator will inevitably associate the current role with the ghosts of his most famous characters.



A haunted production expands the haunting effect to all sign-systems within the theater—sounds, lighting, sets, makeup, or any visual or technical element that alludes to another moment of another production. For my case studies, the most recognizable production ghosts appear from the spatial relationship or blocking between the adulteress and her husband, or the adulteress and her lover. As this spatial relationship is visually manifested and highly recognizable in certain contexts, the adulteress's movements on stage provide a key source for delving into the spectator's cultural and theatrical memory. In this sense, the multiple haunting possibilities of the theater ensure that any given performance will incite a few ghosts.

### **The Adulteress as Sign, Subject, and Object of Desire**

The Calderonian framing of the adulteress—that is, her position as a destructive force on stage—haunts the Spanish theater throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although the textual haunting of *El médico de su honra* is clearly evident, this ghosting only marks the surface of the haunted adulteress construct in the Spanish tragedy. Stylistically, the Spanish tragedians overtly evoke well-known theatrical conventions in their productions. In order to analyze the aesthetic display of the adulteress and the tragic ambience in which she exists, I use two specific semiotic concepts: Umberto Eco's metonymic framing and Keir Elam's definition of sign-systems.

Eco's theatrical terminology is useful in that he proffers definitions of semiotic visual display--especially ostention and framing. Beyond the act of

displaying or showing something on stage, ostention is the display of a person or thing as a metonymic category. In Eco's words, it is the process by which something or someone is de-realized "in order to make it stand for an entire class" (110). This metonymic process realizes its theatrical power in that ostention guides the spectator's reception and interpretation of characters and props on stage. Once the person or thing becomes a theatrical sign, it is immediately framed in a particular context. In fact, the display of the sign imposes upon the spectator a "semiotic pertinence" (113). When the framing context is calculated to evoke a certain interpretation, the spectator is able to read the character, prop, etc, according to its indexical category. Eco's concept of theatrical metonymy is useful in that the Spanish adulteress is a metonym for her class of women. In the case of Spanish tragic framing, the class is destructive wives that provoke familial and societal collapse. The process by which the adulteress is framed allows for an examination of the sign-systems on stage that surround her.

The framing of the adulteress herself, as well as any other theatrical sign-systems, constitute various categories of visual or aural signs on stage. Keir Elam provides a useful subdivision of theatrical sign-systems in his text *Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*. (1970). The actor's gestures, movements, set scenery, and lighting constitute visual signs that relay the production's overall theatrical message. These stylistic choices directly influence how the adulteress is perceived within the aesthetic context of the production. In this sense, the adulteress's body manifests

itself in many semiotic vehicles. She is a part of the visual sign-systems on stage, and she is a metonym of negative womanhood.

In the typical tragic pattern, the crux of the plot structure is the illicit desire among the three points of the erotic triangle—in this case, the husband, the lover, and the adulteress as the objectified third point. Following Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's logic in *Between Men*, (which is itself derived from René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*) the adulteress becomes an incidental object over which the competing men fight (21). The prevalent use of the erotic triangle in Spanish tragedy makes sense in light of the discourses of male honor and *limpieza de sangre*. In other words, the adulteress is the receptacle of dishonor, while the primary relationship is that of the two men.

However, the adulteress may not be cast aside as a mere object of male posturing. Within the Baroque model, the adulteress endangers honor unless and until she is eradicated. Moreover, the adulteress may be more than an object of desire—she may also lust after and pursue the man, thereby taking on a form of agency. This female transgression occurs frequently in the Realist novels of the late nineteenth century, as well as in Unamuno's *Fedra*. Although it is the men's honor that is most at stake, the adulteress retains a power over that honor that belies her position as the third point of the erotic triangle. In this way, the adulteress is both an immobilized object and a destructive force that endangers family and nation.

Because she is displayed visually on stage, the adulteress's body constitutes an important semiotic sign in the Spanish tragedy. However, the importance of the

female body (and specifically the woman's body) goes well beyond its semiotic roles. An important consideration for the analysis of the adulteress's body is the character's paradoxical subjectivity. Stanton Garner describes how the body, unlike other sign-objects on stage, has a dual role. On the one hand, it is the central object within the theatrical space (2). All spectators examine the body and it fulfills its theatrical role by receiving the gaze and allowing the spectator to interpret the stage visually. The actress's body acts as a gauge upon which all the other objects (sets, props, etc) are measured and understood. For example, a prop does not acquire its significance as theatrical object until the hand of the actor touches it or uses it (47). It *seems* as if the body lacks subjectivity—it is more of a complicated prop.

However, the body has one characteristic that is unlike any prop on stage—the body may look back at the spectator (49). As a result, the body becomes an individual with subjectivity who looks out while she is being looked at.

Garner's description of the theatrical body pertains especially to the female body on stage—while both male and female actors receive the gazes of the audience, it is a more frequent occurrence that the female body will be further eroticized or objectified. This situation is often the case in the Spanish tragedy in that the female body receives several different sexually charged gazes. The adulteress acts as a sign of desire—she is an adorned object that receives the gaze not only of her lover, but also her husband, other male characters, and the spectator. At times the dramatist maintains the adulteress's position as objectified vessel of desire, and restricts the actress's movements so as to keep her as primary object rather than subject (this

technique is particularly true in the Romantic and Neoromantic tragedies of the nineteenth century). In some cases, however, the adulteress acquires subjectivity and the opportunity to gaze back at those whom *she* desires. It is her intermediary position between subject and object that complicates the perspective of the adulteress as a phenomenological presence and as a metonym for social destruction.

### **The Haunting Adulteress in Modern Spanish Theater**

Using the Baroque model as my point of departure, I intend to explore the textual and production ghosts that appear and reappear the modern Spanish tragedy (1830-1930). Each of the four chapters examines the way in which the haunting adulteress appears across various periods of the Spanish stage: early Romanticism (1830-1842), Neoromantic and Realist tragedy (1875-1895), Miguel de Unamuno's theatrical experimentation in the early twentieth century (1895-1915), and the first burst of avant-garde expression (1920-1930). Remarkably, the Calderonian framing of the adulteress haunts the Spanish tragedy well into the twentieth century, until the avant-garde dramatists eschew the traditional perspective of the adulteress along with many other traditional theatrical conventions. The chain of haunting proceeds thusly: the Romantic tragedies of the 1830s are clearly haunted textually by the Calderonian drama, a model which every theater-going Spaniard would have recognized. The Neoromantic tragedies of the late nineteenth century echo the Romantic ghosting of the Baroque model—hence the label “Neoromanticism.” Even the Realist tragedy *Realidad* (1892), which remains unique among its Neoromantic

colleagues, relies upon its own thematic ghosting to fashion an original view of the adulteress's role in society.

For the theater of the early twentieth century, the emphasis on haunted texts wanes considerably but remains a crucial tool for depicting the adulteress on stage. The dramatists who continued to focus on tragedies incorporate two levels of textual ghosting: the reference to general historical / period knowledge, or the use of a specific drama as exemplar for tragic form. Unamuno chooses the latter form of haunting with the result that his adulteress is ghosted by the ancient Greek tragedies along with the Baroque model. With the avant-garde theater of the twenties and thirties, Spanish dramatists usually reject textual or production haunting (to the extent that ghosting can be avoided). The avoidance of explicit haunting assists in the avant-garde's break with traditional and conventional models of theater, including but not limited to, the display of the adulteress.

Although textual ghosting remains a key component of my close-reading analysis, I also intend to discuss the possibilities for haunted productions within the Spanish tragedy. Carlson explains how certain visual or auditory moments in a production may allude directly to a specific performance of the past. He cites Nora's slamming of the door at the ends of a *Doll's House*, for example, as an auditory and visual ending that is tied up with the memory of that classic play (100). While my case studies do not have as specific an example of sign-system ghosting, the Romantic and Neoromantic plays of the nineteenth century do evoke scenes of visual haunting. Certain conventions of the Romantic theater, such as the unsheathed *puñal*

or the contaminated adulteress at the window, are such commonly used imagery that they spark recognition in the spectator. Because the nineteenth-century tragedians are greatly invested in reiterating tragic tradition, the potential for copying recognizable visual moments is a somewhat common occurrence. This visual ghosting occurs less often, however, when the visual component of the production is reduced greatly, as in Unamuno's *teatro desnudo*, or when the dramatists reject former conventions and replace them with irrational or jarring visual signs, as in avant-garde drama.

Although the use of the Baroque model remains unbroken from the Golden Age tragedies to the 1920s, it is the burst of Romantic tragedies in the 1830s that provides a unique combination of varied elements that had never been seen before on the Spanish stage: the unique Romantic aesthetic, well-known tragic conventions, and an emotional connection to the modern anxieties of a nation thrust into a new period of modernity. It is this unique mixture of the old and new that incites the creation of a distinctly haunted Spanish tragedy.

### **A Summary of Chapters**

Although I will discuss the general portrayal of the adulteress (and its construct variations) in each period, I will offer a more extended analysis of five case studies. In chapter One, I link Spain's burgeoning sense of modernity with the Romantic tragedies of the 1830s. During this chaotic decade, Spanish dramatists reassert the obsession with the Baroque legacy of male honor and the destructive adulteress. Antonio García Gutiérrez's *El page* (1837) is the prime example of the

Romantic preoccupation with tragic tradition and the Baroque framing of the adulteress.

Chapter Two concerns the height of Realist expression in Spanish literature. Along with the great production of Realist novels during the Restoration, many authors wrote, produced, and directed dramas that paralleled the social messages of its narrative counterparts. Concurrently, Spanish tragedians knowingly evoked Romantic and Baroque ghosts in the most popular dramas of the period—the aptly named Neoromantic tragedies. In both cases (albeit in different fashions), the Neoromantic and Realistic tragedies reiterate the adulteress as a destructive force and threat to male honor. In the context of late nineteenth-century realism, the adulteress adversely affects the burgeoning market economy and the moral fiber of the growing bourgeoisie. The portrait of the adulteress as a sign of bourgeois immorality is epitomized by Galdós’s tragedy *Realidad* (1892).

Chapter Three discusses how disillusion and doubt influence the construct of the contaminating adulteress in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Miguel de Unamuno’s “anti-theatrical” drama *Fedra* (1910) presents a traditional adulteress without the benefit of the multiple sign-systems of theatrical production. However, Unamuno borrows his plot from two ancient tragedies and a French Baroque drama: Euripedes’s *Hippolytus*, Seneca’s *Phaedra*, and Racine’s *Phaedra*, the latter two themselves based on Euripedes’s original. This paradoxical relationship between aesthetic experimentation and the dependence on tragic texts



complicates Unamuno's framing of the adulteress: Fedra is both a threat to society and a regenerative, cleansing force.

Despite the perpetual haunting of the adulteress construct in Spanish literature, the brief period of avant-garde theater in Spain provokes a monumental (if temporary) break with the assumed position of the adulteress as a destructive force in society. It is this shifting current of artistic expression that I analyze in Chapter Four. Ramón del Valle-Inclán's *esperpentic* techniques in *Los cuernos de Don Friolera* (1921) distort traditional tragic constructs, including the role of the adulteress in the classic honor tragedy. Ramón Gómez de la Serna's nonchalant look at female adultery in *Los medios seres* (1929) also questions tragic tradition. The result is that both dramatists successfully subvert the Baroque perspective on the adulteress and avoid the use of haunting.

The development of the Spanish tragedy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries experiences a monumental shift from the early Romantic dramas to the avant-garde works. Whereas Romantic tragedians often relied on the Baroque model to create a tone of *gravitas*, the avant-garde dramatists explicitly rejected tradition in favor of political and aesthetic subversion. It is this remarkable trajectory from reverence to rupture that characterizes the course of modern Spanish tragedy.

## **Romantic Tragedy in the 1830s: A Contaminating Adulteress for the Nineteenth Century**

While the framing of the adulteress as social threat and blood contaminant is based largely in Calderonian tragedy, the obsession with the adulteress on stage reaches a fever pitch during the mass production of Romantic tragedies in the Spanish theater of the 1830s. This chapter examines the social and political anxiety that encourages the consistent reiteration of the Baroque tragic model on stage, as well as the way in which certain Romantic tragedians display the adulteress as a part of tragic visual spectacle. The continued emphasis on blood cleanliness and honor provides a well-known context for the display of modern anxiety, and the contaminating adulteress becomes a convenient manifestation of the political and psychological fears of Romantic tragedians and their spectators.

On a conceptual level, the display of the adulteress taps into a longstanding tradition of tragic conventions in Spanish theater, and thus offers an easy and practical way of communicating nineteenth-century fears through the longstanding cultural obsession with honor and lineage. Many tragedians of the 1830s (especially Ángel de Saavedra (El Duque de Rivas), Larra, and Antonio García Gutiérrez) consciously allude to well-known conventions to increase the cathartic power of their tragedies. In this sense, the theatrical display of the adulteress has several practical purposes: first, that she helps incite Aristotelian catharsis, secondly, that the adulteress offers an aesthetic link between Romantic tropes and glorified Baroque tragic tradition, and perhaps most importantly, the tragedians use the adulteress as an

allegory for modern anxieties. It is not surprising that so many Romantic tragedies present a familial crisis within the frame of political disunity; and the breakdown of familial structure (usually through blood contamination) leads to a larger political crisis. I will return to this pattern of tragic allegory (and the adulteress's role in this allegory) as it applies to Ángel de Saavedra's *Don Álvaro* (1834), Mariano José de Larra's *Macías* (1835) and Antonio García Gutiérrez's *El trovador* (1836), as well as my case study of García Gutiérrez's *El page* (1837).<sup>3</sup>

The reiteration of the Baroque model provides not only a tragic catharsis for the early nineteenth-century public, but also a source of comfort in a time of change. Because the spectator recognizes the Baroque tragic pattern, he is able to expunge his modern anxieties through the threats to honor and stability that he views on stage. As Marvin Carlson explains, dramatists purposely evoke a sense of haunting in order to enrich the spectator's experience and tap into the collective cultural memory of the audience (see introduction). The haunting process is attractive to both dramatists and spectators because the shared ghosts reassert a sense of cultural tradition and stability—in other words, there is the implicit assurance that the theater, even in the midst of vast political or social change, maintains a connection with a national past. For the Spanish public of the 1830s, the need to remember past cultural greatness (in this case, the Golden Age of literature), is a sorely needed countermeasure against the fear of political chaos. In this sense, the recognition of the spectator is a crucial element in the spectator's emotional connection to the tragedy: his catharsis depends

upon identifying and absorbing the explicit haunting constructs from Baroque Spain, and the adulteress is a hallmark of that tragic tradition.

With this ample ground for haunting, there are a number of both textual and production ghosts that are readily available for the Romantic tragedian. Textually, the Romantic dramatists borrow rhetoric and imagery from the Golden Age tragedies. In particular, the language used to describe illicit desire evokes ghosts from Baroque texts. The binary imagery of the Calderonian tragedy, especially the juxtaposition of fire and water or fire and ice (based in Petrarchan rhetoric), is a convention that is well established in Spanish drama. Even Unamuno in 1910 employs these particular Baroque dualities when describing illicit desire (see Chapter Three). From a visual perspective, the Romantic tragedians' allusions to Baroque tragedies offer certain tropes that elicit production ghosts. Arguably the most common visual technique of the Spanish tragedy is the wielding, unsheathing, or brandishing of the *puñal*. Rather than merely proclaiming the need for a duel or murder, the cuckolded husband must visually display his weapon, which in itself has various symbolic connotations. In the case of *El médico*, the display of the *puñal* eclipses the actual murder scene in which Don Gutierre avenges his supposedly damaged honor. The audience never sees the murder; rather, the weapon is used as a suspense mechanism in which the spectator recognizes Doña Mencía's fate. The visual power of the *puñal* is that it has both a practical and an emotional purpose. As a prop, it cues the spectator as to the next step in the plot pattern—that is, avenging lost honor. Moreover, the view of the dagger provokes fear and pity in the

spectator as he realizes the fate of the adulterous lovers. This “*puñal* reveal” becomes a repeated convention in many Romantic tragedies, including those discussed in this chapter.

While not as explicit as the display of the dagger, the character’s movements in the theatrical space at times reveal the potential for production haunting. Specifically, the physical relationship between the intrusive male lover and the contaminating adulteress is one that rarely changes even in twentieth century Spanish tragedy. Usually, the actress playing the adulteress remains enclosed and relatively immobile—her threat to her husband’s honor and to society as a whole is implied through her contaminating power but is not displayed with kinetic movement. Conversely, the illicit male lover “penetrates” the wife’s room, and upon crossing her “threshold,” instigates dishonor and blood contamination. Although this interaction occurs in *El médico de su honra* (the prince Enrique keeps visiting Doña Mencía after his accident), this physical interaction between lovers goes as far back as *Celestina* (1499), when Calisto enters Melibea’s orchard.<sup>4</sup> Hence, the recreation of the penetration of the wife’s room becomes another recognized convention and source for reception ghosting.

Along with the use of traditional conventions and Baroque haunting, several tragedians of the 1830s depict medieval stories or events in Spanish history. These medieval settings serve to create reception ghosts from the spectator’s knowledge of national history. This textual haunting is achieved by framing the Romantic action (the illicit desire in the erotic triangle or search for self) with a momentous historical

event from Spain's medieval past. In many cases, such as Larra's *Macías* or García Gutiérrez's *El trovador*, the historical "event" behind the action is threatened royal succession. The historical event is quickly overwhelmed by the love story and the destructive passion of the protagonist, with the result that Romantic historical drama is much more about the individual's angst than the historical narrative (Serrano Asenjo 343).<sup>5</sup> In this sense, history acts as a backdrop for the tangled web of honor, lineage, and uncontrollable desires of the protagonist(s) (Navas Ruiz 126).

Despite some tragedians' "loose" sense of historical events, the allusion to a specific time and place in the distant past has a specific reason—it invites further reception ghosting for the average spectator. The historical framework, while perhaps only loosely based on actual events, automatically evokes a sense of gravity and revered tradition that is perfect for the grave tone of Romantic tragedy.<sup>6</sup>

Carlson proclaims that since Aristotle and Bharata, dramatists have considered "the superior and more significant drama to be that in which the material is already familiar to the audience, drawn from a shared body of historic, legendary, and mythic material treating heroes, kings, and gods" (18). It is little wonder, then, that the Romantic tragedians use cultural memory of history to maximize the haunting in their tragedies.

The overall continuity between Golden Age drama and Romantic tragedy is due in large part to the type of theater produced in the eighteenth century. Much of the dramatic productions of the eighteenth century had consisted of either translated works from outside Spain, or revivals of Golden Age dramas. In fact, a large

percentage of Spanish Neoclassic theater was the *refundición*, or revival of Spain's "classic" dramas.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the typical theater-going audience of the 1830s would most likely be well acquainted with both *El médico de su honra* and any other hit from the Golden Age. The consistent connection to Calderonian works further asserts the Spanish dramatists' persistent obsession with "la estética barroca" (Rull 59).<sup>8</sup>

Even when eighteenth century dramatists wrote and produced original work, their dramas were little more than poor imitations of Golden Age *comedias de capa y espada* (McClelland 201, 205). René Andioc goes even further, indicating that all genres of eighteenth century theater remained largely invested in Baroque themes and structures, to the point that theater of the period reflected "la decadencia de unos valores ya tradicionales" (132). This consistent reiteration of Baroque themes and conventions would ensure that Golden Age works remained vivid within the Spanish spectators' cultural memory.

Along with the prolific production of Baroque works throughout the eighteenth century, the rhetoric and discourse of the Enlightenment influenced the way in which Romantic dramatists dialogued with both their recent and distant pasts. Specifically, the Enlightened perspectives on gender and anatomy became the model for the modern view of the transgressive body. As the adulteress is without doubt a member of this corporal category, it is useful to examine this eighteenth-century discourse.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault analyzes the connection between body and governmental power in Early Modern Europe (the Renaissance to the Enlightenment). Within Foucault's description of modern power, the control over the individual's body is a crucial component for containing and categorizing society. Although the body retains its physical presence and importance, it also becomes an important instrument on a political level: "...there may be a 'knowledge' of the body that is not exactly the science of its functioning, and a mastery of its forces that is more than the ability to conquer them: this knowledge and this mastery constitute what might be called the political technology of the body" (549). This process of political technology, as manifested in panoptic surveillance, is what Foucault deems a "disciplinary society" (557). Thus, the body either becomes a sign of acquiescence to state power, or it becomes a potential threat to disciplinary structure.

The display of a rebellious or dangerous body, then, incites the spectators' fear. If the adulteress's body is seen as a potential contaminant, then the solution is to root out that element and eliminate it. In this Foucauldian light, the display of the adulteress on stage gives the spectator the ability to see the contaminating body and feel its threatening power. Not only does he see the potential damage of the offending body; he also watches her public punishment (either her death or that of her lover).

Rebecca Haidt's work on the subject, *Embodying Enlightenment* (1998), provides another perspective on the influence of body discourse on relations of power and gender constructs. In this work, Haidt traces the gender and biological



constructs of men as they manifested themselves in the philosophy and literature of the Enlightenment. She contends that the eighteenth-century subject focused on the male body in a scientific, logical manner. Within Haidt's model, a rational concept of the body leads to a rational mind, which in turn leads to a productive male citizen—a man with reason and “buen gusto” (3). Once the body is analyzed in a logical way, it may be harnessed to promote social reform.

On the other hand, there may be contaminants to this reasoned conformity, particularly from those men that choose not to perform their gender roles according to Enlightenment definitions of masculinity. Haidt's prime example of rebellious male subjects (both in society and in literature) are the *petrimetres* (dandies or fops) who feminize themselves through their feminine behavior—excessive shopping, obsession with high fashion, interest in the home, etc (112-3). The more they stray from virtuous masculinity, the more they embody dangerous difference. As a result, the *petrimetre*'s body is legible as a dangerous “Other” (119). According to this discourse, inappropriate gender performances, that is, incarnating the “Other”, damages the overall quality of the male collective.

Haidt's study and Foucault's description of disciplinary society bear fruit for my analysis in the sense that the Enlightenment obsession with a virtuous body (and the logical control over it) is similar to the Baroque obsession with blood purity and honor. In both cases, the male control over the “Other” depends upon the ability to control the quality and nature of the Other's body. Likewise, the failure to effectively limit the othered body results in catastrophe for the guardian and also

affects the quality of societal constructs. In this sense, the fear of the adulteress as an othered, dangerous body is further emphasized by the gender rhetoric of the late eighteenth century.

Together, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century perspectives on gender and transgression influence the way in which the adulteress is perceived in the early nineteenth century. However, the motives behind the use of the adulteress as a tragic construct derive largely from the specific political and social context of the early nineteenth century. The necessity to lose oneself in tragic splendor and idealized theatrical memory becomes even more necessary given the political upheaval that characterized the 1830s. Much of the anxiety of the period derived from the transition from absolutism to modern liberalism.<sup>9</sup>

For the Spanish public of the early nineteenth century, many Romantic tragedies reflected the fear of uncertainty as to whether modern liberalism could develop a Spanish state worthy of European modernity. This anxiety was heightened further during the first Carlist War (1824-1842). In the first third of the nineteenth century, Spain experienced three different political systems: the last period of French occupation, the absolute monarchy under Fernando VII, and María Cristina's regency in which Spain experimented with political liberalism. This third crucial stage begins in 1834, and the following six years mark a period of tangible political and psychological chaos. The transition from absolutism to moderate liberalism occurred rather abruptly when Fernando VII, an extreme absolutist, died in 1834 without a male heir. Because of this ambiguity, Spaniards could oppose a future

absolutist state or reassert an absolutist dynasty by handing over the monarchy to Fernando's brother, Carlos V. Remembering much of Fernando's oppressive reign, the Spaniards placed Isabel as future queen, with her mother María Cristina as regent.

As a result, Spaniards experienced several momentous changes in the period from 1834-1843: the absolute monarchy is suspended for the first time, the first Carlist War (1833-1840) breaks out, and there develops a strong ideological polarity between the two principal political camps—the carlists, who supported an absolutism and traditional constructs of the Ancien Regime, and the liberals, who supported a moderate regency and the development of a thriving bourgeoisie under market capitalism (Otero Carvajal 378). This polarity, and the unwillingness of either side to compromise politically, led to seven years of battles across the northern half of Spain's territories (Burgos 182). The crux of the First Carlist War hinges on the crucial decision as to how Spain was to be redefined as a nation: the choice between a Carlist monarchy and a liberal democracy provided two extreme political systems, both of which would have vast consequences for Spain's position among other European nations.

This political upheaval was a major instigating force in the development of Spanish Romanticism.<sup>10</sup> The connection between the development of a Romantic aesthetic (particularly in theater) and political chaos was a well-established pattern in other European nations well before the 1830s. These earlier Romantic movements largely influenced Spanish authors exiled to France. Although exiled liberals

experimented with Romanticism abroad, they did not return to Spain until after Fernando VII's death (Gies *Theater* 97). One such Romantic in exile, Ángel de Saavedra (the Duque de Rivas), would not have produced his landmark *Don Álvaro o la fuerza del sino* (1834) had Fernando VII's death not incited a series of political and artistic changes in Spain. This work opened the floodgates of Romantic theater for years afterward, as it was a model of Romantic style and structure within a distinctly Spanish context.<sup>11</sup> In other words, Spain's belated Romantic movement in theater may have never occurred had the political context for Romantic expression not reached its emotional apogee after Fernando VII's death.

A motivating force for the development of Spanish Romantic tragedy was the new laws and attitudes towards theater after Fernando VII's death. As an extreme and often oppressive absolutist, Fernando had forbidden any vestige of early liberal thought since the Liberal Triennium (1820-1823). Several artists were exiled during the absolutist period, and any sort of writing (whether literary or journalistic) was strictly limited in the Fernandine years (Bahamonde Magro 153). Fernando's strictness secluded Spanish artists from European stylistic currents and did little to renovate theaters or stimulate dramatic production. His limitations included severe censorship and a lack of funding for the dilapidated theaters of the 1820s (Gies *Theater* 93). As a result, only a handful of dramatists managed to explore or incorporate aspects of Romantic drama.

Immediately after Fernando's death, however, his wife María Cristina encouraged new artistic production. The influx of government funds, combined with

the ability to employ new theatrical styles and techniques, was instrumental in inciting the Spanish theater's transition from Neoclassical rigidity (particularly the adherence to the three unities) to Romantic irrationality and experimentation (Gies *Theater* 13). Although her succession was controversial and eventually led to the first Carlist War, María Cristina's few years as regent allowed dramatists to embrace both Romantic stylistic techniques and an openly liberal political stance within and outside of their dramatic works (Mariano José de Larra, for example, incarnated both tendencies as dramatist and journalist of the 1830s). Moreover, many of Spain's canonical plays were written and produced during the development of Spanish liberalism (roughly 1834-1845), including José Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844).

Although Romantic dramatists relied in part on their Neoclassic predecessors, the tone and style of their productions clearly rejected the former stagnation of the past and embraced a subversion of traditional plot lines. Romantic dramatists sought to shock the public with taboo themes and dazzling productions. Incest, lust, adultery, matricide, along with shocking conventions such as hidden or mistaken identities and wrongful executions were the common fare of Romantic drama (Gies *Theater* 13-4). The exploration of taboo themes is pertinent for Baroque ghosts in the sense that incest, adultery, and mistaken identities all relate to the fear of blood contamination and the health of the family. In this way, dramatists such as Antonio García Gutiérrez and the Duque de Rivas were able to maintain strong thematic links with the Baroque tragic model while still using a specifically Romantic aesthetic.

Along with its connection to the Baroque model, the exploration of taboo themes allowed dramatists to delve into the fractured subjectivity of the male protagonist and his relationship with the object of his desire. The uncertainty of modernity manifested itself in the subjectivity crisis of romantic authors *and* their famous characters or alter-egos, a tendency analyzed at length by Susan Kirkpatrick and Carlos Secos Serrano. The difficulties and potential contradictions of developing liberalism, and their effects on Spanish intellectuals, is perfectly embodied by Mariano José de Larra's life and works. It is no wonder, then, that Carlos Seco Serrano, Susan Kirkpatrick, and Michael Iarocci dedicate much of their analysis of Romantic literature and Spanish history to Larra's life and the influence of his works. The psychological and thematic paradigm of Larra's life and works provides a template for the themes and anxieties expressed in many Romantic tragedies.

For Seco Serrano and Kirkpatrick, Larra's suicide is directly related to the artistic, political and psychic failure of liberalism in the 1830s. Carlos Seco Serrano often notes Larra's uncharacteristic optimism towards modern liberalism and the freedoms it could extend to artists and Spaniards in general (22). Nonetheless, this optimistic view of the new Spanish nation quickly dissolved into disillusion and bitterness. According to many of his journalistic writings, Larra's rancor towards the Fernandine snobs was replaced by his repulsion of the greedy, ill-educated liberals (along with, of course, Carlist officials). According to Iarocci, Larra's quick descent from hopeful to scornful (and suicidal) was due to his ability to see (and partially

foresee) the dark side of the modernity that he had longed for during the Fernandine years. Susan Kirkpatrick describes Larra's prescience as an especially heightened subjectivity, in which he was hyper-sensitive to his own disillusion (internal passion) and the metaphorical death that surrounded him (sociopolitical failure) (104). Thus, Iarocci, Kirkpatrick, and Seco Serrano use Larra's life and works as a model of liberal artistic angst during the 1830s. The trajectory goes as follows: discontent during Fernandine oppression, exhilaration during the first months of the regent María Cristina's reign, simultaneous excitement and concern for the developing nation-state under liberalism, and ultimate disillusion as greed and civil war impede Spain's ability to develop as a modern nation.

All three scholars trace the trajectory through Larra's satirical essays, but the individual's subjectivity crisis is equally emphasized in many of the Romantic tragedies of the period. In a sense, Larra's disillusion and suicide provide a sort of archetype of the Romantic subject and his fatalistic journey towards death. While the tragic figure struggled to develop his own subjectivity on stage, the spectators could sympathize with him and connect the dots between his melodramatic crisis and the confusion of their own modern subjectivity. David Gies explains the emotional connection between the spectator and tragic protagonist that is specific to Spanish Romanticism:

Romantic heroes let loose a maelstrom of pain, anger, frustration, and confusion upon unsuspecting audiences. Those audiences were precisely the 'bourgeois men' who were struggling to understand their place in the new

society and anxious to see themselves reflected, and resolved, on stage  
(*Theater* 106).

The Romantic self suffers a rupture between his internal, emotional psyche and the social order of the outside world (Kirkpatrick 37). This tension provides fodder for the fatalistic tragedies, as the protagonist's fractured self seeks unity between his two selves but fails to peacefully connect his psyche to the outside world. In other words, the Romantic subject longs for the union between internal, literary passion and the external desire for social rights (Kirkpatrick 41). While Larra is the exemplar of the Romantic subjectivity crisis, the same pattern appears in the Romantic tragedies of the period.

For the protagonists of Romantic tragedy, fractured subjectivity is wrapped up in the potential for blood contamination. Frequently, the noble protagonist falls prey to both the political upheaval of his kingdom *and* the internal destruction of his family. In some cases, such as Antonio García Gutiérrez's *El trovador* (1837), the problem of contaminated blood is directly linked to the protagonist's political downfall. Even when the link is not explicitly drawn, Romantic dramatists consistently parallel political dissolution with familial dissolution. The use of noble characters reinforces the urgency to maintain familial honor and secure a proper heir; the failure to continue the noble lineage has dire consequences for the nation as a whole.

As a result, the adulteress acquires significance as a steward of *limpieza de sangre* and honor. It is through her body that the heir is drawn, and any



contamination of her body extends to the son, the father, and especially in the case of a noble family, the “kingdom” as a whole. While the tragedy of contaminated blood is not solely linked to female adultery (incest and hereditary insanity are also common causes), the obsession with clean blood remains the central fear of several Romantic tragedies. The tragic fate of the protagonist who suffers blood contamination is linked with a sociopolitical crisis—dissolution of a noble family, war, and the painful death of more than one virtuous character. The blood contamination spreads from its starting point (usually a mother or wife) and eventually poisons society as a whole. By displaying this tragic process, the Romantics reinforce the fear that blood contamination remains a threat regardless of the period, and that such societal destruction may reoccur at any moment.

Along with *El page* (1837), there are several Romantic tragedies that display the gender constructs, stylistic conventions and reception ghosting that characterize the theater of the 1830s. As one of the most famous tragedies in Spain’s literary history, the Duque de Rivas’s tragedy *Don Álvaro y la fuerza del sino* (1834) is often cited as the exemplar of Spanish Romanticism. This early Romantic tragedy tells the tale of a man who follows his desire for Leonor, despite the disapproval of her family and the fact that her father has sent her to a convent. After killing Leonor’s brother, wandering the wilderness, and losing both love and social status, Don Álvaro throws himself off of a cliff. The major theme of lost desire is the driving force behind the protagonist’s cruel fate, but this initial interpretation barely scratches the surface of *Don Alvaro*’s contextual meanings.

In *Properties of Modernity*, Michael Iarocci explains how this work exemplifies the Romantics' love-hate relationship with modern liberalism. On the one hand, Saavedra's work displays characters and scenes from the 1830s. Yet the thematic framework is tied to tragic, fatalistic tradition and history (specifically, the sixteenth century)—the plight of a subject who is in danger of losing his honor, his love, and his life because of an unfortunate turn of fate. While the concern over blood contamination is arguably more subtle in this tragedy than others, there still appears anxiety over Don Álvaro's roots and lineage. According to Iarocci, Don Álvaro's status as a *mestizo* (that is, supposedly having both Incan and Spanish blood) condemns him to an outcast state (129-30). Thus, the protagonist's questionable lineage influences his ability to marry Leonor and avoid death. The fact that he is unable to overcome Leonor's family's disdain indicates that miscegenation is another source of destructive blood contamination.

Along with questionable lineage and the modern/early modern dualities, Don Álvaro must also contend with his ruptured subjectivity. Kirkpatrick characterizes Álvaro's particular struggle as the tension between his desire for Leonor (internal psyche) and his desire to find his niche within the social order (external world) (115). As he barrels ahead on his fatalistic path, Don Álvaro's longing for a unified self is consistently denied to him—he must give up his social standing or his pursuit of the forbidden object of his desire.<sup>12</sup> Rather than give up either, Don Álvaro opts for a third option—that is, uniting his fractured self in death. In Kirkpatrick's reading, Álvaro's moments of highest emotional torment give him the temporary state of a

whole self (117). The protagonist's battle with his own subjectivity mirrors the Romantic subject's inability to reconcile his position within a modern, liberal nation-state. Whereas Don Álvaro struggles to combine desire with social responsibility, the Romantic subject simultaneously longs for the comfort of tradition and the exciting possibilities of a new nation. While Don Álvaro's journey towards death does not literally reenact the life of a Spanish citizen, the symbolic angst of the protagonist parallels the public's feelings of uncertainty and excitement towards the unknown fate of the nation. As one of the most famous Romantic tragedies, *Don Álvaro* epitomizes the indecisive stance of Romantics towards Spain's burgeoning modernity.

The other two "big" hits of the 1830's stage, Manuel de Larra's *Macías* (1835) and Antonio García Antonio García Gutiérrez's *El trovador* (1836), reemphasize the Romantic tragedies' trademark pseudo-historicism and obsession with the contaminating adulteress. In both cases, the tragedy pertains to blood and lineage crisis within a noble family in medieval Spain. In *Macías*, Larra displays the various fears of blood contamination within the story of star-crossed lovers. Because Macías is detained in war, his intended Elvira is coerced into marrying the evil Fernán. When Macías returns, Elvira is confronted with three forms of transgression: betraying her promise to Macías, committing adultery against Fernán, and defying the wishes of her father. In all three cases, she has inadvertently endangered the lineage (and honor) of all three men through her betrayal. Any contact with one man contaminates her relationship with the other two. Although it is

the three men who either enclose her or penetrate her room, Elvira's body remains the site of destroyed honor and betrayal (Kirkpatrick "Liberal" 55).<sup>13</sup> Larra emphasized from the first act that the only "solution" to the contaminated blood is death. Eventually, it is Fernán who manages to cleanse his honor through spilling the blood of both Macías and Elvira. Although the spectators sympathize with Elvira, it is Macías who garners the most empathy as the victim of tragic fate. As the primary subject, he is the first to suffer the loss of his honor / love receptacle, and is therefore destined for social and physical ruin.

We see a similar blood-driven pattern with *El trovador* (1836). The dichotomy of historical distance and emotional closeness is particularly vibrant in the works of Antonio García Gutiérrez, and his most famous work epitomizes those tendencies. Critics such as Ermanno Caldera mark *El trovador* as the moment in which the historical drama struck a deep chord in the Spanish public's consciousness. Not only did the production run for multiple performances, but it also provoked a previously unheard of reaction in the audience—theatergoers were said to be transfixed in a sublime state of shock—that is to say, they were simultaneously horrified and delighted (89)<sup>14</sup>. As one of the principal theatrical critics of the 1830s, Larra is quick to praise García Gutiérrez's talent and ingenuity:

Las costumbres del tiempo se hallan bien observadas, aunque quisiéramos ver el *don* prodigado en el siglo XV. Los caracteres sostenidos, y en general maestramente acabadas las jornadas; en algunos efectos teatrales se hallan desmentida la inexperiencia que hemos reprochado al autor: citaremos la

linda escena que tan bien rematan la primera jornada, la cual reúne al mérito que le acabamos de atribuir una valentía y una concisión, un sabor caballeresco y calderoniano difícil de igualar (835).

Along with his comment on the visual display of the production (la linda escena), Larra particularly emphasizes García Gutiérrez's effective use of cultural memory and the tragic tradition. The "sabor calderoniano" is seen as a boon to the overall emotional and artistic effect of this highly popular historical tragedy.

A large part of *El trovador*'s success was due to its potent combination of melodramatic language, Manichean themes, and visual effects. Like many of its successors, *El trovador* focused on the individual's fight with destiny, honor, death, and all in a medieval context. The figure of the trovador itself is a construct of the *juglar*, or poet-storyteller, who would entertain the medieval public with his tales and songs. Thus, Gutiérrez evokes textual ghosting by placing a medieval cultural archetype in the center of the Romantic erotic triangle.

In order to augment the stakes of the conflicts, the story relates a blood feud between the noble Don Pedro and a gypsy clan, followed by an illicit love affair. Leonor, Pedro's object of desire, is secretly in love with the trovador despite her brother's wish that she marry Pedro. Leonor's defiance, along with encouraging transgressive desire, offers a discursive challenge to the male authority that surrounds her—particularly her male relatives (Bueno Pérez 116-7). Although her defiance allows her a temporary agency in the tragedy, she is eventually punished for her illicit actions. Like Elvira, Leonor has instigated blood contamination through

her desire for the “other” lover. As a result, she must wait immobilized in her room until the adventurous trovador manages to visit her in the night. The dashing protagonist is supposedly a gypsy, and therefore his love affair with Leonor immediately evokes the fear of blood contamination through miscegenation.

Within the first few scenes, Antonio García Gutiérrez has successfully displayed the blood threat and employed the conventions of Spanish tragic tradition. Eventually, the spectators find out that while Manrique was raised by gypsies, he is actually the long-lost brother of Don Pedro. In a sense, the mistaken identity becomes an accomplice to assumed or actual blood contamination, and the tragic fate of both the adopted and blood family is assured. Fate is cast through the tragic separation and death of the lovers, accompanied by a terrible anagnorsis in which the noble Don Pedro learns that he has accidentally killed his own brother in order to assuage his thirst for vengeance. Thus, García Gutiérrez stuffs his most popular tragedy with as many references to blood contamination as possible, and all are tightly wound up in medieval pseudo-historicism. Yet despite this distance, the Romantic spectators of 1836 had little trouble associating a noble’s fatalistic journey with their own uneven path towards a stable, modern Spain. Along with *Don Álvaro* and *Macías*, *El trovador* consistently employs tragic tradition in order to express the anxiety of the early nineteenth century.

In order to augment the emotional impact of the tragic experience, these tragedians employed hyperbolic visual signs that increased the spectator’s emotional reaction to the Romantic individual’s crisis. The most overt visual signs come from

acting techniques – the movements, gestures and expression of the actors (Caldera 238, 240). Much of the passionate and irrational tone of Romanticism depends on the actor's emotional and histrionic delivery of melodramatic soliloquies. The Romantic's focus on the subject (and his emotional plight as an individual) encouraged the actors of the 1830s to use hyperbolic gestures and expressions. However, it was just as important for actresses to embody the Romantic sense of passion and irrationality in their own performance.<sup>15</sup> As a result, the body and voice of the actor alone already send forth a plethora of signs for the audience to interpret.

Along with melodramatic acting styles, the Romantic era was famous for its elaborate sets and new use of space—a production aesthetic analyzed at length by Ermanno Caldera and Ana Ballesteros Dorado.<sup>16</sup> One purpose of these dazzling technical sign-systems is to break the Aristotelian unities, especially the unity of place. Unlike the Neoclassic works of merely a few years earlier, many Romantic tragedies included a protagonist who embarked on a theatrical journey with multiple locations. In a typical Neoclassical work, all three acts take place in a middle-class drawing room, and the actors remained contained in circular space (Caldera 260). Rather than moving naturally, Neoclassical actors remained in their assigned spot, thereby maintaining the familiar *tableau* at the end of every scene. The masters of the Romantic theater, however, opted for a fluid use of space and movement. One again, the Romantic directors desired verisimilitude that further emphasized the fear and pity of the protagonist's tragic fate (Caldera 261). Within a space of a few short

years after Fernando VII's death, Romantic dramatics had completely razed the old-fashioned use of space and visual sign systems.<sup>17</sup>

Ballesteros Dorado even notes that the lack of space is used symbolically in Romantic tragedy. The most common analogy between plot and space occurs when the infamous lover visits the wife or daughter by crossing into her room. The room and the contents therein (woman and honor) are marked as belonging to the husband and father, and the transgressor penetrates all upon entering the patriarchal space (191-2). Once again, the wife is marked as the container of honor and the property of her husband, and is therefore confined to "his" space. Along with the female characters, there are also male characters who are displayed in part through their spatial surroundings. For example, the orphan in tragedy may wander the stage without ever enjoying his own room (232). In this sense, the spatial ambience of Romantic drama is meant to consistently reinforce and reiterate the protagonist's psychic journey towards his tragic fate.

The spectator's anxiety is reflected by any number of visual and aural stimuli, including the trovador's execution where he is thrown into flame, or his mother's hysterical "grita gitana" at the plays conclusion (Vilarnovo 105). With respect to the adulteress, the sense of shock is usually provoked by signs of a 'cleansing' blood—a bloody sword, the marital bed, or the display of a passionate death. In this sense, the multiple sign systems (especially visual cues) reinforced the link between familial destruction and the contaminated or contaminating woman.



When spectators recognize these signs of taboo behavior, they are incited to fear the consequences of defying social norms. The punishment for such defiance is the common fare of Romantic tragedy, often accompanied by duels, lightning, snakes, and bells ringing. Sound effects in particular were designed to add to the emotional “frenesí” of the production (Vilarnono 101). The emotional impact of perceiving such signs further provokes the spectator’s fear until the protagonist (and in some cases, other transgressive characters) are punished in a shocking yet cathartic manner. Ballesteros Dorado effectively describes how extreme visual and audio signs were designed to shock the spectator, and how the spectator was conditioned to receive the hyperbolic message:

Se trataba de provocar en él (el público) una conmovación externa, hacerle participar aunque solo fuera sensorialmente de la tensión dramática....Ahora bien, probablemente ayudado por la experiencia de muchos años del Romanticismo, escogió de modo conveniente estos recursos. El espectador ya estaba dispuesto a <leer> de modo correcto el escenario....el público estaba condicionado para trabajar así cognitivamente” (80).

Thus, the public willingly absorbed the sensorial overload and received the social messages that were conveyed. As Umberto Eco explains in his analysis of theatrical semiotics, the signs onstage create a message, which in turn becomes a representation of life outside the theater (113). As modern liberalism loomed on the horizon, the fate of the family as a traditional anchor of Spain’s social structure was a primary concern for Spaniards. While this concern could not be allayed by a

simple solution, it could be channeled into the sort of hyperbolic sign-systems that characterized many tragedies of the 1830s.

As he did so effectively in *El trovador*, García Gutiérrez once again deftly plays with the themes, conventions and emotional tension of the Romantic tragedy in *El page*. In this little-known work, Antonio García Gutiérrez manages to carve out a blood threat that touches upon all the Romantic sign clichés, yet still retains a unique multi-layered look at Spanish political upheaval in the 1830s. The plot trajectory of the play employs several Romantic conventions, as the spectators experience the ill-fated love and tragic death of the title character. Like many other protagonists, the page Ferrando loses his object of desire (the lady Blanca), is denied his true identity, and dies in agony for want of those illusive objects. In order to attain Blanca, Ferrando sings and woos her, and eventually agrees to kill her husband, Don Martín. Wracked with guilt, the protagonist continually sacrifices the health of his psyche to feed his undying passion for Blanca. As an orphan, Ferrando's identity is hidden until the very last moments before his death, when he learns that Blanca and her lover Rodrigo are his parents. Thus, the unrequited love between Ferrando and Blanca is not merely a sexually driven relationship, but also a perversely incestuous one.

With this powerful combination of social violations, it may be assumed that the Romantic spectator would be as emotionally affected as he was during a performance of *El trovador* a few months earlier. Yet beyond the potentially stunning visual signs and the shock of presenting openly taboo subjects, the

Romantic spectator may also perceive a certain parallel between the threats displayed on stage and the threat to his own well-being as a Spanish citizen in the 1830s. Although the tragedy focuses on the disturbing relationship between mother and son, García Gutiérrez also includes a curious historical side-note to the conflicts of desire—the king Pedro has died suddenly, and there is ambiguity as to his proper heir. Moreover, Córdoba suffers from an ongoing war in which Rodrigo has triumphed in a number of battles. As a war hero, Don Martín is indebted to Rodrigo and the protection he offers the families in Córdoba. Yet at the moment Martín discovers the affair, the “bad blood” between them immediately overrides any military triumph. With his discovery, the problematic succession of the first *jornada* is abandoned in favor of an intimate look at Ferrando’s downfall and illicit passion. Nonetheless, the historical context of the tragedy emphasizes the link between political and familial upheaval. Without Blanca’s contamination, Martín and Rodrigo may have formed powerful allies and restored Córdoba to its former glory. Moreover, Martín and Blanca could have produced a noble line that replaced Pedro and his curbed lineage. This potential becomes obsolete, however, the moment the adulterous relationship between Rodrigo and Blanca occurs.

In a sense, Antonio García Gutiérrez provides an allegorical exposition in order to parallel the exotic battles of late medieval Spain with the civil strife of the 1830s. The tension of uncertain succession in the play mirrors the Romantic fear of a new governmental system. This pattern is a perfect example of the way in which political anxiety is channeled into fear of blood contamination, and in this case, the

suspicious female body. Blanca's body absorbs the social angst of political instability; it is the tangible visual sign of transgression. With all the sign-systems reiterating her guilt, the actress playing Blanca sacrifices her body as a site of purging anxiety. Her body is not only the site of contamination, but also the site of ultimate punishment. Semiotically, the adulteress provides a theatrical metonym for a modern society's ills. Within the performance, the adulterous flesh is both an emotionally and visually accessible vehicle for "modern" anxiety.

Perhaps more so than any other female character in Romantic tragedies, Blanca incarnates several forms of social threat through blood contamination. Like Elvira in *Macías*, Blanca anchors the love triangle as the center of destructive desire. The first link is to her noble father, who has arranged a suitable lineage through Blanca's marriage to Don Martín. However, Blanca has already enjoyed the warrior Rodrigo, who is betrothed to her through their moments of shared passion. Even before Antonio García Gutiérrez develops the relationship between page and lady, he has already represented a web of betrayal spun by Blanca. If she has indeed married Rodrigo, she has effectively betrayed her late father's wishes (and the family's pure blood line), and she has committed adultery by sharing the newer marriage bed with Martín. She has also betrayed Martín by denying him a noble heir and cuckolding him. Both men are linked to her through marriage, but only Rodrigo connects to her through desire, whereas Martín connects to her through her social obligation. Already with this cross-reference of adultery, Blanca has damaged Martín's honor and infected Rodrigo with diseased passion. Like Elvira, Blanca becomes a blood

receptacle for multiple men that are linked to her either through genetics or marriage. In every case, she manages to both betray and poison each man in his turn.

With this initial love triangle, Antonio García Gutiérrez had enough material to develop the blood crisis and condemn Isabel as an adulteress. Yet the dramatist decides to go a step further – he includes a *fourth* desire link to Blanca—her page and secret son Ferrando. Initially the passion of a fourth potential lover seems to follow the typical line of the fatalistic protagonist—he loves in vain, and cannot help but become obsessed by the object of his desire. However, by the end of the first jornada, Antonio García Gutiérrez had added yet another Romantic convention—mistaken or unknown identity. Along with his ambiguous lineage and problematic desire for his mistress, Ferrando believes his mother has died and his father has vanished. As an orphan, his illicit desire for his mistress is even more transgressive because of the gap in age and social ranking. Coincidentally, Blanca also reveals to the audience that she has a secret son from the earliest years of her affair with Rodrigo. Immediately, then, the spectators grasp the horror of the implicit social taboo—Blanca and Rodrigo are Ferrando’s missing parents, and Ferrando is well on the path towards seducing his own mother. Despite Ferrando’s undying passion, the incestuous relationship is never consummated physically. However, the mere implication of incest (and its motivation) carries with it the certainty of stained honor and social disgrace.

It is worth noting that the implied incest only constitutes one thread of blood contamination. Before he even entertains incestuous desire, Ferrando has already

been marked by his mother's poison. Merely by growing within the contaminated receptacle, Ferrando is doomed to suffer the disease of passion passed on to him from both parents. He is, in fact, the fruit of the illicit union, and has therefore inherited the contamination through his mother's body. On the other hand, Rodrigo and Martín are contaminated through the penetration of the dishonorable receptacle. Once they have been touched by the disease, they are doomed either to death or ultimate dishonor.

In this sense, any blood tie linked to Blanca seals the male subject's fate. Blanca's father dies without securing his lineage, and both Martín and Ferrando die in the contaminated, nuptial bed. Although it is technically Ferrando who murders Martín, Antonio García Gutiérrez leaves little doubt that the true murderess is Blanca, as it is through her manipulation that Ferrando is driven to crime. Moreover, Blanca is also blamed for Ferrando's death, as his suicide is directly linked to his guilt for having killed Martín. As an object and receptacle, she does not physically commit the murders, yet she remains the container in which guilt and vice are stored. While Rodrigo manages to survive with poisoned blood, he is heartily punished through the death of his only son—his chance at a noble lineage, like Blanca's father, is obliterated by the overall contamination. As a result, Blanca ruins every man she touches, and her contamination is like a plague that destroys the noble family as a whole. By play's end, there remains little doubt that Blanca's womb will never produce a viable heir—she is morally barren, and has destroyed the noble lineage connected to her.

Because of Blanca's connection to each male character, her power as a receptacle is quite far-reaching socially. It is almost as if she acquires a temporary subjectivity that feeds on and destroys the subjectivity of the men connected to her. Rather than sharing in the passionate self as a companion, Blanca robs the men of their subjectivity in order to construct her own power as a female subject. However, Antonio García Gutiérrez ensures that this point of subjective independence (and potential dominance) never occurs. Like the incest, the threat of female dominance hangs in the air, but never quite comes to fruition. Instead the male characters die, and Blanca remains an object that depends upon her subjects. In this sense, Antonio García Gutiérrez shows how a woman *almost* fashioned her own subjectivity through systematic blood contamination, but thankfully failed. Through Martín and Ferrando's death (and the cleansing power of spilled blood), there is the chance that social order will be reestablished. In the meantime, Blanca's contamination succeeds in destroying not only the noble line but the chance to establish royal stability after the death of Pedro.

With this interpretation in mind, it is necessary to examine how Antonio García Gutiérrez, through Romantic imagery, presents Blanca as the poisonous *nudo* that links the men to each other. Because Rodrigo and Ferrando share an inherited bloodline, their sexual desire for Blanca takes on a similar rhetoric and symbolism. Both men are infected with the fever of desire which they are unable to shake off despite their intellectual will. As in most Romantic tragedies, the all-consuming passion of the protagonist's psyche dictates the progression towards his tragic fate.

Despite both men's realization that their passion destroys their social positions, their subjectivity is deeply melded to Blanca as the object of their desire. Ferrando remains conscious of this prison of passion, as his dialogue often likens his obsession to a fatal disease:

Mi frente es un volcán, mis venas arden  
 en fuego abrasador, irresistible...  
 delirio,  
 que el alma emponzoñada alimentaba  
 y mi ser y mi vida devoraba,  
 tu eres mi bien, mi gloria, mi tesoro;  
 tu eres el dulce encanto de mi vida,  
 y mi tormento a par...sí... ¡Yo te adoro! (93)

Within just this short profession of love to Blanca, Ferrando evokes a number of running tropes that recur throughout Gutierrez's impassioned dialogues. The first is the concept of the fever of desire that blinds the "victim" to his duties as a social subject. Until his death from the disease of desire, he remains in the trance of enchanted passion, unable to escape. Ferrando seems to realize that the fever will torment him and eventually lead to his downfall, yet he enjoys the pleasure of the disease "devouring" him. While this monologue appears in the third *jornada*, it provides an important thematic foreshadowing for the climactic conclusion of the work. Moreover, García Gutiérrez wastes little time in employing the fire / ice imagery from the Baroque tragic tradition.<sup>18</sup> Because Ferrando is blinded and entranced by his desire, he, like Don Álvaro, suppresses his social duty in favor of his internal passion. Once again, the protagonist's conflict creates a fractured



subjectivity which may only be resolved in death. In this sense, Blanca's contamination does manage to devour Ferrando's ability to exist as an independent male subject.

The dissolution of the male protagonist's subjectivity is hardly a new technique within Romanticism, nor is the use of erotic triangles or incestuous undertones. What sets *El page* apart, however, is the way in which Antonio García Gutiérrez weaves together these taboo themes, particularly how he manages to combine all transgressions within the relationship between Ferrando and Blanca. I have already described how the imagery of fever and disease depict the dismantling of Ferrando's social self as a noble servant and page. Yet this is only one aspect of the page's dysfunctional relationship with his mother and potential lover. While the sexual passion between them is supplemented by images of enflamed desire, the mother-son affection acquires an entirely different series of images. As the implied (and actual) mother of Ferrando, Blanca's infectious ability evolves from devouring fever to the icy hand of frozen death. When Ferrando manages to "remember" scenes from his own infancy, his mother appears as a sort of ice queen that deposits the chill of death on his body:

Si, me persigue como seco espectro  
 acosa al criminal: ¡Madre del alma!  
 En mis brazos estaba, moribunda,  
 tal vez pidiendo por mi bien al cielo;  
 llorosa me besaba, y un suspiro  
 hirió mi frente con vapor del hielo.  
 Un crucifijo, que alumbraba apenas

trémula luz de antorcha funeraria  
 testigo fue de su temprana muerte,  
 y oyó benigno su postrer plegaria.  
 Vos también vos también sobre el sepulcro  
 de una madre llorasteis, y de flores  
 coronasteis también la losa fría.... (74).

Although Ferrando still believes his mother to have died at this point in the play, Antonio García Gutiérrez is careful to link the page's memory of his mother to Blanca's destructive power. In this sense, the "memory" of the dead mother actually acts as a premonition of the future death that awaits the male protagonists, and in particular, the fruit of her contaminated loins. Once again, Ferrando has contracted death from his mother, who has "marked" him with her frozen vapor. Within the first half of the tragedy, Antonio García Gutiérrez has already juxtaposed the duality of sexual passion (fire) with the death of the family line (ice). Along with displaying two contrasting images, the juxtaposition of passion and death becomes a symbol of Ferrando's ruined subjectivity, a destruction that originates from Blanca's contaminated womb.

With all the threads of dishonor originating from her body, Blanca even condemns herself as the instigator of tragic events. In some ways, Blanca's character garners sympathy because of the fact that she recognizes her guilt and suffers for it. Although she is beautiful, Blanca consistently refers to the mark of disdain that has destroyed both her outer and inner self. In a Foucauldian sense, the marks of guilt on her face and body act as punishment, and are also signs by which society (or in this

case, the spectator) may condemn her as a dangerous or unhealthy member of the conforming collective. Blanca's position as contaminator is displayed to the audience, principally through her own self-condemnation. The rhetoric of the following monologue reiterates Blanca's guilt and shame in the last *jornada*:

Sola me deja y de temores llena,  
 ¡Y huye de mí cuando le espero ansiosa!...  
 sola, y no viene a consolar mi pena,  
 y el seno esquiva de la amante esposa.  
 ¡Oh! Tal vez me aborrece...del delito  
 la marca infame señaló mi frente,  
 cual la marca infernal con que al precito  
 señala el vengador Omnipotente (112)

This confession indicates that from the moment she committed adultery, Blanca was marked as the destructor of the men attached to her, and in a larger sense, the noble community as a whole. Her sin converted her from pure youth to her state of venomous parasite, a state outwardly imprinted on her "frente marchita." This sort of adulterous mark of Cain also appears on Ferrando's face, as he is the fruit of the illicit union. From his birth, the mark of *hielo* burns into his memory, and his poisoned legacy culminates with the murder of Don Martín and his literal poisoning in his mother's arms. Shortly before their last encounter, Blanca foreshadows the inevitability of Ferrando's marked semblance: "Niño inocente, nunca sea yo la que inhumana estampe mancha de crimen en tu pura frente" (94). Despite her fervent wish, it is obvious to the spectators that Ferrando's *pureza* has been contaminated

since birth. It is not a question of *if* Ferrando is marked unfavorably by God or fate, but rather *when* his inherited shame will be explicitly displayed.

As Blanca remains the unquestioned source of tragedy and dishonor, the images associated with her further clarify the consequences of her adulterous transgression. Most obvious is the irony of her name. Although the purity of Blanca's name is evoked by Ferrando's descriptions of her beauty, it is not long before the imagery connected to Blanca becomes far more sensual and dangerous. Before her first encounter with Rodrigo, her lovers equate her with water, and specifically with the river Guadalquivir. Along with Rodrigo's comparison of Blanca to the river, Antonio García Gutiérrez makes this parallel explicit in his stage directions describing Blanca's bedroom: "Habitación de Doña Blanca...habrá también una ventana que da vista al Guadalquivir." (68) From a spatial perspective, Antonio García Gutiérrez has subtly underlined Blanca's gendered position in the tragedy. Like other female receptacles, she remains trapped in her room for much of the action. On the other hand, she is able to see and symbolically connect with the freedom of the river. If expansion and natural scenes are associated with the male protagonist's journey, then Blanca is on the point of partaking in the "masculine" freedom. The lure of freedom through the view of the river marks Blanca as a potential transgressor. This view, in fact, is what Ferrando first sees as he enters to profess his love of his potential lover, whom he depicts as an "ángel" who has "un alma inocente" (68). Initially, Ferrando's naiveté allows him to create a pure image of Blanca, as he remains unaware of the family's contaminated bloodline.

Nonetheless, Blanca's awareness of her own poisoned state is quite vivid from her first appearance on stage. She cries constantly, and describes her own face as marked by her tears of guilt. To the spectator, Blanca belies her name with each passing scene, as her "whiteness" remains stained by betrayal. In her first staged encounter with Rodrigo, she tries to separate from him, warning him: "Rodrigo, tú no quieres mi mal...huye" (51). Thus, Blanca is highly conscious of her infectious influence from the moment that she consummated her relationship with Rodrigo. Throughout her life as a secret mother, she attempts to wash away the mark of shame, but the sign of transgression remains imbedded in her "marchita frente." Despite her initial attempts to quarantine herself, it is clear to the spectators that both Rodrigo and Ferrando have been infected long before. Any beneficial purity of the Guadalquivir, or Blanca's tears, does little to cleanse the contaminated blood within the dysfunctional family.

Because water has little power over the stain of dishonor, the men in the tragedy employ the typical solution for lost honor—cleansing through spilling the contaminated blood. While Blanca's death may have partially restored the family's honor, none of the dishonored male subjects manages to separate themselves from their infector. Blanca arranges Martín's murder before he avenges his cuckolded self, her father has already expired, and Rodrigo and Ferrando are too enchanted by their disease of passion to carry out the social necessity. Even though Ferrando brings his *puñal* with the intention of destroying the perpetrator of his feverish desire, he is eventually overcome by Blanca's unfailing beauty. Although Blanca

survives the defeat of the male subjects around her, Antonio García Gutiérrez suggests that Blanca's murder might have been the best solution to evade Ferrando's tragic fate. The dramaturge emphasizes the social conventions of honor with the use of stereotypical visual signs—knives, swords, and the site of blood contamination—the nuptial bed. As each male character recognizes his potential or actual dishonor, he quickly brandishes or refers to his favorite phallic weapon—the sword or knife. Upon discovering the affair, Don Martín vows immediate punishment by the sword: “Don Martín sabe cumplir su venganza con la espada o con la lanza, más nunca con el puñal” (59). Rodrigo vows to rid himself of Martín thusly: “mi espada hundirle y su corazón partirle” (51). Only by dividing his heart may Rodrigo ensure that Martín's organ will never again beat during moments of ecstasy with Blanca. Although Martín and Rodrigo opt for the longer sword, Ferrando's weapon of vengeance remains the *puñal*, which Martín refuses to even consider. Despite its lack of force, the *puñal* carries with it the most layered symbolic significance in the tragedy. As in *El médico*, the use of the dagger helps to visually guide the spectator through the plot and augment the tension of the tragedy. When Ferrando first brandishes it in the opening scene, he describes how his weapon reminds him of his lost heritage: “De mi padre alhaja fue; y al dármele me previno que estaba en él mi destino, misterio que no alcancé” (41). Rather than a treasured heirloom, however, the *puñal* becomes yet another sign of tragic fate, another visual “mark” of previous contamination. It is through the knife that Ferrando is able to identify Rodrigo as his father, and it is with the knife that Ferrando chooses to exterminate the cruel source

of his passion. Antonio García Gutiérrez's stage directions, in fact, demand that Ferrando unsheathe the knife over the head of the bowed Blanca (116). The way in which Ferrando displays his *puñal* as a sign of vengeance might easily provoke a ghosted moment, as spectators connect the visual images of Ferrando's dishonor to the vengeful *galán* of Baroque tragedies.

While the male subjects display different types of weapons, the convention consistently linked to Blanca is the "lecho manchado." Not only is the bed the site of transgression, it also remains a constant visual sign of dishonor and danger. Blanca's sister Leonor makes the connection between betrayal and punishment as she warns: "¿Y si tu esposo, irritado, dejase el sangriento lecho, y en ti castigar quisiera delirios de un hombre ciego?" With this simple hypothetical question, Leonor touches upon the connections between Blanca's body, her adultery, and the effect on the men around her. Leonor also reminds Blanca and the audience that it is her blood that will clean the dishonor, and not necessarily the blood of the male transgressor. Like the bed, Blanca's body is the site of transgression. The bed is described as "adornado elegantemente al gusto de la época" and slightly behind the image of the Virgen Dolores (108). The juxtaposition of bed with prayer space, and decadence with spiritual austerity creates a visual irony for the spectators who realize that religious symbols do not negate the destructive power of the "sangriento lecho" and its connotations. Both Rodrigo and Ferrando penetrate the bedroom either to court or threaten Blanca, and each "penetration" further infects them with the blood contamination. As they physically near the bed, they are further inflamed by

passionate fever or uncontrollable rage of dishonor. Ferrando even dies beside the bed. In this sense, the site of transgression also represents blood contamination to the audience.

While the use of common visual symbols like swords and the nuptial bed consistently emphasize the taboo themes of the tragedy, Antonio García Gutiérrez effectively employs several forms of imagery to paint a picture of blood contamination for his spectators. He avails himself of virtually every element (from water and ice to fire and steel) to retrace the emotional stakes of the noble family's dishonor. Outside the melodramatic dialogue, however, there are few stage directions that specify the visual parameters of the actors' movements or the scenic placement. In fact, *El page* lacks the numerous melodramatic stage directions that often abound in Romantic texts. Nonetheless, the overtly Romantic styles of the tragedies of this period, as explained before, would insure a sensorially shocking visual interpretation of the action. For *El page*, the visual sign systems had to match the evocative thematic power of adultery, secret identities, murder, and incestuous passion. Unlike *Don Álvaro*, Ferrando does not avail himself of natural scene-scapes to represent his internal upheaval. The stage directions only allude to one natural setting, and that is the view of the Guadalquivir through Blanca's window. For the sad, orphaned page, his plight is visually manifest through his gestures, expressions, and the well-timed display of his *puñal* and cup of poison. One could also assume that the actors' use of physical space in relationship to each other would increase the dramatic tension during the most taboo moments of the tragedy.



The sinister tone of the work, beyond that created by suggestive dialogue, is supplanted by the visual threat of the bedroom and the sounds that occur within or just outside the bedroom. When Martín or Rodrigo enters, Blanca is alerted to their presence by a knocking sound. In contrast, Ferrando's entrances are less sudden and heralded by a gentle song, which itself is reminiscent of Martínez, the original trovador. In this case, García Gutiérrez offers both a visual and aural ghosting through the spectator's memories of the medieval entertainer, whether based in the knowledge of medieval romances or from the performance of *El trovador* earlier in the same year. Ferrando's love songs constitute another worrisome penetration of Blanca's bed and the overall honor of the court. Each penetration offers a form of suspense in which the spectators perceive impending danger—either further contamination or death. The visual and audio suspense builds to Ferrando's last entrance, where Antonio García Gutiérrez prepares the audience for the protagonist's untimely death—the song, the *puñal*, the fever of passion, the poison, and the chill of death become the ultimate sequence of sensory bombardment for the Romantic spectator. When the series of symbols is played out, the spectators' last visual image is the dead page, lying in his mother's arms next to the *sangriento lecho*, and the wrath of Rodrigo as he recognizes his destroyed lineage.

Although *El page* is uniquely complex in its treatment of blood contamination and the role of the adulteress, Antonio García Gutiérrez's tragedy exemplifies the way in which Romantic tragedians of the 1830s express modern anxiety through well-known theatrical conventions. His artistry captures the stylistic

technique and tropes of Romanticism in general, and his plotlines and themes tap into the Spanish dramatist's need to return to the glory of Golden Age dramas. In order to traverse the juxtaposition of rebellious Romanticism and traditional tragic constructs, Antonio García Gutiérrez uses his tragedies to reiterate the fear of blood contamination with the sensorial shock of visual sign-systems. In *El page*, the dramatist manages to connect several blood threats (from incest to lack of political successor) to the actions of the adulteress. More so than his other famous works, Antonio García Gutiérrez explicitly pinpoints the adulteress as the source and container of social collapse. Blanca's body, through the dialogue of the text and her spatial/symbolic relationship to the male characters, consistently builds up and then reiterates her guilt as the destructor of society. For the period of time in which Romanticism flourished in Spain, the adulteress remained an efficient instrument for channeling the spectator's sociopolitical angst into a tangible scapegoat on stage.

Along with Antonio García Gutiérrez, the tragedians of the 1830s created theater that exemplified the uneasy dance between tradition and modernity. While the use of Baroque ghosts and conventions were essential components of the Spanish Romantic theater, this reiteration of the past served as a technique for confronting nineteenth century modernity. The utility of the adulteress within the Baroque tragic model ensures that her presence in Spanish tragedy will linger for several more decades.

## Neoromantic and Realist Tragedies: The Adulteress in Benito Pérez

### Galdós's *Realidad*

During the 1830s, the Romantic tendency to reiterate the Baroque framing of the adulteress strengthened the significant continuity between Golden Age tragic tradition and the “modern” Spanish tragedy. This continuity remains intact throughout the nineteenth century, as tragedians continue to use Calderonian conventions to haunt their productions. However, the tragedies of the late nineteenth century include another layer of haunting—along with consciously alluding to the Baroque tragic model, many tragedians also reuse textual and production elements from the Romantic period. The result is a domino effect of haunting elements that accumulate as the popularity of the Spanish tragedy grows.

As a result, the adulteress continues to be a prolific character of the late nineteenth century tragedy, and the way in which she is framed incites ghosts from both the Calderonian model and the Romantic period. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the use of the adulteress in tragedy appears in three different, yet interrelated genres: the *alta comedia* (mid-century drama), Neoromantic tragedies (particularly popular in the 1880s and 90s), and a small group of Realist dramas (1890s). While the tragedians from each group employ their own aesthetic and style, they frame the adulteress largely within the Baroque model—that is, as a dangerous element that provokes immorality and threatens the health and well-being of the family. Unlike many of the Romantic tragedians, however, some of the late

nineteenth century tragedians provide more empathy and depth in their depiction of the adulteress. While female adultery is still looked upon as a grave threat to society, there is also the realization that the adulteress is one of *many* examples of bourgeois immorality; therefore, she *alone* may not be condemned for all of society's ills. This partial empathy for the adulteress provides a more complex framing of her person on stage. Although there are multiple examples of the adulteress in the late nineteenth century theater, I will focus on three tragedies of the early Restoration (1876-1895): Eugenio Sellés's *El nudo gordiano* (1878), José Echegaray's *El gran galeoto* (1881), and an extensive case study of Benito Pérez Galdós's *Realidad* (1892).

Both the Neoromantic and Realist tragedians borrow techniques and conventions from their Romantic predecessors; however, the sociopolitical motivation behind the use of reception ghosting changes significantly during the Restoration (1876-1923). Specifically, the political anxiety of the early nineteenth century is largely replaced by the concern for economic progress. The Romantic preoccupation with fractured subjectivity becomes less potent, while economic concerns such as successful investments, foreign capital, and the state of the middle class dominate Restoration rhetoric. Concurrently, there remains the preoccupation with a strong family unit, and the fear of the adulteress as a threat to morality. The result is that constructs of femininity (and the role of the wife in Spanish society) are related to the economic concerns and rhetoric of the period.

The focus on economic growth is due largely to the relative political and economic stability of Spanish life in the late nineteenth century. During the first two

decades of the Restoration, the political upheaval of earlier in the century had dissolved into a supposedly unified and nationalized concept of the Spanish State.<sup>19</sup> A key aspect of Restoration policy, in fact, was the implementation of *turnismo* or *turno pacífico*, a political system in which liberal and conservative factions took turns at power. The effectiveness of *turnismo*, combined with the benefits of *caciquismo*, allowed Spain to enjoy an economic / political system that was not “democrático, pero liberal y estable” (Varela 11). Within this sociopolitical ambience, the politically powerful depended much more on their niche in the growing economy rather than their sociopolitical platform.

The relative political stability of the late nineteenth century lent itself to a prosperous economy, which was fueled by the oligarchic system of *caciquismo* and the success of urban capitalism. With *caciquismo*, local bosses, or *caciques*, gained control of vast amounts of land (and the workers on that land) through their cooperation with city politicians. City politicians, in turn, were able to maintain urban power often because of their alliance with agricultural organizations (Varela 271-4). These urban-agricultural alliances were particularly efficient in the 1880s (Tuñón de Lara 299). In this sense, *caciquismo* provided a necessary function in the construction of a functioning economy. The relative success of *caciquismo* in the 1880s was complemented by investment and industry in the cities. The mid-century investments in railroads especially stimulated the Spanish economy and laid the groundwork for Restoration stability (Bahamonde 458-9). By the 1880s, the important elements of a growing economy (that is, a growing bourgeoisie, a laissez-

faire system, and the frequent influx of foreign capital) were far more established than they had been fifty years earlier.

Despite the economic productivity of Spain in the last decades of the nineteenth century, the anxiety concerning gender roles, and specifically, a modern wife's position in a supposedly modern society, remained as difficult a problem to resolve as it had been earlier in the century. Whereas the Romantic anxiety over gender was often linked to the male subject's troubled psyche (see Chapter One), the problems with gender definition during the Restoration were more concerned with women's physical position and economic role—that is, whether she was to be a guardian of domestic virtue or a consumer in the public sphere. As Bridget Aldaraca discusses at length in her analysis of Restoration gender discourses, the contradictory roles of women in Spanish society made it increasingly difficult to determine what behavior constituted that of a “good wife.”

The gendered rhetoric during the Restoration supported largely traditional views of the wife and mother within the domestic sphere. In *El ángel del hogar: Galdós and the Ideology of Domesticity in Spain* (1992), Bridget Aldaraca explains how nineteenth century rhetoric solidified the Spanish public's perception of women and wives as “natural” beings that required the peace, purity, and protection of the domestic sphere. The strict division between public and private spheres (on paper) seemed to provide a clear demarcation of gender roles—man existed in the public sphere, and woman (at least, the proper wife and mother) remained within the domestic sphere. It was quite common, in fact, to conflate the Baroque concept of

one flesh with the complementary nature of two social spheres. Joaquín Sánchez de Toca, one of many family experts of the early Restoration, reiterates the one flesh concept within a nineteenth-century context: “el marido y la mujer no forman más que un mismo ser...tienen una misma voluntad, un mismo afecto; idénticos sentimientos, iguales deseos...pero en el fondo resulta siempre distinta la individualidad de los dos seres” (quoted by Jagoe 84). The seeming contradiction between one flesh and individuality demonstrates the nineteenth century’s complicated view of women in society. One way of resolving the contradiction, however, becomes the division of social spheres: if each sphere is half of the conjugal self, then man and wife may complement each other by incarnating one (and only one) half. The allotted half defines the married person’s roles as an individual, and makes him or her indispensable in the creation of the completed conjugal body. As a result, any mixing of the line of demarcation would result in ambiguous gender roles, contamination, and collapsed morality.

Along with the division between spheres, it was also necessary to guard and foster the purity of the domestic space. The private sphere acquired a sort of sacred status in nineteenth century rhetoric, due largely to the fact that the *ángel del hogar* acted as the spiritual compass and bastion of purity for the family as a whole (Aldaraca 59). Nicolas de Ávila y Toro deems the mother as a “mártir hasta el heroísmo,” while Adolfo Llanos y Alcaraz defines the wife-mother as “ídolo”, “santa” and the miraculous domestic spirit that “nos eleva y rehabilita” (quoted by Jagoe 72-74). As a key part of her special spiritual status, the ideal wife-mother

should eschew sexual desire in favor of maternal love. If the woman stays within the confines of her domestic construct, she should be able to satiate any sexual desire and replace it with pure love. Aldaraca describes this situation as one in which women are “literally satisfying whatever sexual needs they may have through pregnancy and childbirth.” (84). The “virtuous” wife should recognize the importance of her position and put forth the gender and sexual performativity necessary to comply with the ideal construct.

This ideal construct required, perhaps more than any other action, participating *solely* in the domestic sphere. Although the public and private spheres were “complementary and interdependent,” they were also separate to the point of being “antagonistic and mutually exclusive” (Aldaraca 55). The traditional wife construct depended on a wife’s domestic enclosure so that the outside world could not contaminate her body, her mind or her domestic space. The virtuous wife was so enclosed, in fact, that she was not considered a part of society in the sense of the public realm of exchange (Labanyi *Gender* 40). In practical terms, it was impossible for women to remain completely locked away in their domestic space. However, the gendered rhetoric of the time suggests that the most virtuous wife is one who cherishes her domestic role and avoids contact with the male elements of the outside world.

According to the period’s lofty discourse, the ideal wife/mother should be protected from public contamination. The potential for female adulteration was great, as the public sphere was immoral and unpredictable, lending itself to chaos,



corruption and instability (Aldaraca 56). The potential danger in mixing spheres was that the home (considered a place of production) could be turned into a space of consumption. It follows, then, that any wife who attempts a dual role in society (that is, treading in both spheres) risks the loss of personal status and the destruction of her family unit.

Nonetheless, these discourses regarding the Spanish family often directly contradicted the tenets of productive market capitalism. In order for a capitalist system to function properly, capital, trade, investments, and all other forms of exchange needed to flow freely. A large part of capital circulation depended upon bourgeois patronage of local businesses, and a large part of local patronage came directly from the middle-class wife. In a free market economy, it was the middle-class wife who bought furniture, jewels, clothes, and any other luxury item that stimulated capitalist growth. In fact, the narrative portrait of the consumer in late nineteenth century literature was usually a woman (Felski 61).

Yet as soon as the woman leaves her “natural” sphere in order to participate in the market exchange, she has endangered the sanctity of the home and defied her prescriptive gender role. Moreover, the wandering woman endangers the purity of her body. As a domestic wife and mother, her body serves a reproductive purpose and is protected from sexual desire. Upon entering the public sphere, her desire is enflamed and her ability to maintain gender performativity is weakened. Another danger is that she will become a commodity within the market exchange of the city, thereby prostituting herself. It is these fears, and their consequences on Spain’s

moral fabric, that perpetuate the concept of the adulteress as a destructive force in both spheres.

The conflicted discourses regarding wife and mother become a rich basis for narrative commentary in Restoration Spain.<sup>20</sup> Many narrative examples of the adulteress are analyzed at length in Biruté Cipliauskaitė's *La mujer insatisfecha*. Among the other adultery novels that she analyzes, Cipliauskaitė focuses on the perception of the adulteress in three Spanish novels: *La gaviota* (1849) by Fernán Caballero, *La regenta* (1884-5) by Leopoldo Alas, and *Fortunata y Jacinta* (1886) by Benito Pérez Galdós. In all three cases, the authors present the adulteress as a morally ambiguous yet sympathetic protagonist. Cipliauskaitė notes that like most adultery novels, the Spanish Restoration novel adheres to a well-trod plot pattern. Initially, the authors create a triangular love story in which the ambivalent husband and arrogant seducer compete for the protagonist-object—the female protagonist (53). The nature of triangular desire incites the female protagonist, as she becomes entranced by the idealized notion of a passionate affair. Her amorous musings permit her to succumb to the seducer, despite the fact that the man of flesh and blood leaves much to be desired (81). Eventually the adulteress awakens from her amorous desire to find that she has lost not only her imagined love, but she has also adversely affected the financial state of the family. Thus, the folly of her desire inevitably leads to financial ruin (54).

Within the Realist novel, the disastrous outcomes of adulterous sex usually stem from one or more maladies that affect the female protagonist physically and

mentally—hysteria, ennui, and infertility are the most common origins.<sup>21</sup> These physical ailments worsen because of social immorality—excessive gossip, shopping, or reading exacerbate psychological conditions, resulting in adultery, prostitution, and any number of immoral acts that defy the *ángel del hogar* construct. Once again, the Realist novelists portray excessive desire as a symptom of economic excess and social immorality. The result is that the wife commits adultery, suffers some sort of punishment, and society as a whole is weakened by its overall lack of moral fiber.

From a pure plot perspective, the condemnation of the adulteress's naiveté and immorality seems to be the crux of the adultery novel. This interpretation, according to Ciplijauskaitė, is compounded when one considers the harshness of the Calderonian honor tradition in Spanish literature. In this context, there is little room for defiance. Ciplijauskaitė explains: “En España y Alemania la moral burguesa por una parte y los principios calderonianos por otra imperan en todo y no permiten desviación ninguna. La mujer que intenta oponerse es arrollada” (95). Usually the condemnation of the adulteress constitutes the overt tone of the Restoration novel. Yet beneath the explicit message often lies a sympathetic or conciliatory narrative that subtly confers with the adulteress and her desires.<sup>22</sup> It follows, then, that one may not easily or correctly categorize the Spanish adulteress of the Restoration novel as the sole destructive force in modern society.

The varied analyses of the adultery novel suggest that the perception of the adulteress and her effect on the family and society eludes a clear categorization. The

adulteress could be interpreted as an exemplar of bourgeois immorality and frivolity, or she could be perceived as a revelatory messenger that exposes the hypocrisy of modern Spanish society. The complex nature of the adulteress often extends to her visual portrayal in theater. Overall, the characterization of the adulteress on stage mirrors that of her narrative counterparts—she participates in suspect activities, she becomes the third point in the erotic triangle, and she is complicit in the destruction of her family’s honor, health or economic stability. The details of the adulteress’s fall from grace, however, differ according to the needs of the tragedians and their personal aesthetic.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas hysteria, ennui, and the introduction to illicit texts are the principal causes of wifely unrest in a narrative context, the primary “red flag” of illicit desire for the theater is gossip—how the relationships within the erotic triangle are perceived, and how these perceptions stain male honor.<sup>24</sup> The shifted emphasis from psychosomatic diseases to the destructive power of gossip is practical in that it is difficult to visually display the subtle nuances of a wife’s mental condition on stage. Whereas narrative provides a detailed analysis of the adulterous protagonist’s most inner thoughts and desires, the theater must illuminate problems through dialogue and action. In this sense, the suggestion of illicit activity, *through the dialogue of gossip*, allows the dramatist the freedom to explicitly characterize the destructive course of the adulteress’s actions. Moreover, the use of gossip as a contaminant or immoral force complements the themes and message of the adulterous tragedy—first, it reiterates the Baroque notion that perception is as damaging to male honor as

physical action; secondly, it allows the tragedian to display the overall immorality and pettiness of the bourgeois crowd. This effective use of gossip is a key component of all three tragedies discussed.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, three types of drama were developed—the *alta comedia*, the Neoromantic melodrama, and the Realist drama. After the first wave of Romanticism died down, the prevalent style of the period became the *alta comedia*, or *comedia de costumbres* (Gies *Theater* 235-6). Along with Rodriguez Rubí and Ventura de la Vega, Luis de Eguilaz and Narciso Serra helped to form the early *alta comedia*—a theater genre that, according to Rodriguez Rubí, combined spiritual values with material benefits (Gies 233). In other words, the Spanish theater should attract the bourgeoisie with commercial techniques while also encouraging them to better themselves morally. The preachy tone of most *alta comedias* may be a convention born of the concern for traditional values that forms a key part of mid-century discourse.<sup>25</sup> The duality of commercial conventions mixed with morally upright lessons becomes an increasingly common trait of theater during the Restoration (Rios-Font 10-11). The dramatists of the *alta comedia* understood the importance of the present in their productions, and contextualized their works with the socioeconomic problems of the middle class at mid-century (Gies 235, Cantero García 68). Cantero García even goes so far as to say that the bourgeois fears in Spanish society bled into theatrical production, thereby creating a “binomio teatro-sociedad” that resonated strongly in mid-century theater (73).

The prolific production of the *alta comedia* was an important precursor to both Neoromantic and Realist tragedies, as the dramatists of the period employed themes that presaged the concerns of the Restoration. The adulteress as a moral and economic threat was clearly evident among the *alta comedias* of the sixties and seventies—Manuel Tamayo y Baus’s *Un drama nuevo* (1867) and Adelardo López de Ayala’s *Consuelo* (1878) are two prime examples. Thus, the *alta comedia* provided a crucial link between the Romantic tragedies of the early nineteenth century and the dramatic techniques employed by Neoromantic and Realist dramatists.

Despite their influence and popularity, the *alta comedia* lost its momentum by the 1880s and was replaced by another movement—Neoromanticism. Even more so than the *alta comedia*, Neoromantic dramatists mixed and matched past conventions and styles to the point that a succinct categorization still remains elusive. David Gies links Neoromantic works with social drama, realist drama, melodrama, Romanticism, the *alta comedia*, and even Naturalism (*Theater* 309). Like the Romantics of the 1830s, the Neoromantics reincorporated notions of Calderonian honor in their melodramatic tragedies. Wadda Rios-Font, for her part, also notes the Neoromantic’s dependence on the tenets of Aristotelian tragedy (63). In essence, the Neoromantic drama incorporated a little bit of everything but did not necessarily incarnate one style of theatrical production.

Regardless of their generic ambiguity, the Neoromantic works provided thematic continuity through their hyperbolic obsession with female adultery.

Whereas the *alta comedia* touched upon adultery as one of many bourgeois crises, the Neoromantic drama placed the adulteress as a fixture--a glaringly dangerous and destructive component of the Spanish family. Like their Romantic predecessors, the Neoromantic dramatists reinstated the portrayal of the adulteress as the receptacle of stained honor. Due largely to its Romantic conventions, Neoromanticism is often categorized as tragic melodrama (Rios-Font 51). Indeed, the Neoromantics used melodramatic techniques—they displayed exaggerated models of virtue and vice, and they used hyperbolic language followed by suspenseful silences to whip the audience into a fury (24). Moreover, they wrote convoluted plots in which it was necessary to reveal the characters' feelings through expressive monologues (31). The one glaring departure from the melodrama is the propensity towards tragic endings—a trait not common in a genre where good must triumph over evil.

In this regard, the Neoromantic tragedians followed Romantic formulas. Along with the traditionally desperate, cathartic conclusion, the Neoromantics employed overt sign systems in their productions, particularly visual signs of the bourgeois lifestyle of the characters—luxurious sitting rooms, and fashionable costumes, for example. In his series of articles entitled *El arte escénico*, Josep Yxart often comments on the visual sign-systems of the Neoromantic stage. Although he does not specifically review *El nudo gordiano* or *El gran galeoto*, Yxart frequently mentions the ominous or cathartic effects that Echegaray creates through visual stimulation. In an article praising Echegaray's *El prólogo de un drama* (1890), Yxart notes the effective use of *chiaroscuro* lighting to create an ominous tone

throughout the tragedy (127). This sort of visual stimulation, according to Yxart, incites numerous emotional responses in the spectator and a sense of cultural memory:

La escena por sí sola, evoca el recuerdo de una literatura nacional permanente; suscita y reanima series enteras de imágenes, heredadas de generación en generación, y depuestas en el cerebro de todo un público (127)

The power of these visual sign-systems, then, is their ability to provoke tragic catharsis through the use of production haunting. This ability is heightened even further with the use of Calderonian themes and the display of the dangerous adulteress.

Even before Echegaray dominated the Neoromantic stage, Eugenio Sellés wrote *El nudo gordiano* (1878), a controversial Neoromantic tragedy in which the adulteress is not only unfaithful, but also contemplates divorce.<sup>26</sup> As a result, she must be completely removed in order for society to survive her destructive influence. Unlike other adulteresses in Spanish tragedy, Julia and her lover admit their transgressions openly. The crisis of honor is heightened by Julia's intention to divorce her husband, which further publicizes Carlos's dishonor. While Julia takes a practical position towards the marriage, Carlos clings with ferocity to traditional honor codes to the point of homicidal mania. Much of the drama, then, is Julia and Carlos's emotional process—for Julia, it is the realization of her ultimate downfall and her inability to escape the marriage tie, and for Carlos, it is the realization that he must cleanse his honor at all costs. Naturally, these processes lead to Julia's murder



at the hands of her husband, who afterward claims that his honor has been restored through vengeance.

The familiar plot trajectory of *El nudo gordiano* parallels that of *El médico de su honra*. In the climax of the first act, for example, Carlos discovers a love letter in Julia's handwriting, which leads to their first melodramatic confrontation. Once again, the revelatory letter is used to evoke memories of the typical tragic pattern of the Baroque tradition. Unlike Doña Mencía and Desdemona, Julia is indeed guilty of adultery. However, Carlos's blood rhetoric is strikingly similar to both Don Gutierre's and Othello's monologues on male honor.

Carlos's reference to blood purity provides an overt connection to the language of male honor, one flesh, and spilled blood. Carlos's chilling monologue after killing Julia explicitly displays the stranglehold of the honor code on his psyche. "...de mis cellos vi pagada, / ¡que así su última Mirada / fue para mí toda entera! / Y diome orgullo y / ver cómo, al espano abiertos, / miran unos ojos muertos / a un honrado matador!" (Acto III, Escena X). The mere suggestion that murder incites pride and restores honor reiterates an overwhelming obsession with not only the honor code, but also with the Calderonian concept of "mancha que limpia." Carlos's parting words in the final act further emphasize Sellés's adherence to a traditional Baroque denouement: "¡Que ese cuerpo ensangrentado / va a ser, con mi confesión, / la única reparación / de mi nombre deshonorado!" (Acto III, Escena XI). Beyond the thematic similarities, these last words of the cuckolded husband closely resemble Don Gutierre's last proclamation in *El médico*: "trato en honor, y

así pongo / mi mano en sangre bañada / a la puerta; que el honor / con sangre, señor, se lava” (Jornada III, 887-91). When compared to Don Gutierre’s rhetoric in *El médico*, the use of textual haunting in *Nudo gordiano* is palpable.

The emotional impact of this early Neoromantic tragedy sparked admiration from literary colleagues and critics, in particular from Yxart and Clarín. Josep Yxart describes the spectator’s catharsis in *El nudo gordiano* as an extremely exaggerated emotional response:

...los espectadores iban recibiendo tal granizada de lacónicos pensamientos sublimes, con los rumores de sorpresa de las multitudes viendo estallar en el aire, uno tras otro, cohetes, petardos y estrellas de colores (75).

In his collection of articles entitled *Solos*, Clarín writes a glowing review of *El nudo gordiano*. Although he does not describe specific sign-systems of the production, he continually praises the power that the performance held for the spectators:

...¿por qué aplaudimos todos, yo el primero, a Carlos, al noble Carlos, que es homicida? Por la misma que aplaudimos al *Médico de su honra*, cuando hace que le den una sangría suelta a su señora, y aplaudimos aquel otro marido, agraviado en secreto, que en secreto se venga, y aplaudimos el castigo sin venganza, del príncipe ultrajado por su propio hijo, a quien obliga a hacer verdugo de su cómplice. ¿Y por qué aplaudimos todo esto? Por que está muy bien hecho (112).

Along with asserting Sellés's ability to transfix the audience, Clarín reiterates many of the Baroque conventions and ideals that characterized the Spanish tragedy during the Restoration. Already in the exposition of his review, Clarín managed to link *El nudo gordiano* with nearly every Baroque honor tragedy, thereby leaving no doubt as to Sellés's place in the Spanish tragic tradition (or his overt use of textual ghosting). Moreover, Clarín indicates even more strongly his personal ideological adherence to the honor code and his disgust towards divorce, proclaiming that Sellés offers a "lección provechosa" for Spanish husbands, and that married couples would do well to remember the "vínculo sagrado del matrimonio" (115). In this sense, Clarín applauds the use of Baroque themes and mores in Sellés's tragedy.

There is little doubt, then, that Sellés's portrayal of female adultery remains heavily rooted in the Baroque tradition. Julia is framed as a destructive and dangerous force, whose murder is justified in order to cleanse male honor. This strong connection to past conventions and imagery provokes haunting through a strong emotional reaction in the audience.

Although Sellés is one of the first Neoromantic tragedians on stage, the most famous and popular Neoromantic tragedies were written and produced by José Echegaray.<sup>27</sup> Because he juxtaposed melodramatic conventions with tragic endings, Echegaray's portrait of the adulteress bears a striking resemblance to the Romantic tragedies of the 1830s (with Calderonian reverberations). In *El gran galeoto* (1881), Echegaray aptly demonstrates how the seed of adultery (that is, the mere suggestion of it), poisons the family structure to the extent that the characters separate from each

other and must abandon their position in society. *El gran galeoto* is often hailed as the seminal Neoromantic tragedy because of Echegaray's ability to emotionally enthrall his audience while criticizing bourgeois hypocrisy.<sup>28</sup>

The play shows the downfall of the initially innocent Ernesto, a young playwright. Ernesto visits his friend Don Julián and the latter's young wife Teodora, despite the rumors of an illicit affair. Although both young characters are innocent of mental or physical adultery, the influence of calumny convinces Julián of his wife's treachery. In true Baroque form, the discourses of adultery are so powerful that Ernesto and Teodora are eventually forced out of the home (and society as a whole). In fact, the characters are so browbeaten by suggestion that they succumb to the possibility of adultery, thereby possibly fulfilling a menacing prophecy. In this sense, society as a whole (through its most vicious vice) is guilty of destroying the integrity of its own building block. It is important to note that every character, and not just the would-be adulteress, perpetuates familial destruction with his or her words/actions (Gies 302). In this sense, Teodora does not destroy society single-handedly.

If Teodora is merely a victim of society's cruelty, it appears that this famous Neoromantic tragedy does not condemn the adulteress, nor does it make her the root source of destructive desire. Nonetheless, Teodora's body (and its relative purity) still becomes a crucial factor in her family's (dis)honor. Like in *El médico de su honra*, the physical act of adultery in *Galeoto* is not as damaging as the implication of marred honor. In essence, Don Julian's honor is stained from the moment the first

shred of gossip is uttered. From that moment, Teodora's body becomes a receptacle of the poisonous gossip. Don Julian indicates the importance of Teodora's body several times throughout the tragedy. By the second act, Julián has been contaminated by gossip and begins to perceive his wife through her vilified body:

¿No sabes, si yo viese  
 Sobre su mejilla el rastro  
 De una lágrima no más,  
 Y pensase que era el llanto  
 Por Ernesto, la ahogaría  
 entre mis crispadas manos? (147-8)

Already in the second act, Julián describes his determination to literally stifle any physical signs of Teodora's potential infidelity. This threat of strangulation also constitutes a Baroque convention—in this case, Julian's "murderous contemplation" monologue offers similar language as that of Othello's jealous rants towards Desdemona. Visually, the effect of Teodora's body comes to a climax when Ernesto carries the would-be adulteress out of the drawing room and out of the discursive hierarchy that condemns them. Ernesto proclaims:

Nadie se acerque a esta mujer; es mía.  
 Lo quise el mundo; yo su fallo acepto  
 El la trajo a mis brazos. ¡Ven Teodora!  
 (Levantándola y sujetándola en sus brazos....)  
 ¡tú la arrojas de aquí!...Te odebecemos. (264)

With this climax, it is as if Ernesto were forced to remove the contaminated vessel from the home and quarantine it away from "honorable" society. Even though she is

not exclusively condemned for adulterous thoughts, Teodora's body remains the spot in which the adultery could manifest itself. In other words, calumny incites the process, but it is through Teodora and the staining potential of her body that dishonor is inevitable.

It is this obsession with honor that links Echegaray to Romanticism, melodrama and Baroque tragedies.<sup>29</sup> Even though he maintains a semi-realist examination of the modern middle class, Echegaray and his numerous fans could not bring themselves to break with Spanish theatrical tradition. The lure of Calderonian constructs remained a tantalizing background for the Neoromantic dramatists, and it became even more tantalizing considering the Spanish public's insatiable appetite for honor tragedies (Menéndez Onrubia 19-20).

Because the Neoromantic works of the 1880s and 1890s were so popular, it is easy to suggest a striking continuity between the Baroque adulteress in Romantic theater and her reappearance in Neoromantic tragedies. However, the Spanish tragedy during the Restoration was not solely dependent upon the Neoromantic tragedians. The Realist dramatists provided a less popular, but equally influential, portrayal of the adulteress and her effect on Spanish family and society. In the 1890s, the majority of Realist works were written and produced by the prevalent novelists of the period—most notably Leopoldo Alas, Emilia Pardo Bazán and Galdós. It is only natural, then, that the realist dramatists sought to report on the Spanish bourgeoisie with journalistic observation and psychological analysis of their characters' behavior. Nonetheless, these narrative traits did not always translate well

into the theatrical medium. The difficulty sprung from the attempt to visually display the psychological turmoil of a character on stage. Without employing some well-established melodramatic techniques, the Spanish public would struggle to interpret realist sign-systems. Anything too subtle might easily fall flat in the Spanish theater of the 1890s, considering that spectators had been trained to appreciate the hyperbolic signs of Romantic and Neoromantic dramas for several decades. This is one of many possible explanations as to why the earliest Realist dramas failed to overcome the popularity of Neoromanticism.

At the time of *Realidad*'s theatrical debut (1892), Galdós and his Realist counterparts were fighting an uphill battle not only for an audience, but also for critical recognition as playwrights. Compared to Echegaray's popular Neoromantic productions, Pardo Bazan's naturalist mini plays (*Vestido de boda* (1898) and *La suerte* (1904)), as well as Clarín's infamous flop *Teresa* (1895), proved too boring and too revolutionary to attract an audience. Despite Clarín's passion for *Teresa*, the public and critics condemned the play as crude in style and overly "socialist" in its themes (Gies *Theater* 330). In most cases, the most prolific novelists could not garner success with their dramas, even though many of them doubled as theater critics for much of their literary career (331).

Galdos's efforts seemed to achieve slightly more success, most likely due to three critical factors: he began his career as a dramatist and understood theatrical conventions, he adapted his most popular novels for the stage, and he enlisted the help of several theatrical and narrative colleagues in his writing and revisions of

scripts. Both Paciencia Otañón de Lope and Lisa Condé mention the influence of Clarín and Pardo Bazán (and to some extent, Echegaray) as key factors in Galdós's formation of his theatrical style. Pardo Bazán attended rehearsals while Clarín offered notes on drafts (Otañón de Lope 574, Condé 21). Along with his colleagues' advice, Galdós compromised with the theatrical directors or technicians around him in order to make the theatrical adaptations of his novels more "tragable" (Condé 21). Galdós's ability to combine his own skills with those of others most likely allowed him the most sustained dramatic success of any of the Realist novelists.

Because of his latent theatrical skills, Galdós's production of *Realidad* is often hailed as the first successful foray into a truly Realist Spanish drama. Wadda Rios-Font, in fact, credits *Realidad* with breaking the melodramatic stagnation of the 1890s, thereby paving the way for other realist and avant-garde productions of the early twentieth century (9, 85). For her part, Otañón de Lope recognizes the riskiness of Galdós's style because of its defiance of Neoromantic plot lines and conventions (580). David Gies also emphasizes Galdós's impact on the Spanish theater, particularly considering the revolutionary style he develops in *Realidad*:

What distinguishes *Realidad* from the dozens of truth-and-honor plays which even in Galdós's own days seemed to dominate Madrid's theaters...is Galdós's refusal to resolve the conflict by traditional means, that is, his distaste for blood vengeance to 'wash' clean a man's stained honor...the audience was used to Echegaray's high passion, but Galdós gave them



instead a drama of man's marrow and soul rather than of his hormones and blood (340).

According to these critics, *Realidad* becomes both a thematic and stylistic departure from the rest of the nineteenth century—it constituted a turning point in Spanish theatrical production. Gonzalo Sobejano also contends that among all of Galdós's dramas, *Realidad* had the most effective character development and structure (41).<sup>30</sup>

Because of its uniqueness among the Neoromantic works of the 1890s, *Realidad* did not receive as much critical praise or economic success as other works of the period. The originality of Galdós's style polarized critics: while some appreciated *Realidad's* ingenuity, others resented his ultimate break with the honor tragedy tradition (Rios-Font 139). The most positive reviews or analyses of Galdós's theatrical work often came from his esteemed colleagues and friends, particularly Clarín, Yxart and Pardo Bazán. Although Clarín and Yxart do not specifically review *Realidad*, they both note the ingenuity and skill of the play in general articles and reviews. On a number of occasions, Clarín praises Galdós's skills as a dramatist (Percival 249). Younger critics such as Rafael Altamira and Eduardo Gómez de Baquero admire the uniqueness of Galdós's dramatic style and wrote about his innovations in their reviews (256). Rafael Altamira's psychological analysis of *Realidad* became especially influential, and his remarks were the basis for many of Pardo Bazan's analytical observations in her own review (256). In this sense, the more general writings on *Realidad* (that is, analysis outside of individual reviews) were largely positive.

Despite the appreciation of his colleagues, Galdós also suffered a skewering at the hands of well-known and not so well-known theatrical critics. *El País* proclaimed it to have nothing dramatic in it, and critic Emilio Bobadilla complained that the play lacked conflict and a sense of dramatic purpose (Gies 340-1). The esteemed critic Pedro Bofill eschewed Galdós's style as an insult to the great tragedies dating back to Calderón (139). Due to its unfamiliar subtlety (and anticlimactic ending), it could be assumed that the average spectator perceived the work as dry and boring.

The most in-depth review of *Realidad*'s debut in Madrid was that of Emilia Pardo Bazán, who had assisted Galdós in his theatrical adaptation throughout the rehearsal process. In her collection *Nuevo teatro crítico*, Pardo Bazán offers a five-part analysis of the work and performance: the direction and rehearsal process, the audience reception, the critical reception, the elements of the performance, and an analysis of the generic nature of *Realidad* (that is, whether a novel may be converted to a play, and whether the drama may be considered Naturalist). Beyond a few brief observations regarding costumes and the actors' appearance, Pardo Bazán spends little time describing the sign-systems of the production.<sup>31</sup> The bulk of the analysis is a defense of the quality of Galdós's talent and potential as a dramatist. In part two, Pardo Bazán consistently reiterates the positive reaction of the audiences to the work, indicating that there were many bursts of spontaneous applause (33). She goes on to rebut each negative review that attacked Galdós's skills as a dramatist. Bofill is prominently featured in Bazán's attack, but she also cites Federico Balart of *El*

*imparcial* for not actually attending a performance, and Federico Urrecha for hiding behind a pseudonym (41-2). In both parts two and five, Pardo Bazán reiterates that any novel can and should be made into theater, and that the origin of the performance should not matter if the production is well done. Pardo Bazán's fierce reaction to several negative reviews suggests that while some spectators and critics may have appreciated Galdós's ingenuity, the overall reception of the debut in Madrid was more negative than positive.

Despite the lackluster reception of *Realidad* in Madrid, the performances in Barcelona of Galdós's remarkable drama garnered a more positive response. Josep Yxart mentions *Realidad* among the most innovative dramas of the 1890s due to its use of Ibsenian elements and its "sabor de la actualidad" (319). One of the more positive reviews appeared in *La Vanguardia*, in which A. Amengual takes pains to defend Galdós's unconventional climax. He maintains that the calm reaction to a wife's adultery is actually more realistic than the vengeful blood climaxes of other tragedies (4). Even the reports of audience reception indicated that Barcelona audiences were less scandalized and more appreciative of Galdós's subtle portrayal of adultery. A short blurb in *La vanguardia* indicates that Galdós enjoyed several curtain calls, in which he was greeted with "sostenidos y espontáneos aplausos" (5). Despite scattered complaints, *Realidad* became the most appreciated Realist drama of the early 1890s.

Much of the critical controversy regarding the debut of *Realidad* is derived from Galdós's unique use of plot and structure in his tragedy. In this adaptation of

Galdós's novel of the same name, the spectators are presented with a seemingly stable aristocratic family. Orozco, a respectable gentleman who is known for his charity and virtue, is married to the spirited and beautiful Augusta. Despite their wealth and good reputation, the couple suffers from three principal worries—paying debts, infertility, and of course, Augusta's infidelity. As an admired and popular couple, Orozco and Augusta entertain businessmen and politicians in their home (and especially their gambling hall). Among these are Villalonga, Malibrán, and Augusta's cousin, el Infante. During their visits, the male characters worry about Spain's financial and moral state, and also gossip about Augusta's adulterous behavior. When the young aristocrat Federico Viera visits, both the spectators and the eavesdropping Malibrán discover that Viera is Augusta's secret lover. Despite his talent for womanizing, Federico suffers from financial debt, potential dishonor, and a nagging guilt that plagues him throughout the play. Among Federico's former lovers is the witty prostitute Lina, in whom Federico forges a friendship and a financial relationship. Along with his entanglement with two women, Federico must contend with the problems of his own family. His sister Clotilde is in love with a man not of her class, and his father continually attempts to finagle financial gain out of shady business dealings.

Consumed by their respective problems, both Federico and Augusta suffer from frequent attacks of guilt and half-hearted repentance. When Malibrán reveals their affair in a public hall, Federico falls into a literal and figurative fever and commits suicide. As a result of the tragic death, Orozco deduces that Federico was

his wife's lover, and he attempts to incite a confession from Augusta. In spite of her overwhelming guilt, Augusta chooses to deny the affair for fear that Orozco will murder her. Although the virtuous husband experiences a moment of rage, he eventually accepts Augusta's moral weakness and lets her leave the salon. In the last moments of the play, Orozco sees Federico's ghost and releases him from the dishonor of his vices. Ultimately, Orozco forgives both characters and resigns himself to the immoral state in which the Spanish middle class exists. With this anticlimactic conclusion, the spectators are left with a problematic resolution of adultery and the suspicion that the "reality" of middle-class life remains ambiguous.

The starkness and practicality of *Realidad's* thematic trajectory contrasts sharply with the Neoromantic tragedies of the period. Although gossip may affect the characters' honor within society, the foundation for honor is not a question of blood, but rather an investigation of morals and values. Unlike *El gran galeoto*, in which calumny poisons the family from the outside in, Galdós offers the opposite perspective—the immoral behavior of each individual is compounded and manifests itself in a corrupt and shallow environment. Thus, each individual contributes to the overall damage of Spanish morality. More importantly, no one person becomes the receptacle of contaminated honor. Rather, the immoral state of Galdós's dramatic society (and more specifically, the state of marriage in *Realidad*) becomes the collective responsibility of all the characters on stage. With the possible exception of Orozco, no character receives an explicit position in the play as hero or villain. Each character, in his turn, wrestles with his vices until he gives in to desire

(in its financial or sexual form) or repents his behavior. Gonzalo Sobejano even goes so far as to say that all three principal characters (Orozco, Federico and Augusta) are co-protagonists; moreover, all three wish to be virtuous (46). Thus, Galdós offers a new complexity for each of his characters in *Realidad*, including Augusta as adulteress. In spite of the wrongs committed by the characters, Galdós purposefully avoids the dramatic possibilities of vengeance and redemption. As a result, *Realidad* sidesteps the majority of melodramatic themes and techniques that were so integral to Neoromantic works. In many respects, he achieves the departure and creates a markedly unique contribution to the Spanish stage.

Although Galdós disliked the Echegarian style and form of Spanish drama, he did not completely discard melodramatic conventions. Rather, he adapted a handful of comfortable techniques to fold into his revolutionary style. For example, he used emotional soliloquies, but only once in a great while and only to enrich the psychological profile of the character speaking. In order to contextualize the plot and themes of the work, Galdós preferred long scenes of dialogue in which the characters discuss their plights and the state of the Spanish economy. When an internal thought needed to be expressed, he peppered the dialogue with an aside (Condé 29). At times, moments of silence dominate the end of a scene, but the silence is not accompanied by contorted facial expression, fainting, or any of the exaggerated histrionics of Neoromanticism. Rather, a more subtle tension infused the interaction between characters—very rarely does a character swear allegiance, vengeance, or suicide as is the typical pattern of a Neoromantic tragedy. In this way,

Galdós managed to maintain a subtle Realism that included certain techniques of the theater of his day.

In the specific case of *Realidad*, Galdós both alludes to Neoromantic conventions (in part by using them) but also demonstrates the unrealistic (and potentially absurd) nature of Neoromantic style. The play does touch on certain familiar points of theatrical themes of the nineteenth century—the visual signs of the play present a guilty adulteress (and her guilty lover), and the spectators see and hear the effects of immorality both in the behavior of the characters and in their financial deals. In this sense, Galdós doesn't completely close off *Realidad* from possible textual and production haunting. Textually, the spectators could easily bring in ghosts from the reading or knowledge of Galdós's novels, including the novel *Realidad* itself.

Moreover, there are key moments in the play in which Galdós does avail himself of Romantic or Neoromantic language and visual sign-systems. Because Orozco is framed as the virtuous and tolerant husband, the vengeful monologues so often employed in the tragedies of the day is lacking in *Realidad*. Nonetheless, Galdós does include the occasional melodramatic monologue in order to reveal Augusta's and Federico's guilt. At times, these confessions allow for the possibility for textual ghosts to emerge. When Augusta suspects that her death at the hands of her husband is imminent, she mentions the chill of the “sombra de la muerte” which all theatrical adulteresses (real or imagined) experience before their murders. Galdós even includes the convention of the illicit letter—in this case, Augusta writes to

Federico in order to arrange a tryst, places it in her corset, and is almost discovered when Orozco embraces her. This use of the perennial letter, and its purpose of increasing dramatic tension, exemplifies Galdós's awareness of tragic conventions and their ghosting potential. In this sense, Galdós places subtle vestiges of Baroque and Romantic conventions in moments of *Realidad*, but employs them in such a way that his Realist aesthetic is not uprooted by melodramatic hyperbole.

Although Galdós's use of haunting is few and far between in *Realidad*, the play does retain its thematic relevance to other Restoration dramas and novels. As is the case with the *alta comedia* and the Realist novel, Galdós's work emphasizes the link between dangerous consumption and immoral acts in the Spanish bourgeoisie. Thus, the play warns the Spanish public of ill-advised decisions and the effects of personal vice on the familial microcosm of the Spanish nation-state. Why then, with these familiar themes, is *Realidad* considered an original and ground-breaking drama? It is because the familiar themes are merely the superficial framework of a much more complicated familial and economic dynamic among the characters. Moreover, the thematic complexity is coupled by a stylistic make-over of the Spanish theater. Prose replaces poetry, dialogue replaces soliloquies, visual starkness replaces sensory overload, and most importantly, practicality and forgiveness overwhelm the obsession with honor and reputation.

The adulteress wife does not incite ruined lineage, nor do her actions lead to cataclysmic destruction. This is not to suggest that Augusta is an innocent in a Doña Mencía sort of way, nor is she maligned like Teodora. Rather, she is explicitly guilty



of adultery, but her vices are one of *many* equally harmful behaviors perpetuated by many different characters. Thus, Galdós manages to significantly reframe the adulteress—rather than placing Augusta as the central (and immobile) point of contamination and vice, she is an individual who is complicit in the general immorality of Spanish society. The remarkable achievement of *Realidad* is largely due to this convincing (if controversial) break with the beloved Calderonian tradition.

As one of many immoral citizens, Augusta is framed as both a guilty adulteress and as an empathetic character. Her lively behavior and quick wit, while attractive, become signs of Augusta’s potential for adulterous desire. Before Augusta even enters the first scene, Malibrán proclaims in an aside: “¡Qué linda y qué traviesa! ...Inteligencia vaporosa, imaginación ardiente, espíritu amante de lo desconocido, de lo irregular, de lo extraordinario...¡Caerá!” (Acto I, Escena III). As the spy and the audience’s conduit to information, Malibrán quickly replaces the *ángel del hogar* perception of Augusta with a more sinister perspective of the seemingly virtuous wife. With this early aside, Galdós already establishes the gap between societal appearance and the harsh realities of “modern” Spain.

During the first act, the gentlemen friends paint a portrait of Augusta’s position within the traditional gender constructs of any typical Restoration work. That is to say, the spectators go through the inventory of Augusta’s roles as wife and mother, as well as any impediments to the fulfillment of those positions. Even though she does not show signs of hysteria, the characters suspect her potential for

illicit desire because of her infertility.<sup>32</sup> Because of Augusta's inability to conceive, her adulterous energy is not channeled into motherhood (which is, of course, the proper channel for female sexuality according to mid-century discourse). Orozco's friends are quick to realize that Augusta's infertility will exacerbate her need to break away from the tediousness of the private sphere.

Once the audience is acquainted with Augusta's and Federico's affair, the notion of a protected domestic sphere comes under fire. Galdós cleverly refuses to maintain an absolute division between spheres. Rather than containing the home and separating it from the immorality or gossip of the streets, Orozco's home becomes a gathering place for public vices. Even though Orozco is thought to be the most virtuous gentleman in Madrid, his home becomes the breeding ground for gossip, gambling, lust, and adulterous encounters. Rather than protecting the sanctity of the home and taking their vices into the public arena, Orozco's friends stay to all hours of the night playing cards in the couple's gambling hall. The hall is such an integral part of the house, in fact, that the audience is able to view the outer edge of the card table and the passage in and out of the area. The stage directions indicate that the door on stage right "conduce al billar, y por ella se descubre parte de la mesa, y se ven los movimientos de los jugadores" (Acto I, Escena I). The spatial construction of Orozco's home visually indicates a conflict of interest—while it is a proper place for a well-to-do couple, it is also inviting public behavior into the private sphere.

One of the key links between public and private spheres is the continual presence of gossip among men in Orozco's home. This sort of gossip becomes

increasingly damaging, as male gossip signals a feminization of Spanish masculinity (Harpring 2). It also serves to isolate Augusta and Orozco within their own home—through the act of gossip, the protagonists become “othered” as the unfaithful wife and cuckolded husband (Vernon 211). On a theatrical level, this gossip is a necessary convention in that the gentlemen’s conversations explain the relationships between characters while also visually recounting the infection of the private sphere with public vices. With this visual and aural construction of the home, Galdós immediately communicates not only the ambiguous state of combined spheres, but also the context in which general immorality flourishes.

By the end of the first act, “public” vices have increased and continue to invade the home. In the last scene of the first act, Federico visits Orozco’s home and steals a minute with Augusta in the salon. The private room appears on stage left, and like the gambling hall, is partially visible from the audience’s perspective. Not only does this scene serve to confirm the rumors of adultery, but it also provides the “other” side of public life infiltrating private space. While Federico poisons the home with adulterous acts, Malibrán invades the domestic space by spying on the fighting couple. He then relates his suspicions to the other guests, thereby infecting the home with gossip. Although Malibrán’s suspicions are confirmed eventually, the other aristocratic guests are reluctant to accept that reality. Villalonga, after hearing Malibrán’s conjectures, states: “No, yo no veo nada. No quiera Usted contagiarme de sus visiones malignas” (Acto I, Escena IV). Within the first few scenes, Galdós portrays the ambiguous line between appearance and reality, and the power of gossip

to both obscure and enlighten. In this sense, Galdós ends the opening act with a glimpse of the secret life of the couple, and allows both Malibrán and the spectators a voyeuristic view of adultery in progress.

During the first act, Galdós has effectively characterized his principle characters as gossips, gamblers, voyeurs, and of course, adulterers, and all within the supposedly protected space of the home. In the third act, Orozco's home is besieged by even darker forces of immorality—greed and corruption. In a parallel plot line to the adulterous affair, Francisco Viera visits Orozco concerning a financial affair. When Viera and Orozco retire to the salon, it is revealed that Orozco must pay a debt of eight thousand *reales* to an English investor. Viera, as a villain in cahoots with the Englishman, coaxes and eventually threatens Orozco with paying the debt immediately. Orozco refuses on principle, as he realizes Viera's shady motivations. This scene becomes a crucial part of the play's thematic trajectory because it offers a parallel plot development to Augusta's and Federico's tryst in the first act. Both scenes involve an immoral (or illegal) transaction, and both include a conflict between the characters involved. Both Vieras act as pushers of their own vices, and both invade the private sphere in order to manipulate their victims. Whereas Augusta succumbs to the immoral invitation and repeats her adulterous behavior throughout the drama, Orozco remains steadfast to his virtuous characterization. In fact, he is the only character that does not compromise his values in order to survive in the moral ambiguity of the Restoration.

Although most of the critical scenes take place in Orozco's home (trysts, gossip, confrontations, etc), Galdós also chooses to present two other homes that are visually accessible to the audience. Rather than presenting Leonor as bedraggled prostitute in the street, the spectators see her as a clever businesswoman with her own home and money. When Federico visits her, he is greeted by the maid Lina, who welcomes him into Leonor's "gabinete lujoso." While the set designers could easily add visual signs of Leonor's profession, Galdós fails to indicate any such signs in the stage directions.<sup>33</sup> Amazingly, Leonor's home could be mistaken for that of a "respectable" Spanish citizen. Once again, Galdós visually questions the validity of societal constructs and the ability to see "reality" through superficial appearances. When even the visual cues are ambiguous, it becomes increasingly difficult for the spectators to imprison characters within melodramatic roles.

Although the prostitute is the epitome of the public realm and the ultimate commodity in most Realist or Naturalist works, in *Realidad* Leonor appears as a feminine, domestic foil of Augusta. Despite the connotations of her profession, Leonor becomes as much of a domestic angel as Augusta within her own home. Her home, in fact, becomes a refuge and emotional comfort for Federico, and Leonor's friendship offers him both practical aid (loans and financial advice) *and* the spiritual comfort that is linked to the loyal wife. With this blended characterization, Galdós mixes and matches constructs of gender, social behavior, and class. In some ways, Leonor is removed from the limitations of her gender construct and becomes masculinized by her financial prowess. As a result, Federico himself struggles to

classify her or his relationship with her: “¿Qué significa esta fraternidad que entre nosotros existe? ¿Se funde quizás en nuestra degradación? Yo envilecido, tú también; nos entendemos en secreto” (Acto II, Escena IV). This commentary is telling because it establishes his relationship with Leonor as a masculinized, if immoral, bond. As brethren of vice, Federico places himself on the same level as Leonor. Rather than a discarded object within the flow of the market economy, Leonor acquires a sense of individuality and humanity.

On the other hand, Leonor supplants Federico’s sense of virility and therefore embodies an alternate femininity to Augusta. It is also noteworthy that while Leonor is marked visually (and through her poor dialect) as a base member of the lower class, it is she that rescues Federico from financial ruin more than once. Thus, Leonor’s character manages to unravel many of the suppositions of prostitutes and their gender performativity within Galdós’s construction of modern Spain. The inability to relegate Leonor to a one-dimensional commodity helps to create a complex portrait of feminine roles in society. If Leonor exists in both spheres and is not condemned for her market circulation, then this blasé position could perhaps be extended to the wayward wife. In effect, Galdós effectively questions whether women’s dishonorable acts really have the power to destroy social or economic stability.

In stark contrast to the ambiguous gender / moral position of the female character, Orozco remains a rigid persona throughout the drama’s development. Due to Orozco’s idealized state, he is effectively removed from the “reality” of his own

period. For Augusta, her admiration and frustration towards her husband stems from his inability to compromise within the changing financial and social world of the modern nation. It is his indefatigable moral fiber that incites his downfall not only as a cuckolded husband, but also as a Spaniard of the late nineteenth century. In a sense, Orozco becomes the failed “reformador” of Spanish society (Sobejano 48). The supposedly successful men, for their part, are those who manipulate the system effectively, regardless of the moral compromises their spirits suffer. It is for this reason that the slimiest characters escape unscathed in *Realidad*. Once they have discarded their conscience, they become the most effective members of “real” Spanish society.

Within the thematic framework of the drama, Augusta and Federico are two of many characters who allow desire to overwhelm the proper dictates of societal constructs. Yet Augusta and Federico exist in the plane of moral ambiguity—they neither renounce society as immoral (Orozco’s position), nor do they freely participate in the immoral dealings of the exchange economy (the male visitors and Leonor). They give in to their desires and immoral behavior, but they are unable to compromise their spirits enough to accept the harsh realities of modern existence. As the conflicted spirits of the play, Augusta and Federico offer twin psychological studies of two familiar dualities: repentance versus desire, and tradition versus modernity. Both characters are technically absolved by Orozco’s forgiveness, yet for Federico, this pardon becomes more disastrous than a condemnation. When Malibrán first accuses him, Federico reacts by preparing himself for Orozco’s

challenge and criticizes the charade of an duel for honor: “Sucederá entonces lo que es de rúbrica: el hombre ofendido me exigirá reparación; se la daré con la estúpida forma de duelo, y ...¡Cuán grotesca es la sociedad! Deberíamos todos embadurnarnos la cara con harina como los clowns....somos unos grandes mamarrachos” (Acto IV, Escena IV).

In this moment of Federico’s dismay, Galdós presents two perspectives through Federico’s monologue: the first is the audience’s expectation of a proper tragic confrontation, and the second is Galdós’s assertion that such a dependence on antiquated honor codes is akin to buffoons fighting on stage. Thus, Federico’s monologue emphasizes simultaneous necessity and ridiculousness of the honor code (both in Spanish tragedy and Spanish society as a whole). At first Federico resents the absurdity of the honor duel, but when this option is denied to him, he is unable to recover from his dishonorable state. Shortly before his suicide, Federico longs for a punishment befitting a Neoromantic tragedy: “(la muerte) es el descargo en un espíritu que no puede soportar ya el peso inmenso de sus propios errores...cuéntale todo, y añade no temo la muerte, que la deseo, que la necesito” (Acto IV, Escena VI). In effect, he wishes for a return to the traditional codes of honor so that he may purge his morally ambiguous state. Despite his wish (and undoubtedly, the spectators expectation of a bloody reckoning), Orozco denies him the cleansing power of spilled blood. As a gentleman, Federico chooses death over absolution as a way of embracing the traditional constructs of an older Spain.



With the surprising twist of Federico's suicide in the fourth act, the action of a fifth seems markedly anticlimactic and unnecessary. The expectation is, of course, that Orozco will spill Augusta's blood and restore his honor. Once again, Galdós denies the spectators any such satisfaction. In some respects, the fifth act appears to repeat the theatrical conventions (in this case, murderous suspense) of his Neoromantic colleagues. Like Othello's confrontation with Desdemona, Orozco visits Augusta late at night (before bed), and urges her to ease her conscience with a confession. Unlike Othello, Orozco restrains himself from strangling his wife in their wedding bed. When Augusta refuses to confess, she explains in asides what any Neoromantic adulteress would suspect—her death is eminent: “¡Oh, su santidad me hiela!...¿Y si tras esa mansedumbre rebulle el propósito de matarme? ¡Ay, siento un escalofrío mortal!...¡No, no confieso!” (Acto V, Escena IV). Her fears aren't entirely unfounded, as Orozco does experience temporary rage: “¿Por qué no te impongo un cruel y ejemplar castigo?” (Acto V, Escena IV). Nonetheless, this melodramatic exchange only occurs in the characters' asides to the audience, and none of the expected actions come to fruition. In this moment, the spectators are denied the expected climax, or “ejemplar castigo.” Thus, by ignoring the logical conclusion of the tragic trajectory, Galdós destroys the potential for both textual and reception ghosts at the end of his play.

In the place of a carefully designed, melodramatically haunted scene, Galdós opts for an unexpected and defiant end to his adultery play. Despite Augusta's defiance, Orozco merely watches as she walks away. Rather than bemoaning his

stained honor, Orozco expresses pity for both lovers and a sense of weariness at their weak moral character. Even in the last moments of the fifth act, as Federico's ghost appears, Galdós rejects the idea of a confrontation. Whereas a Neoromantic protagonist might curse the apparition for his irreparable honor, Orozco merely recognizes the unresolved nature of their relationship and even offers to embrace the ghost. Upon recognizing Federico's image, Orozco says:

“no te alejes, ven...Eres mi propio pensamiento, la luz que alumbra mi razón, revelándome el sentido de tu lastimosa tragedia y los móviles de tu muerte... Sé que moriste por estímulos del honor y de la conciencia...Tú y yo nos elevamos sobre toda esta miseria de las pasiones, del odio y del vano juicio del vulgo...Abrázame” (Acto V, Escena V).

Instead of categorizing Federico as friend or enemy, Orozco accepts Federico as a companion of spiritual repentance. Although the matter of adultery is not resolved, Galdós presents the picture of a cuckolded husband who is tranquil and resigned to live in the immoral world around him. It is this ultimate ambiguity that confounds the theatrical conventions of Galdós's period, and definitively rejects the spectator's Neoromantic expectations and tragic memory.

Because Orozco explicitly forgives and embraces Federico's ghost, one may interpret *Realidad*'s ending as one in which the male subjects of the triangle reunite and blame the third point of the triangle—she who would not confess despite Orozco's patience and virtue. This interpretation is certainly justified by Orozco's behavior in the last moments of the play. However, the theatrical signs of the play

(as well as the multiple plot points and characters) do not point to an outright condemnation of Augusta as an evil harlot. Augusta is guilty of one crime—adultery, and her crime is no more damaging than that of any other character. Specifically, Orozco’s honor is not dependant upon blood cleanliness or the purity of the marital “one flesh”, nor is it dependant upon calumny or suggestion. In other words, Orozco’s honor is internal and uncontested. He stands on his own honor, which is not corrupted despite the immoral acts that surround him.

The separation of a wife’s actions from the marital body, and her resultant individuality, is revolutionary in light of the centuries of the Calderonian constructs in Spanish literature. Once the chain of body-contamination-dishonor-destroyed society breaks down, the adulteress loses much of her destructive potency. The concept of husband and wife as fallible individuals (rather than one flesh) effectively separates Galdós’s framing of the adulteress from those of his Neoromantic colleagues.

Although Galdós’s fifth act breaks with the Spanish tragic tradition, he does not excuse Augusta’s adultery, nor does he claim that her actions do not affect middle class morality or stability. Rather, female adultery becomes a part of the immoral middle class market—in other words, Augusta’s body (even within the private sphere) becomes a commodity that is subject to economic poison and contributes to the overall health of the Spanish nation. As an individual, her moral choices may either transcend the public sphere’s bad influence, or add to its contaminants. However, Augusta and her body do not constitute metonyms of social

destruction—in other words, the adulteress does not appear as the visual scapegoat for all of society's ills. Rather, Augusta is one of many characters who succumb to illicit desire. With this crucial thematic and stylistic transition, Galdós presages the twentieth-century experimentation (and eventual break with) the Calderonian portrayal of the adulteress on stage.

**Dramatic Regeneration in the Early Twentieth Century: The Adulteress  
in Unamuno's *teatro desnudo***

For much of the nineteenth century, the Spanish tragedy is a model of consistency—the tragedians reiterate old models and semiotic conventions with little variation or experimentation. The use of the adulteress, as well as other Baroque conventions, is easy to trace from the Romantic tragedy all the way to the latest Neoromantic melodrama. As the popularity of the Neoromantic tragedy waned in the early twentieth century, a myriad number of dramatic styles developed that experimented with new aesthetic forms, including modernism and a burgeoning interest in the avant-garde. Despite the variety of styles in the early twentieth-century Spanish theater, the tragedians of the period could not separate their work from the venerated Calderonian tradition of their nineteenth-century predecessors.<sup>34</sup> This tragic continuity is in large part a product of the increasing anxieties that Spaniards faced at the turn of the century, including economic, political, and psychological crises. As in the Romantic works of the 1830s, the Spanish tragedy of the new century functions as a theatrical manifestation of public anxiety.

How, then, does the early twentieth century tragedy deviate from nineteenth century formulas? In the case of the poetic tragedians and their popular works, it is as if the particular circumstances of the early twentieth century did not make much of an impact on the discourses, conventions, and aesthetic of the period's tragedians; that is to say, there are few unique characteristics that distinguish a tragedian such as Francisco Villaespesa from José Echegaray.<sup>35</sup> However, there remains one tragedian

who manages to create experimental drama while still connecting to Spain's venerated tragic tradition: Miguel de Unamuno. This tragic duality is best displayed in Unamuno's drama *Fedra* (1910), in which a Calderonian adulteress emerges from an unconventional dramatic aesthetic.<sup>36</sup>

Thematically, Unamuno continues to rely upon theatrical tradition and a glorified sense of history in order to create tragic *gravitas*. Like his contemporaries, Unamuno touches upon the perennial discourses of the Baroque, Romantic and Neoromantic tragedy: lost honor, contaminated blood, the erotic triangle, and incest all reappear as indispensable ingredients of his tragedies. In *Fedra*, Unamuno overtly employs Baroque and Romantic discourses that reiterate the Calderonian framing of the adulteress. His dramas rely heavily on the known, the comfortable, and those constructs that are stored in the Spanish cultural memory. On a textual level, then, Unamuno is highly invested in the tragic tradition and recognizes the importance of spectator recognition.

Aesthetically, however, Unamuno experiments with the dramatic genre and departs from several recognized theatrical conventions. As a unique and experimental dramatist, Miguel de Unamuno's works defy stable or effective categorization. His constant experimentation, combined with his invention of hybrid genres, often separate Unamuno from any solid literary classification. This generic ambiguity is especially evident in Unamuno's dramas—he names his dramas *teatro desnudo*, a label which indicates, among other traits, the avoidance of visual sign-systems in performance. Moreover, his display of the adulteress largely depends on

a twentieth-century context: rather than portray the transgressive woman as a contaminant within the market economy, Unamuno uses the adulteress to explore the link between changing gender constructs and the spiritual and social difficulties of the ailing nation. Specifically, Fedra's position as adulteress (and eventually, martyr to male honor) provides a dramatic allegory for both the Spanish problem at the turn of the century and the hope for national regeneration.

The Spanish problem is linked to several different crises and complications that faced the nation in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Although the period from 1898-1918 is still considered the latter part of the Restoration, Spain's foray into the twentieth century incited significant changes in the way Spaniards defined themselves as a people and as a nation. Traditionally, *fin de siècle* disillusionment is linked to the year 1898, when the Spaniards lost critical colonies: Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines. There is no doubt that the loss of colonies contributed to turn of the century angst (as well as political and economic upheaval); however, Spain's failure to maintain imperialist power only constituted a small portion of the domestic upheaval in this period. Historian José María Jover Zamora characterizes the loss of colonies as a symptom of a changing global politics ("proceso histórico-global") and a sign of Spain's overall degeneration as a cohesive nation state (385-6). The growing discontent of Spaniards at the turn of the century was a product of the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of the Restoration. What had worked well during the 1880s was now crippling Spain's political and economic stability. *Caciquismo*, in particular, was less pragmatic and implicit than it had been

earlier in the Restoration. Yet it remained a political and economic force in the early twentieth century because the Spanish oligarchy was still in place (Ruiz 472).

The continued domination of the *caciques* provoked revolts of the lower classes and contributed to the overall economic crisis. Although investors enjoyed a stable market until the end of the First World War, the health of the Spanish economy dipped during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. The initial economic slumps at the turn of the century were due to the loss of colonial money—the textile industry in particular suffered without imports from Cuba and Puerto Rico (Jover Zamora 410). José Luis García Delgado notes the overall lack of imports and waning industrial revenues of the period (426). Aside from the loss of overseas industry and mining, the slow dissolution of *caciquismo* and the growing need for domestic industry incited a stronger division among the social classes. The result was that in the first years of the twentieth century, Spaniards experienced a crisis of economic and political division that stood out from the prosperity and pragmatism of the 1880s. It is this transition from excess to chaos and loss that exacerbates both intellectual and public anxiety; eventually, this anxiety is channeled into a tragic catharsis through the use of familiar baroque and romantic conventions.

The link between the Spanish problem and tragic catharsis intensifies in light of the psycho-social maladies associated with the early twentieth century. The result of political and financial loss was an arguably more dangerous spiritual depression among the Spanish people—the psychological state of *abulia*. This emotional state and its symptoms became defining characteristics of the typical narrative protagonist



in the turn of the century Spanish novels. However, the nature of abulia is not limited to the famous novels of the period. For dramatists, the expression of psychological maladies was achieved through the hyperbolic and distancing lens of the Baroque model. While this portrayal is explicitly made in some Romantic tragedies of the early nineteenth century, the cathartic power of visually displaying modern anxiety is still viable for the twentieth century tragedian. The small difference is that the concern over fractured subjectivity is replaced by a subtler look at the individual's (and concurrently, the nation's) lingering depression.

In this sense, the early twentieth-century tragedians are still locked into the nineteenth-century tendency to express modern anxiety through the Baroque frame. Despite his aesthetic uniqueness, Unamuno is unable to deviate from this well-trod model of the tragedy. In fact, Unamuno is instrumental in creating the discourses associated with both the Spanish problem and the notion of Regeneration. It is only natural, therefore, that his philosophies on the state of the nation find their way into his dramatic portrayal of the adulteress.

Unamuno was one of many authors who sought to define the Spanish problem and describe potential solutions for the nation's depression and stagnation. Spain's intellectuals at the turn of the century fleshed out two competing philosophies regarding the future of their national identity: *regeneracionismo*, that is, restoring Spain's former glory with centralized strength, or *regionalismo*, in which the specific and unique cultures of Spain's provinces enjoyed their own rejuvenation. The regeneration movement won mainstream support due to its utopist

ideology, and also was championed by the majority of the Generation '98 authors. Although the regenerationists eschewed the failed practices of the Restoration, much of their ideology was rooted in nineteenth-century philosophies—specifically, positivism and Krausism (Jover Zamora 388). However, the regenerationists also wanted to modernize Spain with investments in agriculture and education, as well as a more developed market economy and a democratized state (389). In order to achieve these reforms and garner a sense of national pride, most regenerationists ignored regional movements in favor of a centralized, Castilian unity. Historian Juan Pablo Fusi Aizpúrua describes the regenerationists' concern over forming a cohesive nation state as the central goal of the early twentieth century. As Spaniards recognized the outdated nature of monarchical political systems, literary scholars and philosophers began to reconstruct theories of nationality and modernity that took into account the unstable and uncertain future of the Spanish nation (37). Ironically, the formulation of a new national identity depended upon the rebirth of tradition; in this sense, the inclination to use Baroque and Romantic conventions in the early twentieth-century tragedies is hardly surprising.

The identity of the Spanish nation, particularly for the regenerationists, was rooted in Castilian history and culture. The focus on Castile as Spain was particularly embraced by the turn of the century authors, including Azorín, Joaquín Costa and Menéndez Pidal (Fox 32). These regenerationist authors glorified medieval and Baroque Castile as the epitome of Spanish cultural greatness. For the Generation '98 authors, the definition of Spain as a nation depended on Castilian

history and culture. As Inman Fox explains, the regeneration authors affirmed “the historical originality of Castile as the unifying force of the peninsula and the creator of its culture” (32).

The concepts linked with regeneration, while first put forth at the turn of the century, continued to influence Unamuno’s portrayal of the Spanish problem in his dramas of later years. In fact, it is the transgressive woman’s connection to spiritual malaise and regeneration failure that inspires the dramatic portrayal of Fedra. Although Unamuno spearheaded the search for regenerative Castilian spirit in his essay *En torno al casticismo* (1895), he was not the only author of the period who promoted national rejuvenation. Shortly after, Ángel Ganivet wrote a similar description of the Spanish problem in the essay *Idearium español* (1896). For Ganivet and Unamuno, *lo castizo* was discovered largely through the people and geographical characteristics of Castile itself.<sup>37</sup> Unamuno went even further by suggesting that the people of Castilian villages create the true Iberian essence within the nation. Rather than focusing on the major events of recorded history, the discerning Spaniard should examine intrahistory—that is, the eternal, day-to-day contributions of the Spanish people to Iberian culture.<sup>38</sup> It is this “mar eterno” that sustains and defines *lo castizo*.<sup>39</sup>

The plans for regeneration influenced the way in which women’s roles were perceived in the new century. Although twentieth-century gender constructs were not as explicit as those of the mid to late nineteenth century, the position of wives, mothers and lovers remained an integral part of the failures or successes of the

potentially rejuvenated nation. Whereas destructive or transgressive women contributed to the spiritual malaise of the Spanish problem, the obedient, compassionate and fertile wife / mother could become helpful accomplices in the reconstruction of Spanish glory. For the majority the Generation '98 authors, the *ángel del hogar* construct of the nineteenth century remained the perfect model for wifely behavior. Like their Realist predecessors, Unamuno and his colleagues promoted a traditional view of the wife's role within society: she was to be educated in order to educate her sons properly, she was to stay within and protect the spiritual purity of the domestic sphere, and reproduction was her "divine destiny" (Nash 34). Thus, the constructs of gender largely informed the overall national project of the early twentieth century. Because the Generation '98 group was exclusively male, their attitudes towards gender changed very little even with the gradual development of Spanish feminism in the first three decades of the twentieth century.<sup>40</sup>

While the good wife and mother contribute to positive *casticismo*, the transgressive wife and mother threaten the potential for national regeneration.<sup>41</sup> As an adulteress and a potential destructive force, Fedra is the prime dramatic example of a woman complicit with Spain's failure as a nation. However, she also becomes a cleansing, rejuvenating force by the end of the drama. In this sense, Unamuno presents Fedra as a sort of dramatic Janus—the spectator or reader glimpses both sides of female behavior, *and* sees the negative and positive impact of that behavior on the nation as a whole. In this case, Unamuno uses an ancient Greek myth as an allegory for the belabored rejuvenation of the Spanish nation.

Unamuno's interpretation of Greek myth and other tragic intertexts is a typical inclination of the early twentieth century author. Like the Romantic dramatists, the Generation '98 authors addressed the future by recapitulating the best of the past. Specifically, they clung to past glory through textual techniques, particularly allusions, intertexts, and metanarratives (Orringer "Regeneration" 27-8). In the first two decades of the twentieth century, the majority of '98 authors had reworked canonical works from Spain's distant literary past, as well as ancient literary and historical texts from the western tradition. The examples of highly intertextual works are far too numerous to list here, but a few examples of note include: Azorín's rewriting of *La celestina* in his *Antonio* series, numerous analysis and re-workings of the *Quijote* (Azorín's *La ruta de Don Quijote*, Unamuno's *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho*, among others), the obsession with the mythic power of the Don Juan figure (particularly in *Sonata* novels of Valle-Inclán), and the re-working of biblical narratives (Unamuno's *Abel Sánchez*, for example).

The tendency to interact with classic texts is exemplified by Unamuno's fascination with Greek drama and tragic tradition. The aesthetic impetus to delve into a revered occidental past is a common trait of early twentieth-century authors.<sup>42</sup> Ironically, the foray into Latin and Greek was meant to find an authentic, or even autonomous, sense of Spanish identity (11). The goal was to incorporate multiple sources of western and Hispanic tradition into a collage of Spain's development as a strong nation.

Along with their homage to Greek and Latin authors, the authors of the period also recognized the importance of the Judeo-Christian tradition in Spain's definition of itself as a nation. Hispanic Christianity became one of the elements of the occidental legacy inherent in Spain's former glory—in other words, Greek narratives and Christian doctrine could be complementary elements of regeneration, rather than mutually exclusive ideologies (Orringer "Regeneration" 20-1). This pattern is certainly the case with *Fedra*, in which Unamuno copies the format of the Greek myth but offers a Christianized, martyred protagonist at the play's conclusion. Like his colleagues at the time, Unamuno did not shy away from juxtaposing Greek literature with Judeo-Christian ideals.

Throughout his dramatic work, Unamuno employs various discourses ranging from the most ancient texts to his own essays on modern Regeneration. His use of the traditional tragic model and the conservative view of the wife and mother further connect his dramas to the nineteenth-century Spanish tragedy. Due to its textual and thematic links to both ancient drama and the tragedies of nineteenth-century Spain, *Fedra* offers many different sorts of haunted experience for the average Spanish spectator. However, most if not all of the ghosts created in Unamuno's play derive from *textual* haunting—that is, the dramatist's conscious recycling of other texts in his play, *and* the spectator's tendency to bring his own memories of the text or similar stories to his interpretation of the current reading / production (see introduction). This relationship between dramatist and spectator, even within the most visually "naked" drama, allows for several haunted moments in *Fedra*.

Although textual ghosts abound in Unamuno's drama, the ability to use other forms of haunting (particularly production haunting) are severely restricted by two factors: first, Unamuno purposefully pares down visual sign-systems in his aesthetic; more importantly, *Fedra* was not produced or performed as a full scale production until 1921.<sup>43</sup> This relative lack of performance makes it difficult to trace the sort of visual moments that might incite the cultural memory of the select group of spectators. While the Romantic and Neoromantic tragedians availed themselves of elaborate visual cues to elicit reception ghosts (see Chapters One and Two), Unamuno is specifically adverse to the emphasis on visual splendor, hence the label of his drama as "teatro desnudo." In this way, the dramatists who stage *Fedra* according to Unamuno's instructions are limited in their use of production ghosts.

The textual wealth and production paucity in Unamuno's dramas derive in part from his unique philosophy of dramatic creation. Rather than writing a play that is meant to represent the outside world faithfully, Unamuno wrote within his own perception of the world. In other words, he acted as Creator of his characters, who then became real persons within his creation. Iris Zavala names this process "teatro de conciencia"—that is, a theater in which Unamuno created drama through his own consciousness (168). Within this internalized theatrical world, the boundaries among author, actor, and spectator dissolve (173). All are created through the Creator's consciousness, and therefore; all theatrical participants exist on the same plane of reality, including the characters that the actors present. For Unamuno, "conciencia es representación" (Zavala 186). In this sense, Unamuno becomes a sort of dramatic

anthropologist, as he creates characters that “están haciéndose en cada instante” (Rodríguez Ramírez 107). It is this very creationist impulse that allows for a tragic thread to be carried through his dramas, as his characters struggle to uphold their moral values within their quotidian lifestyles (109).

As a result of Unamuno’s unique perspective on the nature of theater, the generic categorization of his dramas as theater (or even as drama) becomes problematic. This assertion becomes stronger when one considers Unamuno’s own description of his theatrical style. In his *exordio* to *Fedra*, Unamuno defines *teatro desnudo*: “llamo desnudo en la tragedia o desnudez trágica al efecto que se obtiene presentando la tragedia en toda su augusta y solemne majestad” (Unamuno 186). Beyond maintaining the majesty of the tragedy, the true crux of *teatro desnudo* is the lack of theatrical sign systems attached to the dramatic text. In other words, Unamuno wishes to strip his dramas of visually theatrical elements. He explains: “No quiere necesitar esta tragedia del concurso de pintor escenógrafo, ni de sastre y modisto, ni de peluquero” (Unamuno 186). Unamuno even indicates that his dramas should not be performed, but rather read as literary works (186). In this sense, he appears to deny each work its scenic essence—there are virtually no stage directions, no scenic or lighting recommendations, and very few indications of character movement. According to the *exordio*, each scenic distraction obstructs the message of the work; the literary work as a whole loses its purity to theatricality. In particular, Unamuno characterizes luxurious costumes as a restriction of honesty and clarity of the literary message. “Fedra, por ejemplo, sea de tal intensidad trágica, que



los espectadores—y sobre todo los espectadores—no tengan que distraerse mirando cómo va vestida la actriz que la representa” (187). In this particular portion of his *exordio*, Unamuno seems to contradict himself. While he resists the theatrical components of the performance, he also seems to admit to the inherent purpose of the drama—that is, its presentation to the public. If he were to completely obliterate the possibility of the performance, he would not even mention the hypothetical “espectadores.” Rather, he would distinctly refer to those that receive the work as readers. Thus, there remains the potential for a performance, but such a performance must adhere to a severe sense of simplicity.<sup>44</sup>

Although the visual (production) elements of Unamuno’s drama are either simplistic or nonexistent, the textual elements in *Fedra* provide a wealth of intricately interwoven discourses. Along with his use of Baroque rhetoric, Unamuno writes *Fedra* on top of other tragedies of the same name, all of which find their origin in Euripedes’s *Hippolytus*. By using the Greek tragedy as the new model for his own dramas, Unamuno reaches farther into the depths of history and tradition, thereby providing a wealth of reception material for his spectators. Not surprisingly, this exploration of classic theatrical tradition includes a tragic adulteress--the title character in *Fedra*. As is often the case with Unamuno’s dramas, *Fedra* exemplifies the Unamunian theatrical paradox: in its language and style, it is largely original and experimental; yet it could not exist without repeating and reiterating texts, conventions and ideas that have already been performed in the Baroque, Romantic, Realist, and of course, ancient Greek periods.

In certain ways, Unamuno's use of textual haunting in *Fedra* far exceeds his fellow dramatists in that he is basing his work on an explicit previous text. That is to say, he is not using an ambiguous sense of Spanish "history" in the way that some Romantic and poetic tragedians did. Rather, Unamuno roots his version of *Fedra* in three different tragedies: Euripedes's *Hippolytus*, Seneca's *Hippolytus*, and Racine's *Phaedra*. Unamuno's obvious reiteration of past tragedies has incited a number of critical studies recounting the significant similarities and differences between Unamuno's interpretation of the myth and those of his predecessors. For A Valbuena-Briones, Carlos Feal Deibe, André Rombout, and Ignacio Elizalde, the crux of Unamuno's uniqueness is his depiction of Fedra. More than the classical interpretations of the myth, Unamuno provides a complex, sympathetic, and highly Christianized portrait of the title character. Given the fact that Fedra is a would-be adulteress in every version of the myth, the high level of complexity in Unamuno's portrayal frames the adulteress as both a destructive agent and a rejuvenating force. This duality becomes one of many in Unamuno's naked tragedy.

With the Greek and Roman versions of the text, the myth tells of Phaedra's illicit desire for her stepson Hippolytus, who in turn must prove his virtue and innocence to his father. In order to purge herself of dishonor, Fedra commits suicide, thereby "proving" the truth of the relationship. Despite Hippolytus's honest replies to the accusation, his father Theseus exiles him. Tragically, the king does not learn of his son's innocence until he has died in a violent chariot accident. In these ancient versions of the myth, the dramatic tension is fiercely centered upon the wrongly

accused Hippolytus and Phaedra's threat (in life and in death) to the family honor. Although Phaedra is powerful in her destructive actions and desire, she is more a vessel of illicit desire rather than an agent of Greek angst.

Euripides's portrait of Phaedra is one of both victim and victimizer, which is a duality that Unamuno also employs in his own work. Phaedra's position as sympathetic character lies in two points: first, that her illicit desire is a direct result of a contracted disease, and perhaps more importantly, that she vows to purge the disease through virtually guaranteed suicide. Due to Phaedra's awareness of her condition, both her nurse and the chorus sympathize with her position and seek to protect her from further harm. Nonetheless, her desire and suicide fail to reverse Hippolytus's bloody end, which results in the overall destruction and dishonor of the family. The opposing discourses of empathy and blame occur throughout Euripides's version, and Unamuno uses this original tragic structure as the basis for his experimentation with the mythic story.

Contrary to Euripides's complex framing of Phaedra's character, Seneca's interpretation of the myth relies upon vilifying both the adulteress and her would-be love. More so than in Euripides's version, Seneca continually stresses the physical and mental contamination of the characters and the evil manifestation of their diseased minds and bodies. Whereas later versions of the myth may temper negative fate with hope, Seneca's interpretation is dark and pessimistic—he creates a world in which “passion reigns supreme,” and violent death is inevitable (Orringer “Philosophy” 552). In typical mythic fashion, Fedra is cursed by the evil of her

blood line (her mother Pasiphae) and the black magic of her predecessor (Medea). Since Pasiphae bore the Minotaur through immoral bestiality, Phaedra is forever contaminated by the destructive desire of her mother. Phaedra herself recognizes her inability to avoid the inherited flames of immoral lust:

He (Cupid) is the winged force of potency  
throughout the universe. And when he strikes  
his fire savages Jupiter himself.  
There is no cure. The warrior god, crushing  
life under his heel, is seared and burns (Act I, 187-90).

Despite the imposed evil on Phaedra's spirit, Seneca shows little sympathy for her actions or her cleansing suicide. Valbuena-Briones is quick to point out that Seneca's Phaedra epitomizes "la debilidad femenina," and as an exemplar of female frailty, she is denied the more nuanced, forgiving portrayal that appears in Unamuno's interpretation ("Seneca" 93). Even Hippolytus, who is cast in a virtuous light in other versions, is portrayed as lowly and beastlike. Seneca's hyperbolic use of imagery plays well with Unamuno's own characterization of Fedra's disease / contamination. While Unamuno's framing of Fedra and Hipólito is not nearly as vile or violent, he does use the imagery associated with the myth to connect to the Baroque obsession with *limpieza de sangre*. In this sense, the shared emphasis on contamination and illicit desire provides an important textual link among the ancient plays and Unamuno's twentieth century, regenerative interpretation.

Both Racine's and Unamuno's version of the Greek myth retain Euripedes's basic plot, but the portrait of the adulteress changes significantly. Along with the

time difference between the Greek original and the French adaptation (*Phaedra* debuted in 1580), Racine's version of *Phaedra* offers a different perspective of the family tragedy. In this Baroque version, Racine focuses on Phaedra as the thematic center of the action. In other words, Racine uses the dramatic action to reveal Phaedra's struggle with her own desire and destiny. The result is that Racine's Phaedra draws more sympathy than her Greek and Latin predecessors (Feal Deibe 23). Andres Franco describes Racine's version as a "drama psicológico" in which the tragedy is completely invested in Phaedra's internal emotions (142-3). It is this key shift in emphasis that Unamuno incorporates in his vision of the Fedra myth. Unamuno's incorporation of Racine's work is significant in that while he (Unamuno) incites few ghosts from the Spanish Baroque tradition, he uses the adaptation of the myth from a French Baroque dramatist. Ignacio Elizalde notes that while the comparison between Euripedes's original and Unamuno's interpretation is inevitable, Unamuno's version has more of an intertextual relationship with Racine (121). Specifically, Unamuno's portrayal of Fedra is highly vested in Baroque themes (120). This is not to say that Unamuno's version imitates Racine's style or language, but rather that Racine's version is yet another example of Unamuno's overt use of textual haunting.

Although the original Greek tragedy is the basis for drama, Unamuno departs from the original plot in several key moments. As in Racine's version, the incestuous stepmother (Fedra), and not the virtuous stepson (Hipólito), becomes the psychological focus of the drama's plot. The plot structure of *Fedra* consists of the

following key moments: Fedra confesses her illicit desire to her nursemaid, then proclaims her love to her stepson, who rejects her. Eventually she confronts her husband with her secret, and as she is unable to reverse the effects of her disastrous desire, she commits suicide. In an unexpected twist (completely departing from former versions), Fedra's suicide acts as a cleansing sacrifice that saves father and son from death and dishonor.

Most critics, including Rombout and Franco, contend that this suicidal martyrdom changes the overall tone of the borrowed drama. For Orringer, Fedra's suicide is so cleansing that she attains a Christ-like status at the drama's conclusion ("Philosophy" 561). Rombout suggests that Fedra's "Catholic" suicide in Unamuno's version is actually less "chretienne" and "humaine" than Racine's death, for the simple reason that Racine's Phaedra dies in peaceful solitude, whereas Unamuno's Fedra must accomplice purification, regeneration, and the reunion of father and son (56). Rather than a confirmation of guilt, Fedra's death becomes a sign of forgiveness—both for herself and for the men who condemned her. Thus while the development of illicit desire remains rooted in Greek mythic tradition, Unamuno's unique conclusion "christianizes" the overall tragedy (Franco 156). For Orringer and Rombout, Fedra is not only a martyr, but also an agent of Spanish regeneration. Rombout even goes so far as to say that Fedra's Catholic suicide modernizes Unamuno's version of the myth to the point that it is no longer a mere reiteration of other dramas (56). It is this modern deviation from tragic formula that provides an even more complex framing of Unamuno's Fedra.

Along with incorporating Racine's psychological examination of Fedra's character, Unamuno also adds his own thematic twists to her development. In order to enrich Fedra's position as a tragic protagonist, he adds infertility to her list of woes. Not only does she suffer the anguish of adulterous desire; she also must contend with her inability to reproduce and her failure to become a worthwhile mother (Franco 145). As is often the case with Spanish tragedies, the adulterous desire acquires an incestuous tone that increases the stakes for familial and societal destruction.

While the other dramas form the basis of Unamuno's references to the spectator's cultural memory, the most striking examples of tragic continuity is the reiteration of Romantic and Neoromantic conventions. The use of melodramatic language and tone is not a unique occurrence in the supposedly bare Unamunian tragedies. In Franco's words, Unamuno did not shy away from "Echegarian moments" in his works (283). Even if a director and his theatrical designers were to adhere to Unamuno's definition of *teatro desnudo* (that is, preventing costumes, lights or acting styles from creating a visual spectacle), the nature of *Fedra's* dramatic text would still ensure a largely Romantic interpretation of the adulteress.

The structure of the drama in itself suggests a strong influence of Neoromantic tragedies. In the first act, we have an introduction to each character's hidden problem—for Fedra, it is her illicit desire combined with the lingering influence of her mother's insanity that is revealed; for Hipólito, it is his continued absence from the home and his obsession with hunting trips. At the end of the act,

the spectator sees Fedra's confession of love and Hipólito's horrified reaction, concluding with Pedro's insistence that Fedra convince her "son" to marry wisely. The second act provides a crescendo to the problems when Pedro learns of the relationship between them and disowns Hipólito. However, the last scene of the second act adds a new twist to the growing conflict—in a dramatic monologue to the audience, Fedra vows to cleanse her family with her own suicide. The third act departs from the romantic model slightly—rather than enjoying a blood and guts spectacle of death, Fedra quietly fulfills her promise and the men pardon her because of her act of martyrdom. Up until this non-traditional conclusion, *Fedra* follows an Echegarian-like format—the characters gradually admit their illicit desire and secrets (often with emotional monologues), conflicts and threats ensue, and the characters contemplate forms of vengeance and restoring their lost honor. It is only with the tragedy's somewhat anticlimactic suicide (introduced in the second act) that the structure of the dramatic plots digresses from the traditional tragic format.

In the first two acts of the drama, Unamuno employs a number of textual allusions to Romantic and Neoromantic traditions. The overall themes of the tragedy (incest, adultery, infertility, male/ familial honor) reiterate those crises so prevalent in the Romantic tragedies of the 1830s (see Chapter One). Along with Romantic themes, Unamuno's use of language in general creates a romantic tone. Some theatrical techniques in Unamuno's tragedies are reminiscent of the melodrama—impassioned monologues that confer plot points (and internal strife of the characters), as well as dramatic silences that propel the tension among the three main



characters. As Wadda Rios-Font explains in *Re-writing Melodrama*, the duality of emotional hyperbole and silence is a fundamental aspect of melodrama and the melodramatic aspects of Neoromantic tragedies (24). Specifically, Unamuno employs imagery and symbols that harken back to Antonio García Gutiérrez's tropes in his most hyperbolic tragedies (see Chapter One). Throughout the first two acts, Unamuno repeatedly uses the fever conceit (that is, desire as a destructive fever) to develop Fedra's dilemma. From the very first moments of the first act, Fedra explains how her mother has infected her with the fever of illicit passion:

Sí, aunque te parezca mentira, me acuerdo de la que perdí toda memoria...¿toda?...de esa madre a la que apenas conocí. Paréceme sentir sobre mis labios su beso, un beso de fuegos en lágrimas, cuando tenía yo....no sé....dos años, uno y medio, uno, acaso menos...Como algo vislumbrado entre brumas. (Acto I, Escena II).

Despite Fedra's shadowy memory of her mother, it is clear from the outset that her mother's "besos de fuego" have infected her ability to procreate in a healthy way. While Fedra's specific connection to Pasiphae's bestiality is absent in Unamuno's play, he is quick to reiterate the theme of inherited, diseased desire that is so emphasized in Euripides's and Seneca's interpretations. Indeed, Hipólito himself describes Fedra's kisses as "besos de fuego" later in the second act. With this vicious hereditary cycle, it is clear that Fedra's bloodline (or even those bound to her) will be cursed by the destructive power of feverish desire. Already in Act I,

Scene IV, Hipólito is well aware of his dangerous position as the object of Fedra's desire:

Hipólito: Estás loca, madre, y tu locura es contagiosa...

Fedra: Pues, ven, ven que te la pegue, y locos los dos, Hipólito, los dos locos...

In this scene of initial confession, the dynamic between Fedra and Hipólito becomes dangerously incestuous. On the one hand, Fedra wants to eschew Hipólito as her “son” and embrace him as her lover, yet she passes on her fever or “locura” as if Hipólito shared her bloodline. The ambiguous passion between them further complicates the destructive potential of Fedra's adulterous desire. The fact that the incest is figurative rather than literal pushes the characters even further towards shame and death. Although the threat of incest also appears in several Romantic tragedies (including *El page*), Fedra's destructive desire may also be interpreted as a distinctly twentieth century problem. In other words, her incestuous desire is one of many signs of Spain's decadent, abulic, and regressive spiritual state—a symptom of the problem rather than the rejuvenated solution.

Despite the twentieth-century context of Fedra's characterization, the overall language of the play is based in traditional rhetoric and imagery. As in several Romantic tragedies, the fever of desire is juxtaposed with the cooling essence of water. While Hipólito embodies the coolness and freshness of nature, Fedra metonymically represents the fiery *hogar*. Hipólito argues this binary opposition himself, proclaiming: “La naturaleza no sufre fiebres ni necesita luchar para querer”

(Acto I, Escena II). Of course, Hipólito is unable to stay away from home or the fire within, despite his retreats into nature. Nonetheless, Unamuno maintains the juxtaposition of the feverish, contaminated home with the freedom and healing power of nature. Even in the very first scene of the play, Unamuno uses the *llovizna* as a binary opposition to Fedra's recognition of her own destructive power. Fedra describes Hipólito's presence as "una llovizna continua, cala hasta el tuétano!" (Acto I, Escena I). In this description, Hipólito embodies nature once again, although Fedra's perspective on nature is much less calming and far more disastrous.

Linguistically, Unamuno has proffered a Romantic set of binary images in order to characterize the tragic relationship between Fedra and Hipólito. However, this relationship does not rely exclusively on language--it is also indicated by the physical movements represented in the text. If one is to assume, as I do, that Unamuno meant *Fedra* to be performed as a full-length production on stage, then the physical relationship between the actors on stage remains a valid point of analysis. Even without the benefit of specific information on the performance in 1921, Unamuno textually indicates the importance of the spatial and semiotic relationships among the characters. Therefore, the actors interpreting the mother-son dynamic would certainly offer a visual, physical display of the characters' fear and desire. Following Unamuno's own rhetoric regarding all literature, the characters on stage should become people of flesh and blood—that is, the physical manifestation of his creative power as dramatist. Although the actors' bodies may not be adorned with costumes or framed with luxurious scenery, they are still powerful semiotic signs

that create visual messages for the hypothetical spectators (gestures, facial expressions, and general movement are still “in play” as visual sign-systems). In this sense, the interaction of the bodies on stage (and their visual display) remains an important aesthetic consideration for examining Fedra as a haunting adulteress.

The physical interaction between the three principal characters exacerbates the dynamic of a typical erotic triangle within the Spanish tragic structure. Unlike the other versions of the tragedy, Unamuno does not rely on the chorus or the character of the nurse to provide contextual information on the illicit relationships. André Rombout notes that while the incidental characters are not well developed in Unamuno’s *Fedra*, the relationship among the three main characters is much more fleshed out than other versions of the myth (54). The “cohérence intérieure” of the tragic triangle serves to further emphasize the psychological and physical ailments that plague Fedra, while also influencing the way in which father and son interact (54).

Because of the intimacy of the relationships within the triangle, the nature of desire and honor is shown through dialogues and physical contact between Fedra and Hipólito, Fedra and Pedro, and Pedro and Hipólito. When Pedro disowns Hipólito, the erotic triangle is characterized by the traditional dynamic that Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick describes in *Between Men*: that is, the object of desire is incidental to the complex, homosocial relationship between the two competing men (21). Indeed, the misunderstood competition between father and son form an indispensable part of the tragic trajectory, especially when the two are reconciled through Fedra’s

martyrdom.<sup>45</sup> However, the erotic triangle is atypical in the sense that Fedra has agency and she is not the only object of desire. For the majority of the drama, Hipólito is the third point of the triangle. This allows for a more complex version of the erotic triangle to emerge.

Fedra and Hipólito are the central physical objects on stage. As the protagonist and the desiring character, Fedra acts as the body with subjective power (she gazes lustfully at Hipólito). Fedra's power to gaze further demonstrates her position as another dangerous woman who masculinizes herself at the expense of her family's well-being and national morality. However, she also remains a receptacle of dishonor, an immobilized object reminiscent of the tragedies of the 1830s. In some cases, Hipólito comes in from a hunting trip and penetrates the female space in order to gaze at Fedra. In Unamuno's interpretation, Hipólito reciprocates Fedra's desire. As a result, Fedra's physical / thematic position varies between gazer and receptacle. Her position as both a subjectively powerful individual and as an absorbent element of tragic fate (and male dishonor) constitutes one of the many paradoxes in the Unamunian drama.

Hipólito's position as a theatrical body is also complex. On the one hand, Hipólito is subjectively feminized in that he receives the lustful gaze of Fedra and the spectators. This subjective position of Hipólito is largely absent in the ancient versions of the play due to the fact that neither Euripides nor Seneca emphasized Fedra's desire; rather, Hipólito's innocence and honor dominated the tragic action. Unlike the ancient versions of the tragedy, Unamuno repeatedly frames Hipólito as

the object of desire rather than the driving force of the plot. By placing Fedra's desire and her actions at the center of the tragic action, Unamuno complicates the physical relationship between the two main characters. However, he still retains certain aspects of the original tragic story, in particular the male characters' attempts to restore honor and blood cleanliness to the family. Hipólito's actions have the power to affect the cleanliness of the family's honor; moreover, he has the power to procreate and give Pedro the son he has been lacking. In this sense, Hipólito retains a certain amount of agency.

Due to this complex relationship, the contact between the would-be lovers provides visual moments of discomfort and has the potential to evoke tragic ghosts. The Romantic imagery that Unamuno employs (especially the hot / cold binary opposition of desire) find moments of physical manifestation in the performance of the first scenes. The most common forms of contact between Fedra and Hipólito is the kiss on the cheek.<sup>46</sup> When Hipólito comments on the heat of the kisses, the subsequent kisses between them acquire more of an illicit and incestuous tone. For the majority of the drama, Fedra and Hipólito do not touch physically, yet their language becomes more ardent with each encounter. When they do have contact, it is usually in the form of Hipólito coming in from the freshness of nature to confront the feverish heat of his stepmother's desire (penetrating Fedra's "fiery *hogar*"). This sort of interaction is quite similar to the physical interaction between lovers in various nineteenth century tragedies. Despite the vast difference in theatrical aesthetics between Unamuno and the Romantics, the psychical interaction between

Fedra and Hipólito is not unlike the standard illicit encounters of the Romantic stage—Elvira and Macías, Leonor y Manrique, or Blanca and Ferrando.

Not surprisingly, it is easy to find parallels between my Romantic case study in Chapter One, *El page*, and certain scenes of *Fedra*. Like Fedra and Hipólito, Blanca and Ferrando have little contact beyond Ferrando's increasingly passionate professions of love. The troubled page symbolically penetrates the chamber of the object of his desire, and Blanca dissuades him from contact for as long as possible. Like Fedra, Ferrando suffers the fever of illicit passion: "Mi frente es un volcán, mis venas arden en fuego abrasador, irresistible..." (93). Blanca's coolness, like Hipólito's water essence, manifests itself in maternal kisses to Ferrando's forehead: "llorosa me besaba, y un suspiro hirió mi frente con vapor del hielo" (74). In many ways, then, the physical relationship between Fedra and Hipólito is an inversion of the traditional juxtaposition of male heat "penetrating" female coolness. This inversion allows for the focus to remain on Fedra's desire, yet the similarities to Romantic imagery and movement could potentially incite ghosts of tragic memory in the spectators.

These potential Romantic ghosts contribute to a traditional framing of Fedra as a contaminating adulteress. Not only has she contracted the dangerous fever of illicit desire from her mother, she also has contaminated her husband's bloodline and honor. Fedra's suicide indicates her confession to the desire and its damage to familial honor. That Fedra is also an allegory for the failed nation does little to alter

the representation of the tragic tradition in the performances—the adherence to the Romantic / Neoromantic formula appears to be intact.

This traditional framing of the adulteress is exacerbated by the characterization of male interaction. The relationship between Hipólito and his father Pedro, while secondary, further contributes to the linguistic and physical conventions of the Spanish tragic tradition. A prime example of the melodramatic tension between father and son occurs during the high emotional point of the second act. Pedro has just learned of the desire between his wife and son and proceeded to banish Hipólito from his presence. Immediately preceding his melodramatic monologue, there is a preparatory silence in which Hipólito leaves the room and his father's life:

*(Pedro cúbrese la cara con las manos y solloza. Hipólito se va lentamente.)*

*(Acto II, Escena VI)*

Immediately after, Unamuno offers Pedro's internal angst in a completely hyperbolic fashion:

Pedro: ¡Imposible! Él, él, mi hijo, mi hijo único! ¡Costó la vida a su madre, a su pobre y santa madre! Aquellos primeros años, cuando volvía yo a casa sobresaltado, imaginándome que le hubiese ocurrido algo y al llegar y encontrarle durmiendo tranquilamente en su cuna me inclinaba a pegar casi mi oído a su boca para sentirle respirar... ¡sí, estaba vivo! ¡Mi hijo, mi hijo único! ¿Será un castigo por haberle dado madrastra, por no haber respetado mejor la memoria de su santa madre...? ¡Pero...me sentía tan solo! ¡No me



bastaba él! ¿Y por qué no le casé con ella? ¡O egoísta, egoísta! No tuve paciencia a que me diese nietos, quise tener más hijos...¡y de Fedra! ¡No le quise solo! ¡Fue la carne, la carne maldita! ¿Será esto un castigo? ¡Mi hijo, mi propio hijo, mi hijo único!

(Acto II, Escena VII)

Stylistically and thematically, this monologue encapsulates Unamuno's theatrical style (and in some respects, belies his description of *teatro desnudo*). Although the monologue is technically prose, it retains the flavor of a revelatory climax so prevalent in Romantic and Neoromantic tragedies. Despite its lack of rhyme, the monologue does have a poetic rhythm due to Unamuno's repetition. The lilt of the refrain is peppered with dramatic pauses (the ellipsis) and thunderous exclamations. The spectator's musings (or perhaps Unamuno's own thoughts) are presented explicitly with Pedro's rhetorical questions—whether he should have given Hipólito a new mother, whether he should have remembered his first wife, and whether his suffering is a punishment from God. These questions serve not only to display Pedro's psyche, but also to present again the key conflicts of the entire work.

The primary purpose of the scene, as it is in most melodramatic monologues, is to reveal Pedro's internal angst and to remind the spectators of the plot's trajectory (Rios-Font 31). Like many Neoromantic husbands, Pedro bemoans his plight and shows concern over his blood line. This scene in particular is clearly one of Unamuno's "Echegarian moments," as the interaction between father and son assimilates the interaction between Julián and Ernesto in Echegaray's most famous

tragedy, *El gran galeoto*. The visual or linguistic references to both Romantic and Neoromantic tragedies further complicate the way in which audiences receive the productions. If the tragedian employs obvious conventions from the tragic tradition, then the spectator will naturally expect similar visual cues from the production itself. However, Unamuno's insistence on *desnudez* denies the spectator the visual spectacle of the Echegarian tragedy, but still clings to thematic and dialogic elements of the Spanish tragic tradition. While the Ateneo intellectuals may have understood the complexity of the contradiction, the average spectator of the early twentieth century would have resented the mixture of experimentation with outdated or traditional conventions.

Among the traditional themes of the tragedy is Fedra's infertility. The fact that Fedra has not procreated, and that she has contaminated the prodigal son with incestuous desire, is a dramatic conflict reminiscent of the Romantic tragedy blood crisis (see Chapter One). However, unlike the nineteenth-century tragedies, the cuckolded husband does not relegate his anger specifically towards the transgressive wife, nor does he swear vengeance. These are important deviations in that Pedro allocates blame not only to Fedra, but also to himself and to Hipólito. Rather than isolating Fedra as the sole metonym for social destruction, Unamuno has created a more complex version of the adulteress: Fedra instigates the fatalistic path of the family, but all three characters contribute to familial downfall.

Pedro's monologue exemplifies Unamuno's paradoxical style—on the one hand, he consciously reiterates Romantic and Neoromantic patterns, but he also

ultimately defies the foregone conclusion of the Romantic arch. If he were to extend the Neoromantic trajectory into the third act, the spectators would witness Pedro's vengeance as he strangled Fedra or stabbed Hipólito, with the result that the transgressors die in each other's arms, bemoaning their folly. If he were to incorporate a Galdosian conclusion, Hipólito might move away, leaving his parents to resolve the conflict peaceably, or in a possible Naturalist twist, Fedra is overcome with hysteric fits and dies of the same insanity as that of her mother. In both cases, Unamuno would have laid the dramatic groundwork so that the average spectator would accept these logical conclusions.

Instead, Unamuno chooses to develop the third act as an experimental alternative in which Fedra finds absolution through her own suicide. Rather than a performative, melodramatic action of death, Fedra's suicide is a long process that extends across several scenes. In fact, the spectator does not see Fedra during the entire third act—it is only through the men's and servant's dialogue that the audience senses her death and ultimate absolution. This resolution is unique in that Pedro does not avenge himself, but rather receives his fate passively as a sinner himself. Both Pedro and Hipólito take part in the collective guilt of the family and recognize Fedra's suicide as both punishment and absolution. As Fedra dies, both father and son admit their contribution to Fedra's death. Hipólito shouts: "Sí, mi virtud, una virtud ciega, era egoísmo. Sintiéndome firme no sentí que se caía ella" (Acto III, Escena VII). Later, Hipólito even calls himself his stepmother's murderer: "¡Sí, yo,

yo la ha matado con mi ceguera, yo!” (Acto III, Escena XIII). In a distinctly Greek fashion, Unamuno has distributed the blame among all the members of the family.

In some ways, Fedra becomes the seer of the tragedy in that she sees and speaks the truth throughout the drama. Although she gives in to her desire, she manages to transcend her contamination with immoral truth (which acts as a foil to Hipólito’s virtuous egoism). By the end of the third act, Fedra’s position as the dangerous adulteress has been replaced with that of mourned matriarch. Amazingly, Fedra’s suicide acts as an absolving martyrdom that cleanses with sacrifice rather than spilled blood. In the final scene of the third act, the servant Eustaquia brings Pedro a letter with Fedra’s last confession of truth. What follows is Pedro and Hipólito’s remarkable escape from Greek fate:

Pedro: (*yendo a Hipólito con la carta en la mano*). Y esto que dice aquí, ¿qué es?

Hipólito: ¡La verdad!

Pedro: ¿Toda la verdad?

Hipólito: Sí, toda. La verdad desnuda, la verdad después de la muerte.

Pedro: ¿Y porqué no me lo revelaste antes, hijo mío?

Hipólito: ¿Quién? ¿Yo? ¿Contra ella? ¿Contra ti? ¿Contra tu paz, tu sosiego, tu honor? ¿Y para qué? ¿Solamente para defenderme?

Pedro: Sí, bien hecho! ¡Eres mi hijo, hijo mío, de mi sangre! Pero como has podido dejar así...Oh, no, no, no, estoy como loco, no sé lo que me digo...no sé si estoy muerto o vivo...¡Hijo! ¡Hijo! ¡Hijo mío!

Hipólito: (*yendo a sus brazos*): ¡Padre!

Pedro: (*mientras le tiene abrazado*): ¡Después de todo, ha sido una santa mártir! ¡Ha sabido morir!

Hipólito: ¡Sepamos vivir, padre!

Pedro: ¡Tenía razón, es el sino!

With the delivery of the last letter (a visual sign of her suicide), Fedra manages to erase her own legacy and free father and son of their tragic fate. The result is that father and son are reunited, and Fedra completes her transition to “santa mártir.” This neat resolution seems to break away from Unamuno’s use of traditional themes and Romantic production ghosts: no innocent blood is shed in vengeance, no *puñal* is unsheathed in a melodramatic climax, and the family is miraculously lifted from their cursed fate. In many ways, then, the third act stands in stark contrast to the Romantic tropes and condemnation of Fedra in the first act. From a stylistic standpoint, Unamuno’s reversal of the tragic format could easily suggest the experimental nature of his dramatic work—that along with stripping theatre of superfluous visual signs, he also defies the expectations of the spectator / reader. Regardless of his motivations, Unamuno’s paradoxical format in *Fedra* provides a complex and often contradictory use of the adulteress as both a haunting construct and protagonist. Fedra is condemned and pardoned, destructive and healing, and seductive and saintly. Depending upon the scene examined, Fedra may either be classified as the bane of her society, a victim of her cursed legacy, or a sacrificial prophet. Due to these shifting positions, one cannot merely place Unamuno’s Fedra within the traditional adulteress framing: that is, as a metonym for social destruction.

On the other hand, Fedra only receives absolution after her suicide—had she not committed suicide and destroyed the legacy of dishonor, her desire would surely have continued to destroy the family. Moreover, her behavior in the initial confrontations with Hipólito places her as the aggressor and seductress. In the first two acts, Fedra shows no signs of fighting her desire, but rather intends to satiate it at all costs. The result is that Hipólito is banished from the home and Pedro loses his bloodline. It is only through her death that the hope of honorable reproduction is restored.

Fedra's dual position as dangerous transgressor and cleansing martyr, while contradictory, lends itself to an interpretation of Fedra as a gendered symbol of the Spanish nation. In the first two acts, Fedra suffers from various physical or psychological problems—that is, infertility, incestuous or feverish desire, and ultimately, the depression and tragic death passed down from her mother. So, too, does the Spanish nation suffer an abulic depression, manifested by the loss of fervor and productivity. As she is unable to resume a position of fertile wife and angelic mother, Fedra's one avenue of escape is death. By purging herself, she cleanses dishonor (a traditional necessity), but also clears the way for future productivity from the male members of the family. In this sense, her death serves as spiritual regeneration for Pedro and Hipólito, and by extension, the nation.

The contradictory nature of Fedra's character provides a creative adaptation of nineteenth-century constructs of the adulteress. Rather than resigning oneself to the bad effects of adultery on society (Orozco's stance in *Realidad*), Unamuno

maintains the Romantic message that the adulteress is a dangerous entity that must be exterminated. The adulteress is still a potent theatrical sign of social destruction, and this potential for disaster must be extinguished. However, with certain precautions, the destruction may be reversed, and both the family and the nation may experience a spiritual rebirth. Even more amazing is that the adulteress herself, and not necessarily the cuckolded husband, may cleanse her own contamination. This original variation of the Baroque-Romantic adulteress exemplifies the complexities of the early twentieth-century Spanish stage, in which dramatists hovered between tradition and modernity. Within a few short years, the avant-garde movements of the twenties and thirties will reject the tragic obsession with tradition—including the centuries-old construct of the haunting adulteress.

### **A Break with Tragic Tradition: Two Unconventional Adulteresses of the 1920s**

From the height of Romantic tragedy to the experimental dramas of Unamuno in the early twentieth century, Spanish tragedians represented modern fears through reiterating tragic tradition. The use of the pseudo-historic frame, traditional tragic structure, and Baroque themes served as methods to address modern problems while still fiercely clinging to well-known traditions. Even Unamuno's aesthetic experimentation with the dramatic genre did not shake the reliance upon Baroque themes and techniques.

It is only with the first waves of the Spanish avant-garde literature that dramatists finally break with tragic tradition and the Baroque framing of the adulteress. Within the Spanish theater of the twenties and thirties, there were numerous expressions of the avant-garde, but few instances of the tragedy in its traditional or Aristotelian format.<sup>47</sup> The declining production of tragedies in the 1920s, combined with the growing influence of avant-garde movements, led to the diminished use of the adulteress as tragic construct.<sup>48</sup> Despite the theatrical departure from tradition, there were two dramatists in the twenties who employed the adulteress as a vehicle for social subversion and aesthetic experimentation: Ramón del Valle-Inclán and Ramón Gómez de la Serna. This chapter examines how each dramatist redesigns the tragic framing of the adulteress within the context of the burgeoning avant-garde theater of the 1920s. Specifically, I use Valle-Inclán's *Los cuernos de Don Friolera* (1921) and Gómez de la Serna's *Los medios seres* (1929) as exemplars of the unconventional portrayal of the adulteress.



Along with examining the role of the wife in general, both dramatists satirize adulterous transgressions and its effect on the traditional family structure. In the case of *Los cuernos de Don Friolera*, Valle-Inclán distorts the infamous trope of masculine honor, which becomes a key target of the work's *esperpentic* tone. Specifically, the display of the adulteress acts as a tool for ridiculing traditional frames of masculinity. Both the aesthetic characteristics of the *esperpento* and Valle-Inclán's ideological subversions (particularly the trope of honor) constitute the bulk of critical analysis on *Cuernos*. My intention is to extend the analysis of the *esperpentic* aesthetic beyond that of parody or distortion, thereby characterizing *Cuernos* as an explicit break with tragic tradition and the haunting constructs of the nineteenth century.

In *Los medios seres*, Ramón Gómez de la Serna examines the possibilities (or lack thereof) for sexual experimentation within the typical bourgeois marriage. The possibility for female adultery is met with extreme nonchalance and irrational dream sequences, which allows Gómez de la Serna a theatrical platform to critique and shock his bourgeois audience. As a distinct drama among Gómez de la Serna's works, *Los medios seres* is often mentioned in passing as an example of the burgeoning avant-garde theater in 1920s Spain. However, Ramón's unique use of surrealist aesthetic and his subversion of gender roles in this drama are largely overlooked within the overall analysis of his life and works. This chapter offers a more in-depth analysis of this particular drama, with an emphasis on the completely

new framing of adulteress, as well as Ramón's contribution to the aesthetic and ideological rupture with Spanish tragic tradition.

As the most distorted and ironic dramatic works of Valle-Inclán's career, the *esperpentos* constituted the closest link to vanguard expression in the early 1920s.<sup>49</sup> The definition of an *esperpento* varies widely, and although the term describes a certain type of drama, it does not necessarily constitute its own genre.<sup>50</sup> Generally, the *esperpento* may be categorized as a tragic farce. However, this generic definition does not encapsulate Valle-Inclán's unusual production techniques. The most common adjectives assigned to the *esperpento* aesthetic include distorted, deformed, ludicrous, melodramatically sentimental, and of course, grotesque. It is the odd juxtaposition of the romantic and the grotesque that often characterizes Valle-Inclán's *esperpentic* aesthetic (Ilie 499). Specifically, Valle-Inclán increases dramatic tension through binary oppositions, including sentimentality / cruelty, rational / irrational, human/ non-human, lovely/grotesque. The result is that Valle-Inclán adapts "conventional motifs to unromantic contexts" (Ilie 502). Concurrently, the spectator reacts to the juxtaposition of the grotesque and romantic through a mixture of recognition and distance (Pérez Carreño 76).

Because of the breadth of description relating to the *esperpento*, it is useful to examine examples of sign-systems within the production that demonstrate Valle-Inclán's deformed sentimentality. These visual (and at times, audio) techniques reveal not only Valle-Inclán's avant-garde tendencies, but also the way in which he incorporates (and eventually destroys) tragic ghosting. A good model for

demonstrating Valle-Inclán's unconventional aesthetic is his “melodrama para marionetas” entitled *La rosa de papel* (1924). During the climactic scene of the melodrama, a bereft husband embraces his dead wife, thereby creating a somber ambience reminiscent of the Romantic and Neoromantic tragic moments. Amidst his mourning, he knocks over a candle and sets the wife's body on fire. Initially, the romantic premise of the scene draws out certain expectations from the spectator's memory of tragic tradition. However, any potential ghost that emerges is undermined in two ways—first, that the overall gravity of the setting loses its power with the appearance of marionettes, and more importantly, that the sentiment of the scene is interrupted by a simultaneously grotesque and ludicrous event. Moreover, this sudden event occurs in front of the audience—that is, they witness the burning body first-hand. In this sense, the spectator is too distracted by the grotesqueness of the burning body to connect the convention of the mourning husband with similar scenes from their theatrical memory.

This scene from *Rosa de papel* is one of several examples in which Valle-Inclán embraces the avant-garde aesthetic and ideology. Although he *appears* to evoke ghosts from the Baroque tragic legacy, his allusions are used in an opposite fashion—that is, to break the connection between spectators and their expectations as to what constitutes an honor tragedy. As Barry Weingarten explains, “no es que (Valle-Inclán) critique el honor en sí, sino el tratamiento que recibe en el teatro tradicional” (56). Although Valle-Inclán may allude to theatrical tradition, he does not extend the sense of gravity and haunting from the nineteenth century into the

*esperpento*. Unlike the nineteenth-century tragedians, Valle-Inclán only references the Baroque in order to create tension and distance himself from tragic tradition. As Adelaida López de Martínez explains, Valle-Inclán's ironic perspective on the Baroque tragedy extracts "aquellos ángulos de enfoque que podrían descubrir la posible dimensión trágica de este tipo de asuntos" (20). In this sense, the *esperpento* replaces tragic gravity with distorted humor. As a result, the moment a Baroque ghost is formed from the spectator's cultural memory, it has already been deformed or inverted to the point that it hardly resembles the convention or construct from the tragic tradition. In other words, the ghosts that do emerge in the spectator's consciousness are immediately disassembled, distorted or satirized by the sign-systems on stage.

The use and destruction of Baroque and Romantic ghosts is heightened even further when the primary themes of the *esperpento* are the hallmarks of the traditional tragic frame: adultery, threatened lineage, and male honor. The work that most directly attacks the honor code is undoubtedly *Los cuernos de Don Friolera* (first published in 1921), one of the three famous *esperpentos* in Valle-Inclán's *Martes de carnaval*. A primary function of the *esperpento* is to distort and satirize, and this attitude toward drama afforded Valle-Inclán not only his fame, but a new outlook on Spanish history and the sociopolitical changes of the twenties. When *Cuernos* was first published in 1921, the Spanish government had recently suffered military and political upheaval. Specifically, that year saw the assassination of conservative Eduardo Dato and the obvious breakdown of the *turno pacífico*.<sup>51</sup>

Rodolfo Cardona affirms that the political dissolution of the Spanish state was a key target for Valle-Inclán's *esperpentic* aesthetic: "La situación política y social del momento se encuentra en franca desmoralización y establece así el fondo irónico en que se desarrolla esta 'tragedia de honor'" (652). In this sense, Valle-Inclán links the ridiculousness of the honor code with the political failures and scandals of the 1920s.

Within a few years, Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-30) became a constant source of inspiration and trouble for Valle-Inclán. His third *esperpento* in *Martes de carnaval, La hija del capitán*, was banned and pulled from the shelves for its critique of the dictatorship (Rubia Barcia 22). In 1927 and 1929, Valle-Inclán was arrested twice for minor offenses. Both seemed to be trumped-up charges in order to avenge his criticism of the dictatorship and his participation in socialist circles (Rubia Barcia 22).<sup>52</sup>

Although *Cuernos* was published and performed before Valle-Inclán's arrests, his contention towards the dictatorship appeared explicitly in his *esperpentos*. As in *La hija del capitán*, Valle-Inclán used his ridiculously distorted characters to subvert the ideals of masculinity touted by Primo de Rivera himself. Shortly after his military coup in September of 1923, Primo de Rivera gave a speech in which he described his patriotic platform for restoring Spanish greatness:

...the time has come to heed to the anxiety, to respond to the urgent demands of all those who, loving the mother country, see for her no other salvation than deliverance from the professional politicians, from the men who...offer

us the spectacle of the misfortunes and corruption which began in the year 1898 and which threaten Spain with an early end...This is a movement of men; let him who is not entirely sure of his complete masculinity await, quietly and in a corner, the good days which we are preparing for the fatherland (quoted in Cowans 126-7).

Beyond his call for a “movement of men,” Primo de Rivera also created an image of the macho military commander—that is, the general who always wears his uniform and directs daily pompous speeches at his men and the increasingly weary Spanish public (Carr 565).<sup>53</sup> All of these hyperbolic signs of masculine strength undoubtedly influenced Valle-Inclán’s skewering of the cuckolded husband and his relationship to the military.

It is not only the dictatorship that Valle-Inclán distorts, but also the legacy of the Baroque tragedy that persists even in his own century. In this sense, *Cuernos* combines the political satire of *La hija del capitán* with the parody of the hyperbolic Calderonian sign-systems in *La rosa de papel*. Laura Rosana Scarano even goes so far as to characterize *Cuernos* as the ultimate parody of the Neoromantic melodrama (183, 186). Part of the effectiveness of Valle-Inclán’s parody is his use of textual haunting—like in any parody, there are overt references to other famous works. However, unlike other parodies, Valle-Inclán visually deforms his textual allusions and destroys the spectator’s expectations. Thus, Valle-Inclán’s avant-garde rupture is created by superficially connecting to the tragic tradition; the *semblance* of textual haunting is a ruse to draw the spectator into an *esperpentic* world of unexpected

sign-systems. Later I will delve further into Valle-Inclán's use of "pseudo-haunting" in his unique parody of tragic tradition.

Not only is the *esperpento* an aesthetic deviation from the tragic tradition, it also parodies the honor code to the point that Valle-Inclán creates "una profunda transformación del sistema ideológico y estético del modelo y la norma oficial" (188). Within this vast ideological transformation, the adulteress becomes a parodic accessory of male dishonor, thereby constituting an important ingredient in the overall deformation of tragic tradition and antiquated social mores.

In this particular *esperpento*, the absurdity of male honor provides the anchor for Valle-Inclán's satire of both the obsession with Baroque themes and the sociopolitical problems of the early twentieth century. Although María Eugenia Acuna, Ana Francisca Fernández and Victor Valembois do not specifically link *Cuernos* with a satire of the dictatorship, they are quick to point out the political and ideological goals of the *esperpentic* form—that is, to emphasize "la falsa concepción de lo nacional" and "ridiculizar el aparato ideológico español para señalar sus fallas" (95-6). For his part, Weingarten suggests a more specific satire of Primo de Rivera himself through the character of Don Friolera's general, Lauro Roviroso, whose name already provides a "linguistic corruption" of the dictator's name (55). Within the context of the dictatorship, Valle-Inclán is using *Cuernos* to question Primo de Rivera's myths of national greatness—particularly the glorified sense of Spanish masculinity and power.

Beyond the internal drama of the cuckolded husband, Valle-Inclán provides a metatheatrical frame with a prologue and epilogue. In these bookends, the audience hears two intellectuals debating the value of the storyline as they watch a puppet show version of the play that is to follow. In the prologue, the intellectuals criticize Spain's inability to keep up with the rest of Europe, but still cling to the traditional anchor of the Spanish culture. As early as the prologue, then, Valle-Inclán demonstrates the delicate balance between glorifying or deforming traditional constructs. Already within the first moments of the prologue, the satirical impulse wins over the possible veneration of Romantic or Neoromantic tragic ghosts. Later, in the epilogue, the two intellectuals appear exiled and incarcerated on an island, no longer able to critique the play. As a result, the intellectual audience is reduced to a powerless state, just as dependent upon the military and "traditional values" as the parodied characters of the internal drama. The reminder that the spectators themselves may be incarcerated is thinly veiled in the *esperpento's* bookends, and this metatheatrical break further impedes the spectators from creating ghosts from former tragedies.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the tragic spell so conducive to haunting is broken even before the "honor tragedy" portion of the drama begins.

The primary satiric frame for the body of the *esperpento* is derived from *El médico de su honra* (1635).<sup>55</sup> In both works, a paranoid and honor-crazed husband thinks he is cuckolded. In the case of Don Friolera, he insists his wife is having an affair with a foolish barber, Pachequín. At first he fights against his jealousy, believing that calumny has distorted his judgment. He also consults the advice of a



Trotoconventos-like hag, Doña Tadea, in order to resolve or restore his lost honor. After discovering the two together, Don Friolera challenges Pachequín to a duel, and then vows to murder Doña Loreta. In order to avenge his dishonor, Don Friolera first asks council and permission from the military. When he is denied tangible advice from them, he decides to kill his wife, but inadvertently murders his daughter Manolita instead. Thus, he manages to condemn himself to hell with his *cuernos* intact.

This basic plot of the jealous husband *seems* to set up the drama as yet another example of the haunting adulteress and the reiteration of honor themes. Within the hyperbolic honor framework, Don Friolera's rhetoric towards divorce and calumny are reminiscent of such famous Neoromantic melodramas as Eugenio Selles's *El nudo gordiano* (1878) and José Echegaray's *El gran galeoto* (1881). In typical *esperpentic* form, Valle-Inclán has set up the spectator to draw out textual ghosts from his theatrical memory. Nonetheless, the ultimate subversion of the textual references creates the opposite effect of haunting—rather than glorifying the Spanish theatrical tradition, Valle-Inclán distorts the overused Baroque allusions. The ultimate subversion of the well-known tragic formula is a typical trait of Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos*. As Anthony Zahareas asserts, *Cuernos* provides Valle-Inclán with the opportunity to re-evaluate “the problem of mimesis in view of man's tragic predicament and aesthetic alienation” (87). This “re-evaluation” of tragic mimesis takes form through the use of ludicrous and grotesque visual signs that thwart tragic ghosting.

The *esperpento*'s aesthetic ruptures occur in tandem with the development of Don Friolera and his traditional tragic discourses. Upon hearing the gossip of the affair, Don Friolera first bemoans his lost honor and continually classifies Doña Loreta either as an object or a social construct. Before the mark of calumny, she was an "ángel del hogar" (Scene 1), but after committing adultery, she becomes "la depositaria de mi honor" (Scene 7). Before confronting Loreta, Don Friolera seeks council at the tavern and from his Teniente. In these scenes, Don Friolera converts his individual, private dishonor into a collective danger against men in general. He proclaims: "Ningún militar está libre de que su señora le engañe... En este respecto, el fuero no hace diferencia de la gente civil, y al más pintado le sale rana la señora" (Scene 10). As his rage grows, Don Friolera consistently shifts the focus from an intimate family affair to an allegory for Spanish masculinity—he is a soldier who fights the threat to Spanish morality. In this way, the discourses of honor are tied up with the concept of military masculinity. When he discovers Pachequín in his house, Don Friolera dismisses Loreta's defense in order to avenge himself in a manly battle: "Me avistaré con ese hombre... le propondré un arreglo a tiros. Es la solución más honrosa" (Scene 6). The irony, of course, is that the "honorable" solution is not a solution at all—the death of either "caballero" will not resolve the affair, Don Friolera's dishonor, or the absurdity of Spanish culture and politics. Once again, Loreta is the object, or receptacle, that remains on the side of the dramatic action. As a result, the discussion of dishonor remains a masculine issue that needs to be addressed and resolved among men. Nonetheless, the male community offers little

guidance or resolution for Don Friolera's honor crisis. In Valle-Inclán's concave vision of military masculinity, the group of soldiers is merely an example of Spain's overall disintegration—its “gran ignorancia y su increíble barbarie” and its “mediocridad intelectual” (Cardona 653). The impractical obsession with honor, and the lack of a solution for dishonor, is tied to the military's ineptness.

Throughout the *esperpento*, the concept of honor becomes increasingly absurd due to its impractical nature. Not only is it a vestige of an antiquated tradition, it is also ineffective—the honor is not restored. Along with murdering his daughter, Don Friolera's thirst for purified honor remains unquenched. The “protagonist” is merely a puppet of the military, theatrical convention, and his own dependence on a stagnated moral code. Given Valle-Inclán's tumultuous relationship with the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, it is little wonder that the dramatist's primary targets in *Cuernos* are the government and military, along with their insistent adherence to nineteenth century gender constructs and Baroque traditions. Rather than creating a homage to the tragic tradition, Valle-Inclán uses distorted ghosting as a way of critiquing the inefficiency of the dictatorship and Primo de Rivera's staunchly traditional social rhetoric.

Although the tragically absurd conclusion (that is, Manolita's death) subverts the honor construct on its own, Valle-Inclán continually employs visual signs that belittle Don Friolera and his crisis. As in any Romantic or Neoromantic tragedy, Don Friolera is given several melodramatic monologues in which he suspects or recognizes adultery, mourns his lost honor, or vows vengeance. The cuckold's

exclamations often textually allude to classic tragedies, in particular *El médico* or *Don Álvaro* (Cardona 659). However, the theatrical surroundings of Friolera's passionate outbursts render him ridiculous or unimportant. The result is that both textual and production haunting are thwarted by ironical distance and visual distractions.

Although Friolera is supposed to maintain his position as protagonist with the most emotional connection to the spectator, Valle-Inclán uses animals to upstage the monologue and distract the spectator. When the protagonist wonders how he will restore his honor in front of his military colleagues, a rat wanders by and pulls focus from Don Friolera: “Un ratón, a la boga de su agujero, arruga el hocico y curiosesea la vitola de aquel adefesio con gorila de cuartel, babuchas moras, bragas azules de un uniforme viejo, y rayado chaleco de Bayona” (Scene 6). The harsh description of Friolera's appearance in and of itself dehumanizes and belittles the protagonist, while the symbols of status within the military brotherhood accentuate the ridiculous sight, or “adefesio” of the supposedly scorned *galán*.

Along with the visual skewering of Friolera's signs of military status, Valle-Inclán also includes the appearance of the rat to further ridicule Friolera's masculinity. In this moment, Friolera loses his agency to the animal gazing at him/sniffing the uniform, with the effect that he seems less important than the rat. Not only does this interruption belittle Friolera, it also destroys any reception ghost that might spring up in the spectator's mind. Compare, for example, this *esperpentic* scene with any one of Ernesto's mournful monologues in *El gran galeoto* (See

Chapter Two). When the protagonist of Echegaray's famous melodrama bemoans his lost honor, it is underlined with appropriately melodramatic visual cues that emphasize (not diminish or distort) the *galán*'s crisis: a brandished sword, a lush sitting area, or a well-pressed bourgeois suit. In this Echegarian model, the *galán*'s masculinity is enhanced by the other sign-systems (gestures, lighting, sets), which in themselves may be designed especially to evoke past ghosts. The exact opposite effect is sought by Valle-Inclán--the absurd and random focus on the rat prevents the spectator from making connections to past theatrical experiences.

As in most *esperpentos*, Valle-Inclán employs puppetry in order to dehumanize his characters. Weingarten deems this process the "fatochización" of *esperpentic* characters (49). Don Friolera himself imitates a puppet twice, and actually is replaced by a puppet in the last scene of tragic recognition. In a ridiculous reference to Othello, Valle-Inclán calls for an Othello puppet to appear suddenly after Friolera shoots his pistol at Loreta (who is really Manolita) (Scene 12). All of these appearances serve to distract the spectator and dehumanize the characters during great moments of dramatic tension. Along with the appearance of literal puppets, Valle-Inclán calls for the actors to imitate marionettes. After learning of his wife's infidelity, Don Friolera attacks Doña Tadea and then proceeds to ask for her advice and comfort. As the two characters discuss the grave threat to male honor, their actions become continually more mechanical, and their physical fighting appears similar to a Punch and Judy puppet show. During Scene 4, Valle-Inclán describes how the behavior of the two actors descends into animalistic and

marionette-like movement. Upon approaching Don Friolera, Tadea “pasa fisgona, metiendo el hocico por rejas y puertas,” while “Don Friolera, en el reflejo del quinqué, es un fantoche trágico” (Scene 4). As Tadea and Friolera throw accusations at one another, they continually become less human and more mechanical: “Don Friolera y Doña Tadea riñen a gritos, baten las puertas, entran y salen con los brazos abiertos. Sobre el velador con tapete de malla, el quinqué de porcelana azul alumbra la sala dominguera. El movimiento de las figuras, aquel entrar y salir con los brazos abiertos, tienen la sugestión de una tragedia de fantoches” (Scene 4). In this way, the conflict between Tadea and Friolera, while textually a high melodramatic confrontation, is quickly reduced to a violent farce.

While the majority of visual slights hit Friolera directly, there are also moments when Pachequín and Loreta are ridiculed through distortion. Doña Loreta’s characterization is largely linked to Pachequín’s desire and Don Friolera’s honor. At times the spectator sees glimpses of an individual, but the men’s rhetoric tends to portray her as a male accessory. After meeting and planning their amorous escape, Pachequín proceeds to recite all of the classical imagery employed by the *galán* in order to seduce his *dama*, including the concepts of sacrifice and the burning flame of passion that will never extinguish. Loreta responds in kind by characterizing herself either as seductress, wife or mother. First she proclaims “No puedo abandonar mi obligación de esposa y madre” and later “soy una débil enamorada” (Scene 5). The dialogue is so romanticized that the lovers appear as “cursis románticones” (Cardona 648).

Up until this point, Loreta remains an object of honor for Friolera and the *llama de pasión* for Pachequín, with little agency or individuality. Valle-Inclán supplants the discursive objectification of Loreta with the description of her appearance in the stage directions. During Loreta and Pachequín's last romantic encounter, the barber "penetrates" the orchard in order to visit Loreta on her balcony, where she remains stationary and looking out over the orchard. In this particular scene, there is a great potential for reception ghosting—specifically, the spectator could easily connect the encounter in the orchard to any number of classic Spanish theatrical moments, including Calisto and Melibea's illicit meetings in *Celestina* (1499). However, Valle-Inclán undermines the severity of the scene with ridiculous visual images: "Dona Loreta, con peinador lleno de lazos, sale a la reja, y el galán saca la figura sobre la copa del árbol, negro y torcido como un espantapájaros" (Scene 11). With this visual description of the tryst, Valle-Inclán dehumanizes his lovers with the same visual play of lights and shadows as he did with Tadea and Friolera. Along with Pachequín's stiff appearance, Loreta's image as a flesh and blood woman becomes reduced to her fetishized body parts and the gigantic *peinador*. Along with drawing attention to Loreta as the object of the male gaze, her elaborate hairpiece becomes an accomplice in her overall fetishization: "...el galán la abraza por el talle, bizcando un ojo sobre los perifollos del peinador, por guipar en la vasta amplitud de los senos" (Scene 11). Once again, the potential for the theatrical memory of other *amores imposibles* is thwarted by unconventional visual signs.

As an object of male posturing, Doña Loreta could be considered a tool to satirize the traditional model for the Spanish family. By relegating Dona Loreta to an extremely insignificant state, Valle-Inclán further emphasizes the framing of the adulteress as a contaminated vessel without agency. However, unlike the Romantic tragedians, Valle-Inclán does not attach the hyperbolic threat of societal destruction to the adulteress's body. Within the *esperpentic* distortion, the adulteress offers as much a threat to society as the hungry rat. In this way, Valle-Inclán alludes to the traditional framing of the adulteress only to satirize the lasting obsession with the Baroque model.

Although Valle-Inclán explains textually the visual distortion of the characters in *Cuernos*, the realization of these works as performances added a whole new depth of avant-garde rupture with the director's choices in movement, blocking, costumes, and lighting. The original debuts of the *esperpentos* were largely directed by Rivas Cherif and his group "Los amigos de Valle-Inclán" (Aguilera Sastre y Aznar Soler 237). As the most influential vanguard director of the period, Rivas Cherif's interpretations of Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos* further emphasized the production's visual rupture with the Baroque tragic tradition. When the play debuted in 1926 in the *El Mirlo* theater, the director was just beginning to create his visual manifestation of the *esperpentic* style (his earlier productions were either his own works or adaptations of Spanish classics). However, the debut of *Cuernos* initiated several years of collaboration with Valle-Inclán.



In the 1926 debut, Cherif kept the production on a small scale, depicting only the prologue and epilogue, with a brief poster-board explanation of the *esperpento* itself (242). Not only did Cherif direct the first production; he also lent his voice to the various puppet interruptions throughout the work (Aguilera Sastre y Aznar Soler 114). Despite its small scale, the 1926 production enjoyed the professional status of Cherif's flagship actors and scenic designers—Francisco Vighi, Fernando García Bilbao, and the scenographer / painter Julio Caro Baroja (242). Although Aguilera Sastre and Aznar Soler offer few details as to the specific critical and spectator reactions to the play, they do indicate that the “success” of *Cuernos* incited a rush of theatrical debuts of Valle-Inclán works, including *Ligazón* and *El cántaro rojo* (both produced in 1926). Cherif and his artistic team even chose to renovate the *El Mirlo* for their debut of *Cántaro* (243). Ironically, Valle-Inclán used the renovation and his collaborations to produce classic plays, including Moratín's *Comedia nueva* (Lavaud 238). Even with its classic revivals, *El Mirlo* became rapidly known as the epicenter of the early Spanish avant-garde theater. In this sense, the initial collaborative performance of *Cuernos* was significant in that it founded “Los amigos de Valle-Inclán” and instigated the production side of *esperpentic* experimentation.

Valle-Inclán's visual techniques, combined with the satiric tone of his theater, provide a clear opening to further avant-garde experimentation in the late twenties. His invention and exploration of the *esperpento* during the dictatorship indicates not only his rejection of Primo de Rivera, but also the rejection of stagnated

gender and social norms. In this sense, Valle-Inclán uses *esperpentic* distortion to critique Spain's obsession with antiquated tradition.

In the case of *Los medios seres*, the tradition of the haunted tragedy is thwarted by an entirely new framing of the adulteress. Throughout his unique drama, Gómez de la Serna breaks with several tragic conventions, from the plot trajectory to the use of visual signs systems that impede reception ghosting. Melodramatic gravity is replaced by nonchalance, honor is replaced with moral ambiguity, and myth and history are usurped by a dream-like experience of the present. In this sense, Gómez de la Serna distances himself enough from tragic tradition that the potential for textual or production ghosts is severely restricted.

As the “inventor of Spanish surrealism,” Gómez de la Serna's theater in the late 1920s is a crucial component of Spain's foray into avant-garde theater (Hoyle 13).<sup>56</sup> Specifically, Gómez de la Serna employed a number of aesthetic techniques derived from French surrealism and its founder, André Breton. In general, Breton argued for the exaltation and exploration of the unconscious. Rather than crafting plot, language and visual cues in a realist, logical manner, Breton wished to show the depth of the irrational and the truth of the subconscious mind. In his first surrealist manifesto, he proclaims:

Within the limits to which performance is restricted (or what passes for performance), the dream, according to all outward appearances, is continuous and bears traces of organization. Only memory claims the right to edit it, to

suppress transitions and present us with a series of dreams rather than *the dream* (366).

In order to capture the dream itself for the stage, Breton continually adapted the Freudian technique of “automatic writing” for the theater. As soon as the author awoke from a dream, he was to write the first thoughts or images that lingered from his subconscious, without editing them for logic or conscious reason (371). Thus, the earliest surrealist theater broke with tradition in that no linear development of the drama was necessary in either its texts or sign-systems.

In order to attain the realm of a wholly avant-garde production, there needed to be a visual rupture with logic—a fantastical or irrational theatrical moment that prevented any sort of linear development of plot (Huélamo Kosma 207). This visual jolt could take the form of something as subtle as the actor breaking the forth wall and addressing the spectator, to something as disarming as a floating object or an actor with an animal’s head on a human body.

The aesthetic goal of dramatists such as Gómez de la Serna and Lorca was to attack the spectator’s expectations through disorientation (211). The result is a visual collage of images that break with expectations and a logical reality (212).

Specifically, the visual signs on stage contributed to the rejection of social codes and the exploration of the childish, perverse, or fantastical. Huélamo Kosma explains the social and aesthetic rupture:

Pienso, por ejemplo, en la función de este teatro, destinado a acosar o sacudir al espectador, habituado a su cómodo sentido de la realidad más

convencional y, simultáneamente orientado a subvertir los valores más firmes en que se asienta una civilización que, a fuerza de reprimir lo natural, mágico e irracional del ser humano, se debate entre el tedio y la neurosis.

Consecuentemente, en la glorificación del estado de vida infantil, paralela a la liberación de los componentes eróticos y tanáticos de la personalidad... En la misma línea intencional, se asiste al rechazo de las actitudes lógicas a favor de las gratuitas, negando incluso principios básicos de la razón como el de identidad y el de casualidad (210).

With this description of the Spanish surrealist philosophy, Huélamo Kosma lists several ways in which surrealism promotes a break with theatrical convention—in the form of themes, social behavior, plot, acting styles, scenery and props. The basic tenets of French surrealism, that is, showing the irrational, exploring the dream state, and defying visual logic, became common goals of Gómez de la Serna's aesthetic in his dramas of the late twenties. Even as early as 1924, Ramón's colleague Fernando Vela described Ramón as cultivating a specifically Spanish surrealism, consisting of “el pensamiento asociativo, que es lo que da una visión mágica del mundo, una visión juvenil” (quoted in Hoyle 11).

Along with the use of surrealist aesthetic, Ramón Gómez de la Serna promoted a rupture with social norms. Specifically, the concept of marriage and gender constructs within marriage came under attack. This attitude derived in part from the radical socialist and anarchist rhetoric on the fringes of Spanish society during the first third of the twentieth century (Scanlon 225, Bizcarrondo 139). In

direct opposition to the submissive *ángel del hogar*, many socialists of the twenties advocated a position of free love for women. If women were to form a collective economic community, they might as freely enjoy a sexual community as well (Scanlon 247). This community promoted the freedom for individuals (including women) to have multiple partners within their community. Charles Fourier, who had actually coined the term of feminism in nineteenth century France, inspired his contemporaries to revisit the concept of free love and independence for women. Some Spanish socialists even went so far as to suggest that matrimony be abolished altogether (Scanlon 225). Fourier's ideas from a century earlier seemed particularly pertinent to Spanish socialists, as many communist and socialist leaders critiqued the hypocrisy of bourgeois family structures. The eminent anarchists Emma Goldman and Frederica Montseny also supported the concept of sexual freedom, and both often characterized traditional marriage as a state in which the wife remained "enslaved" while husbands were free to follow their instincts (247). According to this radical view, both women and men might enjoy multiple partners without suffering the hidden shame of middle-class morality. It is this perspective on sexuality that further encouraged a rupture with social norms in Spanish surrealism.

Whether through his use of surrealist sign-systems or his aversion to traditional gender rhetoric, Ramón Gómez de la Serna provided a crucial template for the Spanish surrealist drama. By the time *Los medios seres* debuted in 1929, Ramón had already produced a vast number of plays and novels, and he was well established as a revered Spanish dramatist.<sup>57</sup> Rather than continuing the comfortable

relationship between himself and the spectator, Gómez de la Serna purposefully broke with the expectations that the typical audience had of his artistic creation. As early as 1924, Ramón had vowed to reject “...el juicio de esas gentes horripilantes que se reúnen en el saloncillo el día del estreno” (*La sagrada cripta* 537). Before the debut of *Medios seres*, the dramatist repeatedly spoke of two artistic urges: to create a completely innovated form of theatrical expression, and to invert the expectations of his frustratingly superficial bourgeois audience. It is for this reason that he often deemed *Los medios seres* “una obra de transición” (Herrero Vecino 63).<sup>58</sup>

Ramón’s general disgust towards his bourgeois audience most certainly influenced his decision to focus on marriage and adultery in this “transitional” play. What better way to create avant-garde rupture, then by presenting a portrait of the “normal” Spanish husband and wife, and then break the conventions or expectations naturally connected with the concept of marriage? This rupture is heightened by the taboo activities that the characters contemplate, all of which are considered (at least within the tragic tradition) to have dire consequences. Rather than condemn the characters for their socially unacceptable / dangerous behavior, Gómez de la Serna merely presents a *tableau* of a normal day in a bourgeois marriage, including the desire for sexual experimentation. This unconventional framing of adultery directly breaks with the spectator’s expectations. Unlike former tragedies, the sexual and social experimentation of the married protagonists have little if any effect on the family, society or Spanish national identity. In this way, Ramón creates rupture in part by defying the tragic formula altogether and alienating his audience.

Beyond his incorporation of controversial social ideas, Ramón clearly wished for a break from theatrical tradition in general. Unlike the tragedians twenty years earlier, Ramón did not pursue famous actors, companies or directors for his production. Herrero Vecino even describes Ramón's theatrical process in 1929 as relaxed and nonchalant—*Los medios seres* was a work in progress that lacked a specific production timeline (63). When the work debuted in the Teatro Alkazar in 1929, the production had few bells and whistles. The bourgeois pair was played by Margarita Robles and Gonzal Delgrás. Another curious choice was Ramón's decision to debut the play on a Saturday rather than the typical Thursday (Herrero Vecino 64). The result of this unconventional attitude towards the production was resentment, annoyance, and in some cases, admiration from spectators and critics. For the critic Enrique Díez-Canedo, the play lacked both spectator appeal and artistic chops. In his review in *El sol*, Canedo criticized Ramón's lack of direction and purpose in the production's movement and blocking (67). Moreover, the aesthetic intuition of the author, said Canedo, was “intelectual y plástica.” Generally, the primary critical complaint was the lack of a logical or well-developed plot, and the spectators disliked the vulgarity of the production (Herrero Vecino 65). One social commentary of the theater of the day described the mixed response towards the controversial debut. Joked columnist Luis de Tapia, “El público se dividió, como los actores, en blanco y negro” (65). Although a handful of spectators may have appreciated Ramón's experimentation, the majority of the public misunderstood the surrealist aesthetic or resented the sexual subversion that the characters

contemplated. The result was a break with the Spanish theatrical tradition and all of the spectator expectations that go with it.

Despite the complexity of visual sign-systems in the drama, the plot of the work is quite simple: a married couple celebrates their wedding anniversary by holding a party in their apartment, and the guests proceed to gossip and wax poetic on the institution of marriage. As the party progresses, both Lucía and Pablo are tempted by adultery—Fidel, a friend of the couple, propositions Lucía, and Pablo lusts after Margarita, the most eccentric guest. The play ends with the four would-be lovers making a toast after the party.

Although Ramón's plot appears to have a semblance of a logical development, the way in which the characters react to their desire defies the traditional formula of a tragedy. Specifically, he has presented the spectator with morally questionable topics (adultery and erotic exploration) without condemning the characters. Ramón rejects textual haunting by denying the spectator the key landmarks of an honor tragedy—neither Lucía nor Fidel expresses illicit desire, Pablo does not suspect an affair and ignores possible dishonor, there is no moment of recognition, and no blood is spilled. In other words, Ramón completely sidesteps the typical tragic trajectory that dominated the Spanish stage for centuries. Of course, Ramón's intention was not to create an honor tragedy; nonetheless, his spotlight on female adultery might automatically suggest to the spectator that a familiar plot is in store. Instead, the image of female adultery is framed as a complete contradiction to the traditional Baroque framing: Lucía is not a threat, either to blood lineage or



society in general; moreover, her adulterous actions have no negative consequences. Beyond creating a momentous break with tradition, Gómez de la Serna debunks the Spanish bourgeois perception of female adultery as a source of societal destruction. The refusal to either condemn or pardon Lucía acts as a skewering of bourgeois social norms and the concept of what is “moral behavior.” Not only does Ramón defy expectations, he also uses the controversial framing as a way of disorienting and infuriating his typical spectator.

This attitude towards sexuality is compounded by the inclusion of a non-sensical prologue. Before the spectator sees either Lucía or Pablo, the *Apuntador* enters in order to “explain” both the nature of marriage and adultery, as well as the meaning of “medios seres.” At first, the *Apuntador*’s speech seems to make sense, as he argues that the individual is a half until he or she finds the other half in a suitable mate. Upon becoming whole, the individual is restless and drawn to adultery. El *Apuntador* proclaims: “El defecto de ser enterizo provoca el adulterio...” (Prologue). As the prologue progresses, the logical argument of the *Apuntador* dissolves into contradictions and irrational explanations. Even he is unable to distinguish between who is a “medio ser” and who is a “ser enterizo,” and ends his explanation with a mystical statement: “quizás, gracias a la entrevisión de la verdad que ensaya esta comedia, se verá claro que este dulce lado inacabado es el que poetiza a los humanos.” Along with disorienting the audience, the odd prologue sets the stage for an examination of sexuality and adultery that is strangely separated from the age-old condemnation of the adulteress. If adultery is a natural inclination

of the *ser enterizo*, Ramón argues that female adultery may be as natural or harmless as love itself.

A large part of Ramón's thematic rupture with the tragic tradition is his focus on Lucía as an individual with full agency. Lucía does not adhere to the Baroque framing of the adulteress—that is, the immobile contaminating vessel or the guilty, self-condemning martyr. Rather, Lucía is presented as a typical individual that is vaguely unsatisfied with her marriage. As a result, the adulteress construct loses all of its haunting potency. Because much of the imagery and dialogue pertain directly to Lucía's role as wife and mother, Ramón's analysis offers a feminine perspective on the state of Spanish society. Both Lucía and Pablo have adulterous yearnings; both have romantic pasts and sexual drives, and both have the potential to be unfaithful at any moment. Not only is the opportunity equally available, but the judgment of both characters appears to be more or less equal. Ramón consistently maintains a nonchalant and non-judgmental tone—the subtext of the play (as revealed in the couple's thoughts as well as the guests' discussion) is that adultery is completely natural and perhaps even warranted. Fidel supports his theories on adultery by criticizing marriage: “¿O es que creéis que es una fiesta solemnizar un año más, cuando sois como esos condenados sobre los que acumulan tres o cuatro cadenas perpetuas?” (Act I, Scene XIV). If indeed Lucía suffers from an overly content marriage, Fidel is more than happy to be her “médico de tu alegría”—in other words, he may temporarily cure her of the married boredom. In the open context of the work, the deviation from convention becomes the best step to renew

and maintain pleasure and interest. It is this attitude towards sex and adultery that provides a new portrait for the Spanish adulteress. Lucía does not contemplate adultery as an act of revenge against a womanizing husband—her desire exists in a parallel fashion with Pablo’s lust. The fact that Margarita attracts Pablo does not inspire a jealous act of revenge. Rather, her adulterous musings merely stem from curiosity, boredom and desire. In this sense, Ramón does not censure either party for their adulterous thoughts. The lack of condemnation by the dramatist (or at least one of his wise characters) would most certainly frustrate an audience that had become accustomed to the Echegarian, bourgeois formula, particularly the hyperbolic confrontations between transgressor and victim. Thus, Ramón continually defies spectator expectations by neutralizing the honor crisis so entrenched in the Spanish tragic tradition.

This rebellious spirit is not merely limited to adultery; it extends to the female experience in general. Along with supporting free love, Ramón also creates empathy for Lucía and oppressed wives in general. As many of the characters observe, women are trapped in a society where they yearn for the wholeness that matrimony will supposedly provide, but are left disillusioned when the patriarchal system fails to satisfy them or their husbands. In a sense, matrimony is viewed as a method to suck the spirit out of the potentially independent woman. As one party guest remarks, “En cuanto un hombre ve un poco de espíritu de la mujer, quiere corromperlo” (Act II, Scene III). The hope attached to marriage stems from social conventions, as the feminine dialogue makes clear on numerous occasions. While

Margarita hopes to kiss someone like they do “in the movies,” Pura dreams of the romanticism of a wedding anniversary. The female characters attach their hopes to the images that surround them, but receive few tangible rewards for believing the social myths. For women, even more so than for their husbands, the escape from the oppressive marriage is tantamount to their emotional survival. This radical position on sex and its importance in a wife’s life provides a key component of Ramón’s theatrical innovation and his clear departure from the patterns of the honor tragedy.

It is clear that these discourses regarding female adultery fly in the face of the traditional condemnation of the adulteress. *Los medios seres* is one of the few (if only) dramas between 1830-1930 where no member of the erotic triangle dies. Instead, illicit desire is absorbed into the quotidian actions of the couple. As a result, little social or familial disaster is put into motion, and no vengeance is contemplated or enacted. Because he refuses the tragic template, Ramón has already separated himself from tradition with just the words on the page. However, Ramón also creates rupture through his use of bizarre images.

The strangest visual moments in the play have to do with the fractured nature of the characters—that is, the visual manifestation of their state as a “medio ser.” As the curtain rises on the first act, the spectator sees Lucía and Pablo acting in an ordinary fashion, but wearing startling costume and makeup: “Lucía, con traje de casa, mitad negro y mitad malva, aparece sentada junto a la mesa de tapete amarillo. Pablo, su esposo, aparece con un batín, mitad color ladrillo y la otra mitad negro” (Scene I). Although the two main characters interact normally, their harlequin-like

appearance distracts the audience from the quotidian and acts as a constant reminder of the fractured nature of the characters. Along with the married couple, the majority of the guests wear a half-and-half costume. This visual display of the incomplete individual is juxtaposed with the quotidian conversations of friends and lovers. As the *Apuntador* explained, the characters are not aware of their own visual / psychological state, and it is the spectator's privilege to discern who is complete and who is not. The stark contrast of black and white acts as a visual metaphor for the characters' own psychological duality—including the mix of erotic fantasies with the restrictions of social convention. In this sense, the divided actors emphasize the conscious exploration of the subconscious and the sometimes ambiguous division between the two.

While Lucía and Pablo are the most starkly divided of the characters, nearly every other character has his or her own visual marking as a “medio ser.” Some of the speaking roles have flamboyant “medio” costuming that reflects their characters. Margarita's costume, for example, gives an even more hyperbolic visual ridiculousness to the party. As she enters suddenly at the beginning of Act II, Scene III, the stage directions indicate the loudness of her introduction to the spectators: “En medio de la expectación de todos entra Margarita, medio ser vestido con un jersey extraño y falda de puntas y colgantes. Entra como una tromba y tira el azucarero.” Despite the loudness of Margarita's entrance, Ramón makes nearly every character's appearance as visually distracting as his protagonists. For example, several of the party guests don't even have names, and are distinguishable

only by color or pattern. The nameless friends appear in symbolic colors, each of whom offers an enigmatic or philosophical opinion regarding love, marriage and sex. Often they attach symbols to their witticisms, as when Azul compares clocks with the perception of life: “No hay hora más fija que la que está en medio de dos relojes” (Act I, Scene XIII). Because the “others” observe and offer the clearest philosophy on human existence, their position is perhaps the most critical to the thematic and stylistic goal of the work. For example, el Medio Ser de Rayas offers this ditty on the nature and quality of woman: “...quise decir que hay que alabar a las mujeres, adelantándose a cómo serán cuando sean ángeles” (Act II, Scene V). The otherworldly feel of the beings not only helps to create a dreamy, erotic tone to the work, but also lends support to their philosophical commentaries on love and marriage.

Along with the visual trope of the divided individual, Ramón peppers his domestic scenes with irrational or fantastical moments. Thematically, time becomes a central concern of the characters—after all, the setting is an anniversary celebration that measures the worth of marriage with time. Rather than merely reiterating this theme with dialogue, Ramón includes symbols of time on stage that are out of proportion with the quotidian actions of the characters. The first image that the audience sees after the Apuntador’s prologue, in fact, is an enormous desk calendar: “En la pared del fondo se destacará a la derecha un enorme almanaque del tamaño de un niño de diez años, en que estará pintada la cifra del día” (Act I, Scene I). The pressure of time is literally unavoidable, as the giant calendar looms over the couple

and their guests throughout the play. In order to supplant the time theme, Ramón inserts reference to clocks continually. Lucía herself describes a party guest / potential lover as the face of “mal reloj, o reloj que marca la hora de un país que no es el mío” (Act II, Scene II). Both the images of time and of split identity reinforce the concept of the characters as pressured and restricted by their social duties.

In the first two acts of the drama, the fantastical or playful elements of married life are merely suggested. Visually, Ramón uses a crystal in the living room as a metaphor for trapped erotic exploration. Early in the first act, Lucía holds the crystal and muses: “Estas florecitas encerradas en el cristal, son como nuestro vivir... ¡y qué alegre parece que vive lo que vive tan preso, aunque esté ahogado en diafanidades de cristal!...” (Scene XIV). The promise of releasing “lo ahogado” appears to develop during the party scenes, when both characters enjoy flirtation with the guests. Pura reasserts the erotic possibilities for Lucía when she mentions the purpose of men: “Un hombre no sirve más que para abrir esos frascos de perfume cuyos tapones de cristal están demasiado incrustados” (Act II, Scene II). Although Lucía’s perfume / enclosed flower is not “opened”, the use of the elegant and shining metaphors for female sexuality further rejects the traditional view of feminine desire. According to the age-old tragic imagery, illicit female desire is depicted as a feverish flame, a disease that contaminates every one around her. Ramón completely departs from this framing and replaces the image of female desire with innocuous, alluring signs—the light of crystal, or the scent of flowery perfume. Ramón implies with this

gentle imagery that Lucía not only can get away with adultery, but that such a break with convention is a healthy desire.

Despite the allure of adultery, Lucía does not have an affair with Fidel (at least during the party). Instead, the action is interrupted by a random foray into the protagonist's mind and thoughts. As the party comes to a close, Lucía enjoys a few moments alone, reading. In this scene, the subtle surrealist touches of the opening scenes give way to a highly fantastical and oneiric sequence. As Lucía contemplates the metaphysical questions on her minds, a group of *medio seres* appear out of nowhere, connected to a black string as if they were in a chain gang. In a Valleinclanesque visual moment, Ramón describes their appearance as “farándula de duendes,” marching in line as if the number of philosophical *medio seres* went on infinitely (Act III, Scene III). Each counsels her on the nature of man until Margarita enters and interrupts the metaphysical discussion. The remaining *duendes* wander off, and the action among the erotic quadrangle recommences as if nothing fantastical had occurred. It is as if Lucía had dreamt for a few moments, and then awakened to Margarita's voice, thereby returning to the conscious world. The fantastical scene is not marked as a dream (i.e. Lucía falling asleep and then awakening). Rather, the fantastical and the quotidian are juxtaposed as abruptly as the black/white division of the characters' appearance. As a result, both the characters and the spectators exist somewhere between the conscious world of married life and irrational subconscious musings. This liminality underscores the



fractured nature of the characters, as well as Ramón's rejection of any sort of tragic unity.

Along with his use of surrealist visual techniques, Ramón's overall portrait of the married woman and her erotic temptations depart from any former dramatic structure on the nature of the adulteress. Thematically, Ramón breaks with convention in that Lucía is neither condemned nor pitied, but rather contemplated as an individual. That she sometimes exists on a fantastical plane of reality, or that she appears as a harlequin housewife, only encourages the analysis of her character as a unique individual with justifiable desires. Visually, the surrealist sign-systems either support Lucía's sexual exploration or support a break with spectator expectation in general. In either case, Ramón creates a drama that impedes reception ghosting.

The defiance of traditional tragic structure and gender codes, while in keeping with the avant-garde aesthetic, indicates once again the Spanish avant-garde dramatist's resentment of sexual limitations and his ability to frustrate the expectations of his typically bourgeois audience. In this sense, Gómez de la Serna's unique framing of the adulteress achieves three typically avant-garde goals: disorient the spectator visually, destroy the possibility for either textual or production haunting, and incite bewilderment and / or frustration in the typical Spanish audience.

Whereas the tragedians of earlier generations glorified the traditional models, Valle-Inclán and Gómez de la Serna knocked down the textual and visual markers of the nineteenth-century tragedy. The result was that theatrical haunting (at least from

the Baroque model) finally lost its momentum and its purpose. Rather than retreat into tradition to display modern anxiety, both dramatists barreled into the future by presenting alternative views of gender constructs, social mores, and sexual taboos on stage. Consequently, the spectator had to adapt to the unusual, the disarming, or the irrational, and had little opportunity to reach into his cultural memory. When the opportunity for ghosting arose, as in Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos*, it was distorted as quickly as it had emerged. In this sense, the thematic and semiotic pillars of blood, honor and social destruction were replaced by satire, disorientation, and experimentation. For a brief period in the 1920s, Calderón's ghosts did not haunt the adulteress's image.

### **Epilogue: The Return of the Adulteress in Postwar Drama (1940-1990)**

Despite the complexities of Spanish politics and gender constructs in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the tragedy as theatrical entity varied little from traditional aesthetics, themes and structure. Although Spain was in the process of becoming a “modern” nation, tragedians could not bear to separate themselves from the Calderonian legacy. This remarkable continuity is epitomized by the undeniable thematic and semiotic connection between *El médico de su honra* (1635) and numerous tragedies centuries later. Even more remarkable is the realization that the tragic thread may be found throughout those three hundred years—adapting to the shifting social constructs of a modernizing nation, but still largely Baroque in its formation.

The Spanish preoccupation with the Early Modern honor code in theater created an extension of Baroque tragedy well into the twentieth century. Beyond a few notable aesthetic changes, these tragedians crafted their adulteress tragedies so as to interact explicitly with the Calderonian model. The tragedians who maintained a theatrical tradition understood the significance of spectator recognition within the theatrical process. Along with its usefulness as a catharsis for modern anxiety, the references to well-known works allowed the spectators to connect to the performance through inciting their cultural memory. That each tragedian infused the Baroque model with his own artistic touches and the political context of the period only increases these works’ value as culturally and theatrically significant contributions to the Spanish stage.

Within the overall obsession with the Baroque tragic format, the portrayal of the adulteress as threat or sign of immorality had as much theatrical longevity as any other Baroque technique. Hence, Chapters One, Two and Three examined the way in which the Baroque tragic framing is employed, as well as how each tragedian adapted his framing of the adulteress to his own theatrical aesthetic and sociopolitical context. Chapter Four discussed how this seemingly unbreakable continuity ruptured in the 1920s with the first wave of avant-garde theater on the Spanish stage. In this epilogue, I will briefly explain the use of the adulteress *after* avant-garde rupture—from her appearance in early postwar drama, to her makeover in the plays of democratic Spain.

Upon examining the trajectory of Spanish dramas and tragedies since the civil war, it is obvious that the Baroque tragic model continued to lose its potency after the 1920s. In other words, the haunted constructs that were so prevalent before the civil war did not make an appearance in postwar tragedies. Not only does this division pertain to honor themes and textual haunting, but also the imagery, gestures, and *tableaus* that evoked production ghosting throughout the nineteenth century. The new sign-systems of the postwar drama usually discard the Baroque tragic constructs in favor of a more malleable and complex framing of female adultery.<sup>59</sup>

As I explained in Chapter Four, Valle-Inclán and Gómez de la Serna rejected the centuries-long love affair with the Baroque tragic tradition and the haunting constructs that go with it. This rejection is largely due to the fact that the avant-garde theater is designed to defy spectator's expectations and block the use of cultural

memory. Although the avant-garde does not die completely in Spanish theater, its development is slowed greatly after the Spanish civil war (1936-39). Avant-garde theater groups in the early twentieth century were often associated with socialist (and later Republican) politics, which were quickly suppressed by the Nationalists' victory and the early years of the dictatorship.<sup>60</sup> By the 1940s, dramatists chose a realist style, with the result that the use of textual and production haunting was relevant once again.

After the civil war, Spanish theater consisted of three general dramatic movements: psychological realism during Franco's dictatorship, the re-exploration of avant-garde theater during the Transition (late 70s and early 80s), and a more exploratory version of realism during the first years of Spanish democracy (80s and 90s). This general categorization does not suggest that the theatrical aesthetic was homogenous throughout each period, as each decade brought with it its own subtle sociopolitical changes and nuances that were reflected on the Spanish stage.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, the theatrical aesthetic of the Spanish dramatist was closely linked to the political powers in play at the time of their production, and all three periods reflected the most recent changes in the definitions of Spanish individuality, family, and nationhood.

As a result, the re-emergence of the theatrical adulteress (and in some cases, tragic haunting) was a common occurrence after avant-garde rupture. However, postwar dramatists did not follow the Baroque model as closely as nineteenth-century dramatists had. Although the postwar dramatists may portray great personal

tragedies in their plays, the typical components of an Aristotelian tragedy are largely absent. In this sense, the more general term of drama is more appropriate to describe the theatrical scene after the war. Whereas the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tragedian embraced and exacerbated the melodrama and climactic catharsis of the traditional tragedy, the dramatists of the mid and late twentieth century chose to portray the more intimate problems of middle or lower class Spanish families. In this sense, the crisis of noble blood or bourgeois honor was replaced by other familial problems.

During Francisco Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), the dominant form of Spanish theater was the psychological drama (Zatlin 63). These dramas usually centered on the troubled individual and his dysfunctional / emotionally wounded family. While it was not uncommon for the mid-century dramatist to use expressionist touches in their productions, the overall aesthetic was one of tragic realism. Phyllis Zatlin characterizes postwar psychological realism as dependant upon the "subjective point of view of psychological expressionism" in which "the recurrent theme remains that of guilt and remorse, and the tone is markedly confessional" (63). Within the realist portrait of the suffering family, the typical mid-century dramatist emphasized the perennial post-war crisis—the disastrous effects of "Two Spains."

The dramatists that best exemplified this pattern of tragic realism included Antonio Buero Vallejo, Lauro Olmo, Jaime Salom, and Alfonso Sastre. While these dramatists experienced their first success in the forties and fifties, many of them

continued producing tragic realism well into the seventies, and while the storyline of the plays changed slightly, their overall aesthetic remained the same—the exploration of the social, economic, and psychological problems of the postwar family.

In a very general sense, the dramatists between 1940-1970 do embrace a tragic sensibility—the spectator witnesses the individual’s inevitable downfall, the plot lines rarely deviate from a traditional linear form, and historical dramas are a prolific subgenre during the dictatorship. However, there are key differences that separated the psychological realism of the forties and fifties from nineteenth-century tragedies. While tragedians from earlier generations heartily embraced the Baroque (Calderonian) model, the twentieth century realists crafted their own form of tragedy out of the trauma of the civil war. Martha T. Halsey emphasizes the difference by distinguishing the aesthetic of the poetic tragedians of the early twentieth century with that of the postwar tragedians. While the poetic tragedians are consumed by “lo castizo” or “pure ideals” of past national glory, the postwar tragedians focus on the future of Spain and the potential to exhort “political awareness” (Halsey 93). This “greater political awareness” was the precarious state of the Spanish nation under Franco and the current effect of the dictatorship on people’s daily lives. Thus, the center of the Baroque model (that is, *limpieza de sangre*, lineage, honor) is eclipsed by the postwar fixation on the psychological and economic state of the Spanish family.

Although the roles of wife and mother remained crucial parts of the dramatists' family tragedies, the adulteress was no longer the origin of dishonor or tragedy. It is not uncommon for the wayward wife to appear next to the traumatized or unemployed husband, although it is important to note that it is the traumatized husband, and not the adulterous wife, who became the thematic or semiotic center of the drama. In other words, female adultery, while still looked down upon, is an incidental symptom of the larger family struggle with mental health, poverty, social oppression, etc. The adulteress gradually becomes an effect of post-war crisis rather than the initial contaminator or receptacle of dishonor. This particular framing of the adulteress appears in the postwar tragedy, and in some cases, the tragic farce or bourgeois comedy.

The Spanish dramas of the forties and fifties use adultery as a symbol of general familial strife. It is often the case that both husbands and wives commit adultery out of economic or social desperation, and both are pitied or forgiven as victims of circumstance. A good example of postwar, angst-ridden adultery is portrayed in *Historia de una escalera* (1949). In this acclaimed example of tragic realism, Buero Vallejo presents the spectator with the would-be lovers Carmina and Fernando, who marry others out of necessity but always pine after one another. It is unclear as to whether they consummate their relationship, but the angst-filled climax of the work manifests itself through the pair's emotional affair and their realization that their children (aptly named Carmina and Fernando), have decided to marry each



other against their parents' wishes. Here illicit desire (whether of youth or middle-aged adultery) mirrors the desire to escape from poverty and obligation.

Although examples of both male and female adultery appear throughout the dictatorship, perhaps the most revealing and subversive portrait of the adulteress occurs during 1960s. Whereas the adulteress was a supporting character in the literature of the forties and fifties, the wayward wife takes on a more aggressive and prominent role in a handful of dramas and comedies. Rather than reiterate the formula of tragedy or historical drama, these dramatists confront adultery through other generic forms—that is, farce, or drama with touches of humor. The departure from the severity of the traditional tragedy provides a satirical look at the impractical or ridiculous nature of gender constructs within traditional marriage. It is this perspective on the adulteress that Carlos Muñiz and Victor Ruiz Iriarte explore in their influential works *El tintero* (1961) and *Juego de niños* (1962). Rather than condemning the adulteresses as stereotypical Jezebels, both dramatists offer a unique defense of their adulteresses and women in general. In one way or another, both adulteresses are justified and instigated at the time of their transgression. The potentially subversive tone of these works echoes a small but significant wave of rebellion against Francoist ideals in the sixties. Specifically, dramatists are quick to point out the weaknesses in the dominant gender discourse and its failure to guard the well-being of the Spanish family.

In the theatrical realm, a big portion of the success of both dramatists (Muñiz and Ruiz Iriarte) was their ability to satirize Francoist politics and shine a

moral spotlight on the Spanish lifestyle. In this way, the allusion to antiquated honor codes in postwar drama becomes a basis for social criticism rather than a method of haunting; as a result, the adulteress of this period fails to evoke the powerful textual or production ghosts that were such common ingredients of the Romantic and Neoromantic tragedies.

As the expectations and regulations of *franquismo* are more firmly drilled into the Spanish consciousness, the postwar dramatists use adultery to subvert the myth of the traditional and morally sound Spanish family. Criticism of bourgeois mores, in particular, is very prevalent among the Spanish dramatists of the sixties. Víctor Ruiz Iriarte, known for his popular comedies, consistently uses adultery to pinpoint bourgeois hypocrisy, laziness and immorality.<sup>62</sup> The play that most obviously explores the ramifications of adultery is *Juego de niños* (1962). In this drama, the would-be adulteress's transgressions are a direct response to the unrelenting promiscuity and apathy of their husbands. Although initially reluctant to confront their husbands and society's double standards, both wives avenge themselves by giving their husbands a taste of their own medicine. Part of the comic effect of the productions, in fact, is the audience's delight (as well as the other characters) in seeing the husbands suffer an unexpected loss of honor and control. Eventually, the husbands recuperate their power and status within the family. Nonetheless, the wives are encouraged to challenge the patriarchal constraints around them.

As its title suggests, *Juego de niños* “plays out” the possibility for the woman to have an affair. In fact, the *juego* is the affair—the protagonist and her children “play around” with the double standards of male and female infidelity. In the context of women’s constraints in post-war Spain, *Juego de niños* provides a more feminist perspective on marital expectations and the effects of adultery. The game is incited by Ricardo’s constant infidelity and late night trysts. His wife, Cándida, has chosen to meekly accept the inevitable and therefore feigns ignorance whenever Ricardo sneaks in after a wild night. As witnesses to this injustice, the couple’s children and niece decide to avenge their mother by creating the illusion of an affair between Cándida and their French instructor, Marcelo. Although she is reluctant to deceive her husband, Cándida agrees to participate in the ruse with the hope that Ricardo will refocus love and attention on her.

As is often the case with postwar drama, the fantasy of the game becomes reality. Although the two lovers do not consummate their love, Cándida does commit emotional adultery. For the first time in several years, she dreams of and experiences another relationship beyond her that of husband. By the end of the play, Cándida has transformed as a result of the game, and realizes the danger of manipulating love. In a cautionary tale to her niece, Cándida pleads “Cuando seas mujer...no juegues...Es tan peligroso poner de prenda el corazón...Lo mejor es tomar lo que nos dé la vida. Risas o lagrimas...” (110). Despite the transformation, Cándida returns to her “legitimate” role of wife and mother. It is unclear whether

either will transgress again, and the ending of the play creates a sense of moral ambiguity.

While the bittersweet retribution of Ruiz Iriarte's heroine provides a satire of bourgeois life in the sixties, the wife in Carlos Muniz's *El tintero* serves as a farcical (yet tragic) example of Francoist oppression of lower class families.<sup>63</sup> Unlike Iriarte's drama, the action in *El tintero* focuses on and sympathizes with the cuckolded husband, Crock. Abused and beaten down from all sides, Crock suffers an interminable series of indignities. At the office, Crock's supervisors deny him both his salary and sick days. His inability to earn money incites a chain of humiliations ranging from his wife's affair to witnessing an unjust charge of assault against his best friend. Eventually, Crock loses everything just before getting hit by a train at the end of the drama. In this sense, the trajectory of the plot is the increased indignities of Crock's life, followed by the climactic indignity—death.

The most obvious point of social criticism depends upon the constant struggle of Crock to exist peacefully and safely within society. Despite his efforts, this simple wish is denied to him—whether at the office or at home, Crock must suffer the torment of an outcast. Although he does not outwardly rebel, his solitary character projects a non-conformist attitude towards his surroundings. In one possible reading, Crock's wife Frida may constitute the familial branch of torture. Thus, she is the shrew that cuckolds him mercilessly, thereby emasculating him and furthering him towards death. Within an expressionist analysis of the work, this assertion could be easily supported by Frida's words and actions. In the domestic

sphere, Frida directs her anger directly towards her husband. Already emasculated by his supervisors, Frida does so further by insulting both his wage-earning ability and his sexual prowess. She even foreshadows her own adultery long before it occurs. At the moment Crock arrives at home, Frida incites him with tales of “conversations” with the young, robust schoolteacher. “¿Y sabes lo que me dijo? Que una mujer como yo necesita un hombre que la abrace y que la pegue cuando llegue el momento....Tú siempre llegas cansado al pueblo...Compréndalo, Crock; necesito un marido...y tú no lo eres” (143). Although Crock attempts a moment of stereotypical masculine strength, Frida continually hints that she will commit adultery. When she departs to meet with the boys’ school teacher for a romantic dinner, Crock exclaims “¡No consentas!,” but Frida consistently rebuts “Es alto y fuerte” (148). Frida’s reply indicates that adultery is inevitable—while the Maestro represents the mythical perception of youth and power, Crock remains the whipping boy of all those around him. He eventually realizes his impotency has pervaded his family, and his only recourse is to shout “(*Gesto de impotencia*): ¡No puedo hacer nada más!” (148).

Unlike the typical cuckolded husband, Crock does not have the opportunity to restore honor through spilt blood. Rather, he is systematically feminized by both his wife and government, resulting in a state of impotency. Although Muñiz does carry over the framing of the adulterous wife as a contaminating element of society, the nineteenth-century solutions that provoke production ghosts (duels, death, weeping, dying scenes with melodramatic monologues) are glaringly absent. The

result is that Crock's impotency and death deny the spectator any opportunity to connect the cuckolded protagonist to his dishonored predecessors of fifty or more years earlier.

Beyond the unique aesthetic of Muñiz's farce, the framing of Crock's wife is not entirely condemnatory. It is possible that Frida, while contributing to Crock's dehumanized state, also experiences her own torment and dehumanization. In effect, she may become a co-victim of society rather than a co-conspirator in Crock's downfall. Frida's victimization stems from her dependence on her husband and her limitations as an individual. Crock's troubles at work create a trick-down effect in which Frida eventually must cope with the depravation and disrespect poured onto her family. Due to her domestic imprisonment, Frida cannot contribute to saving her husband or rescuing her family from poverty. Attached to her husband, she is also attached to his dehumanized, undignified state. There is no escape route available to her (beyond the brief exhilaration of adultery), and she is condemned to drown in social injustice alongside her husband. In this sense, Frida is not the center of social destruction (as were many of the nineteenth century adulteresses); rather, she is a product of Francoist poverty and desperation.

Because the adulteress is used as a tool of social criticism, the theatrical conventions associated with her (including haunting constructs) change drastically in the second half of the twentieth century. The more prolific use of the adulteress in 1960s drama further separates the postwar tragedies from the Baroque tragic tradition. Not only are the dramatists avoiding Baroque conventions, they are also

subverting the traditional values within marriage so that the adulteress is an entirely different theatrical construct. The primary difference is that she is the effect of societal destruction rather than its cause, and this dramatically different portrait of the adulteress on stage prevents much of the traditional haunting from occurring. The shift in theme also creates a shift in theatrical sign systems—everything from language and gestures to set design. One has only to compare the luxurious salons of the 1890s melodramas with the stark, run-down apartments of *Historia de una escalera* or the dark, oppressive factory in *El tintero* to sense the contrast in the dramatist's use of visual signs and production ghosts.

The continual break with the Baroque tragic model continues in the dramas of the seventies and beyond. The development of the Spanish theater immediately after Franco falls into two categories: the continued development of the realist / historical drama, and the second explosion of avant-garde experimentation. The most prolific avant-garde dramatists during this period were Luis Riaza and Fernando Arrabal, who resuscitated Spanish surrealism while also including theatrical techniques from Artaud's theater of cruelty and French absurdist theater.<sup>64</sup> Some dramatists, including Fermín Cabal and Francisco Nieva, incorporated avant-garde techniques into their realist plays well into the eighties.<sup>65</sup> Like their predecessors from the twenties, the avant-garde dramatists eschewed both aesthetic and thematic convention. It is no surprise, then, that the avant-garde dramatists of the period rejected the reverence of national myth and history. As a result, the

second wave of Spanish avant-garde was just as resistant to haunting as the surrealist dramas of the twenties and thirties.

Remarkably, the use of the adulteress as a central dramatic convention makes a big come-back in the realist dramas of the late eighties and nineties—specifically, in those plays written and produced by *female* dramatists. In the late eighties, several female dramatists gained popularity with their portraits of the Spanish woman in crisis, and many continued to write popular plays well into the nineties. This group of female dramatists includes Concha Romero, Carmen Resino, Lidia Falcón, Paloma Pedrero, and María Manuela Reina. For these dramatists, the problems of post-Franco excess still present the biggest conflicts among the characters, but the question of female adultery (its social causes and its effect on the family) suddenly becomes a key symptom of that excess. Moreover, the exploration of female agency and sexuality takes center stage as it never had before. The exploration of the Spanish woman's sexuality (and the limitations on that exploration) becomes a centerpiece of realist dramas written by women.

The critics who have consistently analyzed the feminist dramas of this period (John Gabriele, Patricia O'Connor, Peter Podol, and Iride Lamartina-Lens) tend to focus on the female dramatists' portrayals of gender transgression. In many cases, the transgression takes the form of both male and female homosexuality and transvestism, as well as complex erotic triangles among the characters. While these aspects of the dramas are crucial for the subversion of traditional gender roles, the simple act of adultery may also constitute an act of feminist rebellion. Often the



portrayal of the adulteress works in tandem with other forms of gender subversion, thereby resulting in a sexual free-for-all where gender identity is at least temporarily inverted or questioned.

Paloma Pedrero, in particular, questions the Spanish construct of woman (and in many cases, wife) in most of her short dramas and full length productions. Her drama *El color de agosto* (1989) is striking in that Pedrero intertwines the adulteress with lesbian eroticism, female homosociality, and a multidirectional erotic triangle.<sup>66</sup> The play consists of a married painter (María) who expects a visit from her long-time friend Laura. Once Laura enters María's studio, it is clear that the women's relationship goes far beyond mere friendship. At first their dynamic is one of a mother-daughter relationship, as María coddles Laura and offers to pay her rent in the city. As the women begin to discuss the past, however, their relationship exists somewhere between the realm of fiercely competitive rivals and passionate lovers. Initially the conversation is centered on the men in their lives—for María, it is the boring, comfortable relationship with her husband; for Laura, it is her exciting affair with a married man. As the two argue over the worth of their relationships, the energy between the women escalates from competition to sexual tension. The ambiguity of the women's relationship and sexual desire reaches a climax when the two friends kiss, then disrobe and paint each other's bodies, all the while insulting one another. After this display of passion, one may assume that the primary subversion of the piece is the women's discovery of their repressed passion for one another. The true crux of the action, however, is revealed when Laura discovers that

her married lover José is actually María's husband. Thus, Laura is not only an adulteress, but also an epicenter for various forms of sexual energy.

With this twist at the end of the drama, the spectator is unsure as to how Laura (or for that matter, María or José) is framed semiotically. In other words, are María and Laura meant to be theatrical exemplars of lesbians, adulteresses, or both? Part of Pedrero's inversion of gender norms is that the class of character remains ambiguous—both women incarnate various roles at different moments in the dramatic action. In this sense, the women's position as adulteresses is just as important in the subversion of traditional gender constructs as is their experimentation with lesbian eroticism.

Along with the numerous role reversals, the spectator is left confused as to which action, if any, constitutes immorality. Laura's supposedly illicit desire flows in two directions—the typical consummated relationship with a married man, and the latent lesbian desire towards her best friend. By indulging in either desire, Laura cheats on the third member of the erotic triangle. It could also be argued that upon engaging in erotic moments with her friend, María also becomes an adulteress (or, at least, an accomplice of illicit desire). However, neither action is condemned decisively—rather, female adultery becomes a sort of psychological and physical exploration of the unknown and prohibited. If Laura is to be condemned, it is for her betrayal of her best friend rather than the nature of her sexual exploits. This portrait of the adulteress is unique in its complexity: the adulteress/es are neither condemned nor exalted, and their actions don't require a reinstatement of social norms. The

ultimate portrayal of female adultery, like the women's relationship in general, remains enticingly ambiguous throughout the play. In this sense, Pedrero uses the adulteress to explore the sexual and psychological complexities of the Spanish woman in the post-Franco era.

While not as innovative as Paloma Pedrero's framing of the adulteress, María Manuela Reina also investigates the meaning of female adultery within the context of Spanish democracy. In many ways, Manuela Reina's works are reminiscent of the postwar psychological dramas of the dictatorship, in which female adultery is portrayed as a symptom of general moral degradation and desperation. However, Manuela Reina adapts the traditional postwar portrait so that it is filtered through a young woman's eyes rather than the middle-aged male protagonist. The result is that her framing of the adulteress exists somewhere between the spectrum of traditional and feminist.

In her dramas *El pasajero de la noche* (1987) and *La cinta dorada* (1988), Manuela Reina creates a familiar scene on the Spanish stage—that is, the dysfunctional family whose members dabble in inappropriate sexual relationships. In *Pasajero*, the dramatist portrays an emotionally destructive night in which rich couples are forced to confess their transgressions against one another during a public party. The *pasajero* is Juan, a disgruntled employee who vows revenge on the company CEO and party host Javier Iturbi by seducing the important women in his life. After succeeding in seducing Javier's wife Julia and his daughter Gabriela, Juan interrupts the party in order to reveal both his boss's indiscretions and his own

vengeful seductions. Over the course of the evening, Juan explains that Javier, in the midst of multiple affairs, seduced Juan's wife Elena. It is also discovered that along with his regular affairs with Julia and Gabriela, Juan accidentally slept with another promiscuous married woman at the party, Matilde. At this point in the drama, the reaction to the multiple affairs ranges from disgusted horror to blasé acceptance. The more the truth is revealed, the more Juan flounders in his goal to destroy and humiliate the family. Eventually, Julia and Matilde proclaim their sexual freedom and assert their right to as many lovers as their philandering husbands. At the play's conclusion, even Gabriela puts aside her resentment and asserts that she too will enjoy sexual freedom. By the last scene, the women have embraced adultery despite the men's uneasiness.

Like many of the postwar dramas, each character in *Pasajero* is complicit in the overall dissolution of fidelity and morality. What is unique is the change in tone and theme as the drama progresses. Initially, the play appears to be a democratic rendition of an honor tragedy, complete with contamination of the family, vengeance, and male confrontation. Jeffrey Bruner even goes so far as to suggest that *Pasajero* offers a postwar link to the Baroque tragic thread (49).

Despite its seemingly Baroque premise, *Manuela Reina* does offer a questioning of the adulteress's role in Spanish society. Over the course of the drama, the female characters' sexual emancipation dominates the action. This transition does not suggest that *Manuela Reina* condones adultery, but rather that Spanish woman should no longer uphold the double standards of traditional marriage. In this

sense, Manuela Reina initially frames the adulteress as a victim and contaminated receptacle of Javier's honor / power, but eventually allows for a different perspective of the adulteress—as a post-Franco, feminist champion of sexual equality.

While not as explicitly displayed as in *Pasajero*, the adulteresses in *La cinta dorada* are also framed as courageous warriors against Francoist traditionalism and stagnation. In this work, Manuela Reina offers a female protagonist, and as a result, this play garnered more support from audiences and critics alike. Unlike his lukewarm reception of *Pasajero*, Peter Podol indicated in his analysis of *Cinta* that it deserved its year-long run in the 1989-90 Madrid theater season (23). Once again, Manuela Reina presents a family in which nearly every married person has cheated or been cheated on. In this family, the patriarch Eduardo celebrates his birthday with his wife Emilia and his four children—Ramón, Ernesto, Javier and Adela. For the majority of the drama, the action is focused on the male adulterers and their psychological turmoil. Each son offers a different portrait of traditional Spanish masculinity—Ramón is a stoic and devote bishop, Ernesto is a womanizing, rich businessman, and Javier is a celebrated intellectual. As the brothers reveal their problems, it appears that the play will focus on the plight of the post-Franco man and his navigation of changing social norms and politics. By the second act, however, Manuela Reina has shifted the focus to Adela, who rather than incarnating a conservative Falangist daughter / wife, has defied her gender boundaries and enjoys the same freedoms (and therefore suffers the same psychological turmoil) as her brothers. This rebellion incites the primary conflict of the work between father and

daughter—Eduardo expects and demands that his daughter behaves traditionally, while Adela continually asserts her social and sexual freedoms. The conflict is intensified by Adela's past crisis as well, including a teenage pregnancy and abortion. The spectators discover later that the father was Adela's brother Ramón, and the children have lived with the painful secret of incest their whole lives. With this revelation, the actions that were once interpreted as an explicit betrayal of female duty acquire a darker tone of psychological damage.

While the rift between father and daughter is never completely resolved, Adela's mother Emilia manages to provide therapeutic counsel in the final scenes of the drama: first, she reveals that she knew Adela's secret and forgave her, and secondly, that she herself had an adulterous affair during Eduardo's age of philandering. This ultimate "confession" confirms what the spectator had suspected all along—that the older generation under Franco participated in the same indiscretions but had managed to repress the truth about their moral violations.

In this way, Manuela Reina contends that adultery, unwanted pregnancy, and incest are not sudden phenomena of a reckless democratic generation, but rather part of a perennial Spanish problem. Moreover, these problems do not stem from the wayward wife, but rather are symptoms of the overall family / society in which the women try to survive. Once again, Manuela Reina presents a traditional premise for the discussion of women's roles, and then manages to question those roles through the female characters' explorations of their past.

Along with the addition of feminist discourses in recent Spanish drama, the framing of the adulteress as explorer or crusader indicates a new direction in the theatrical portrayal of the Spanish adulteress. While the age of the Baroque tragic model finally ended in the 1920-30s, the relation of the adulteress to family and society continues to be a fruitful basis for theatrical exploration. That the possibility for the haunting adulteress lessens substantially in the twentieth century does not suggest the banishment of the adulteress from the Spanish stage. Spanish dramatists still look to find not only the causes of adultery, but also its effect on social morality and women's roles in society. As female characters continue to break out of the prescribed Baroque constructs, the relationship between the adulteress and Spanish society becomes more complex and ambiguous. Contemporary dramatists continue to question whether adultery is immoral, and whether the adulteress herself is a tangible, physical threat, or rather a discursive invention of Spain's traditional past. More recently, dramatists have confronted the double standards between male and female sexuality, and have put forth possible acts of gender rebellion. Thus, the adulteress remains a useful theatrical construct that will undoubtedly evolve with the political and social changes of twenty-first century Spain.

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the classically tragic elements in the works mentioned, I will be referring to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century case studies as tragedies. However, because Ramón del Valle-Inclán and Ramón Gómez de la Serna break with tragic conventions and defy most if not all of the Aristotelian rules, I refer to the works in Chapter Four as avant-garde drama.

<sup>2</sup> Many of the prominent theories of haunting derive in part from Marxist literary theory. In her book *Ghostly Matters* (1997), Avery Gordon proclaims that cultural ghosts are signs of a sociopolitical haunting, something as simple as a missing person or as complex as a social site in which “history and subjectivity make social life” (8). This concept of the ghost as social messenger also appears in one of Derrida’s final texts, *Specters of Marx* (1993). The majority of Derrida’s theory is focused on society’s longing to resuscitate Marxism as a political and social system (4, 17). Within the context of Spain, Jo Labanyi extends Derrida’s view of political ghosting to Spanish “modern” history—that is, the process by which Spaniards attempted to form a viable notion of a nation. During the nineteenth century, the concept of nationality depended upon mainstream, bourgeois capitalism and artistic production. Thus, any artistic production that defied the mainstream definition (that is mass / low cultural production or regional art) was either marginalized or “ghosted”—in Labanyi’s terms, “forcibly disappeared” from the literary canon. These ghosts became more visible after Franco’s dictatorship, when socialist politics combined with postmodern theories of literature (12-13).

<sup>3</sup> The years from 1836-1840 were the most prolific for Antonio García Gutiérrez. In 1837 he also produced *El rey monge*, a “historical” tragedy, and in 1840 a lesser known tragedy *El encubierto de Venecia*. Although *El trovador* undoubtedly captured the most critic and popular attention in his career, he also enjoyed late success with *Simón Bocanegra* (1843). Much later in his career, after the Romantic tragic fervor had subsided substantially, García Gutiérrez wrote two final plays—*Venganza catalana* (1864) and *Juan Lorenzo* (1865).

<sup>4</sup> The male penetration of female space in *Celestina* has been commented upon by several critics, including Deborah Ellis, George Shipley, and E. Michael Gerli. Shipley, in particular, describes the specific trope of the male protagonist invading the sexually marked garden or orchard, a convention that derives in part from *El libro de buen amor*. In a more recent article, Consuelo Arias cites Calisto’s penetration of Melibea’s space as one of many sexual subversions in *Celestina*, where female spaces “se abren, se hacen permeables, y se contaminan de otras formas de vida socialmente prohibidas” (369).

<sup>5</sup> Serrano Asenjo further argues that *Macías* constitutes an aesthetic turning point in the development of Romantic tragedy. Although Larra still embraces verisimilitude and the three unities (based in Neoclassic style), his hyperbolic display of the characters’ emotions “sets the stage” for García Gutiérrez’s aesthetic later in the decade (343).

<sup>6</sup> Along with the use of medieval frames in some Romantic tragedies, historians availed themselves of glorified notions of medieval history in the early nineteenth century. Philip Silver notes how Romantic historians recast Iberian nationality through the remembrance of the Reconquest (28-9). The use of history as allegory for the present is not limited to Spanish Romantic tragedies—in fact, British tragedians often used recent Spanish history as a favorite frame for their own hyperbolic Romantic themes (Saglia 22, 25).

<sup>7</sup> René Andioc estimates that roughly 50% of plays produced in the early eighteenth century were *refundiciones* of Calderón’s dramas (17). Even as late as the 1795-96 season, dramatists staged at least 32 revivals of Golden Age works (Cook 237).



<sup>8</sup> In his discussion of the *refundición*, Javier Vellón Lahoz contends that the popularity and prolific production of Golden Age works in Neoclassical theater provided a crucial link between the *comedia* and Romantic drama or comedy. Specifically, the dramatists who produced the *refundiciones* maintained an intertextuality with Baroque works, but also acted as precursors to early Romantic dramatists such as Manuel Bretón de los Herreros and Eugenio Hartzenbusch (171). Both Rull and Vellón Lahoz indicate a sense of thematic consistency across two centuries of Spanish theater—from the conventions of the Baroque masters to the earliest foray into Romantic theater.

<sup>9</sup> Within the context of 1830s, modern liberalism has been defined as the rejection of absolutism and Carlos V's potential regime, as well as the development of a strong bourgeoisie and market economy. The liberal's platform presaged the tenants of the Glorious Revolution of 1868, particularly with the emphasis on direct / expanded suffrage, better representation for the middle and lower classes, and explicitly stated freedom of the press and of religion (Sans Puig 7-8). During the strongest years of liberal revolution (1835-1837), one of the primary goals of liberalism was redistributing Church lands to the poor (Seco Serrano 112). Beyond their political goals, the Spanish liberalism of the 1830s was most characterized by the desire to form a capitalist market economy, complete with industry and a well-nurtured bourgeoisie (Ringrose 303).

<sup>10</sup> My focus is exclusively on the Romantic tragedy on stage, but it is important to note that poetry also flourished during Spanish Romanticism. However, full length novels were not common or popular until later in the nineteenth century.

<sup>11</sup> Although the debut of *Don Álvaro* is commonly used as a marker for the beginning of liberal Romanticism in Spain, there remains debate as to whether Spanish Romantic theater existed before the 1830s. Some critics, such as Philip Silver, contend that the tendency to equate Spanish Romanticism with 1830s liberalism belies the vast amount of Romantic works that were developed before Fernando VII's death, as well as those Romantic authors that were anti-liberal during the 1830s (3, 7). Ivy McClelland, for her part, emphasizes the continuity between sentimental Neoclassical drama in the late eighteenth century and the more widespread Romantic drama in the early nineteenth century (224). In this sense, *Don Álvaro* is not "the beginning" of all Romantic expression in Spain, but rather a key model for Romantic tragedy in this particular decade.

<sup>12</sup> Although Don Álvaro is undeniably the primary subject and protagonist of the tragedy, it may also be argued that Leonor is more than a mere object of male desire. At times, Leonor acquires an agency that indicates her own development as a parallel subject. María Lourdes Bueno Pérez suggests that Leonor's use of typical romantic discourse allows her a position of individual strength in which she temporarily defies male subjugation and the Baroque model of femininity (114-5).

<sup>13</sup> In her article "Liberal Romanticism and the Female Protagonist in *Macías*," Kirkpatrick analyzes the complexity of Elvira's position in the play. On the one hand, she is able to express her desire and participates in the relationship as an individual subject. For much of the tragedy, in fact, Elvira enjoys a parallel subjectivity to the male protagonist (54). However, the scorn of her father and brother relegate her to the position of object and martyr by the play's conclusion—ultimately, her body and subjectivity become the property of the men in the tragedy (55).

<sup>14</sup> The popularity of *El trovador* is evident in that the audiences called García Gutiérrez to the stage during the performance, a tribute that had never been given a Romantic dramatist in Spain (Surwillo 48). For her part, Lisa Surwillo argues that the strong audience reaction to *El trovador* was not necessarily due to the newness of the Romantic aesthetic—after all, *Don Álvaro* already provided Spaniards with their introduction to Romantic tragedy. Surwillo contends that a large part of the audience's reaction had to do with the popularity of liberalism—specifically, Spaniards in 1836 had

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embraced the tenets of the new sociopolitical system, and they connected the Romantic spirit of the tragedy to the emergence of the individual in society (49). In this sense, the spectators' political fervor spilled over into their reception of theater.

<sup>15</sup> Rather than maintain a convention-driven acting style, the Romantics longed for a “realistic” expression of life and emotion. As José Zorilla proclaimed during the rehearsals for the Conservatorio, the art of acting needed to be “más que fingir” (Caldera 240). In order to be emotionally invested in the protagonist, the Romantics combined hyper-emotional tone with a nineteenth-century sense of verisimilitude (Caldera 238). The authors themselves often employ what Eric Bentley describes as melodramatic stage directions—that is, those italicized instructions that describe *how* an actor should say or do something rather than merely mentioning *what* he or she should do in the logistical sense (24).

<sup>16</sup> In order to effectively fill the space with stimulating sets and scenery, Spanish dramatists recognized the need to develop artistic skills quickly. The skills honed during this period developed from two equally important sources: the master of theatrical administration, José Grimaldi, and the Italian and French designers who were hired to create elaborate visual landscapes. With new funds, Spanish directors hired foreign painters like Blanchard and Esquivel to design their elaborate backdrops (Caldera 253). As the impresario and director of multiple theaters in Madrid, José Grimaldi managed to renovate the Spanish theater with his popular *comedias de magia* and an impressive restructuring of the theater's administrative techniques (Gies *Grimaldi* 1-3). For David Gies, Grimaldi's artistic and financial rejuvenation of the Spanish theater set the standard of excellence for dramatic production through the nineteenth century (*Theater* 10, 72-3). With so many technical advances, it is hardly surprising that the emotional impact of visual sign-systems increased significantly during the height of Spanish Romantic theater.

<sup>17</sup> *Don Álvaro*, for example, calls for the portrayal of over seven settings, ranging from a convent room to the stormy cliffs of Álvaro's climatic suicide. A great motivation for the use of multiple locations was the storytelling and thematic impact of space on stage. The use of space, like any other visual sign in Romantic theater, was meant to provoke the spectators' sensorial perception and to mark the protagonists' literal and figurative journeys (Ballesteros Dorado 82). When the character's love is confined, their spatial surrounding are often marked by an enclosed space – hence the common trope of prison, cave or convent scenes in the Romantic tragedy. Likewise, when the characters experience temporary emotional or physical freedom, the theatrical space opens up as well – often with a natural landscape painted on a backdrop or curtain.

<sup>18</sup> Beyond the general use of Baroque imagery, Ferrando's description of desire as a burning, fatal disease is reminiscent of Don Enrique's illicit desire towards Mencía, in which he likens his desire to “Troya ardiendo” and “agüero de mi muerte.” (*El médico, Jornada I*)

<sup>19</sup> Although the political battles between liberals and Carlists persisted through much of the nineteenth century, the ideological intensity of the 1830s had been replaced by the socioeconomic concerns of the early Restoration—that is, a continued emphasis on the developing market economy, social climbing, and of course, *caciquismo* (to be defined later). Tuñón de Lara aptly describes the political platform of the Restoration (regardless of the party) as one of “pragmatismo sobre idealismo” (282).

<sup>20</sup> The proliferation of the adulteress in Realist novels is not just a Spanish phenomenon, but rather a more general tendency that occurs throughout Europe. In his work *Adultery in the Novel* (1976), Tony Tanner analyzes English adulteresses as signs of a faltering, hypocritical bourgeoisie. Adultery became a vehicle for ostracizing societal shortcomings (13). As an extension of Tanner's analysis, Naomi Segal and Bill Overton have enriched the study of the adulteress primarily in British novels.

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Their works *The Adulteress's Child* (1992) and *Fictions of Female Adultery 1684-1890* (2002), respectively, provide more recent analyses of gender constructs in the adultery novel. Both explore the characteristics of wifely desire and the effect on their families and society. Segal focuses her study on the motherhood portion of gender constructs; specifically she describes how the adulterous wife often detaches emotionally from her children to the point that the construct of motherhood suffers as much of that of the faithful wife in the adultery novels of the nineteenth century.

<sup>21</sup> Hysteria is best described as a condition in which the woman (often a wife) has epileptic-like fits. The origin of the disease was thought to be a “wandering womb” that wrecked havoc on the female nervous system (Labanyi 203). The classic Spanish example, is, of course, Ana Ozores, whose hysteric dreams and adulterous desires stem largely from her husband’s impotency and extended hunting trips. Jo Labanyi also reiterates the classic Naturalist example—Nucha in *Los pazos de Ulloa*. In both cases, the wives’ hysteria stems from male neglect and the lack of physical balance (356-7). In order to soothe their troublesome sexuality, the ignored wife looks for a cure in the local Don Juan (or in Nucha’s case, death). The nature of wifely hysteria mirrors the psychological and physical ills of ennui. Reinhard Kuhn defines ennui as boredom, monotony, anomie, or a state of heightened senses / spirituality (8-9). A state of ennui begins in a spiritual realm but also affects the physical and mental well-being of the subject (12). With this description in mind, Kuhn explains how the quintessential Realist adulteress, Madame Bovary, experiences a depression that begins with ennui and ends in suicide (260). When she commits suicide, her ennui transfers to her husband, thereby infecting those around her with her disease (263). Within this progression, Emma’s adultery becomes a symptom of her descent into depression. It is also a clear sign that ennui presents a dangerous social malady that affects society as a whole.

<sup>22</sup> In the case of Ana Ozores, the protagonist of *La regenta*, the adulteress is partially forgiven for two crucial reasons: her husband ignored her sexual needs, and her character acted as a mouthpiece for Alas’s own perspective on bourgeois society (Labanyi *Gender* 228, Ciplijauskaitė 51). Ciplijauskaitė also contends that Galdós’s adulteress Fortunata eventually shows more virtue than the cheating husband (Juanito), with the result that Fortunata may not be entirely blamed for familial destruction or societal immorality (109).

<sup>23</sup> As a prominent Realist novelist, Galdós’s theater bridged the gap between narrative and theatrical technique. More so than Echegaray or other tragedians, Galdós incorporated psychological angst into the display of his characters. The narrative tone in his theatrical works often incited criticism from theatrical colleagues and critics who resented his deviations from well-trod tragic formulas (see reviews).

<sup>24</sup> Gossip remains an important theme within Realist novels as well, but often is characterized as a symptom of other diseases. Mark Harpring characterizes this link as the triad gossip-hysteria-abulia (5).

<sup>25</sup> Whereas the Romantic tragedies were often associated with social subversion, the *alta comedia* tended to embrace traditional family constructs and didactic moral lessons for the middle class. Thus while the Romantics purposefully wanted to shock the public with taboo subjects, the dramatists at mid-century wanted the middle class audience to embrace traditional familial roles. David Gies, Víctor Cantero García, and Wadda Rios-Font, despite their differing emphasis, agree that the theater in second half of the nineteenth century was meant to promote a conservative view towards family and morality.

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<sup>26</sup> In one of the few articles dedicated to the analysis of *El nudo gordiano*, Richard Klein argues that Sellés actually supports divorce as a method for avoiding dishonor / contamination of the cuckolded husband.

<sup>27</sup> Although Echegaray is best known for his contributions to the Spanish stage in the 1880s and 1890s, he also engaged in politics, particularly the decade before the Glorious Revolution (1868). Eduardo Samper contends that Echegaray was influential in the definition and acceptance of liberalism and krausism in the 1860s. He even wrote articles in the political journal *La Razón*, where he extolled krausist individualism and criticized socialism. For more details on Echegaray's political rhetoric, see Edgard Samper's article "José Echegaray ou la souveraineté de l'individu."

<sup>28</sup> Critic Ursula Link-Heer notes the paradoxical relationship between Echegaray and his audience in *El gran galeoto*. On the one hand, Echegaray pays homage to his bourgeois spectators by dedicating his most famous tragedy to them---in his words, "A todo el mundo" (266). Yet, the crux of the tragedy is his overt criticism of the bourgeoisie and the public's ability to destroy a family through vicious gossip (266).

<sup>29</sup> Echegaray's ability to draw from multiple sources in tragic tradition (and cultural memory as a whole) is exemplified by *El gran galeoto*. The impact of its popularity was that the work itself became an important source of haunting for forty years after its debut. Laura Rosana Scanaro cites the tragedy as a sort of ground zero for Spanish parody, beginning with *Galeotito* (1881) and culminating with *Los cuernos de Don Friolera* (1921). Ursula Link-Heer contends that Echegaray's skills in *El gran galeoto* cemented his popularity and secured his position as winner of the Nobel Prize (272).

<sup>30</sup> Although *Realidad* received a lukewarm reception in 1892, its status as Galdós's first adult drama has made it one of the most recognized Realist dramas of the period. Later in his career, Galdós enjoyed more unanimous praise with his controversial yet popular *Elektra* (1901), and his successful adaptations of such novels as *Doña Perfecta* (1896). In the years from *Realidad*'s debut to *Cassandra* (1910), Galdós created at least ten theatrical productions.

<sup>31</sup> Pardo Bazán does offer a brief description of the actress's costumes. She mentions more than once the effectively "chula" look of La Peri, but criticizes Augusta's luxurious costume as inappropriate. Rather than wearing an elegant *cachemira*, Augusta should don a dress that visually displays her position of shame and guilt. Pardo Bazán's suggestion is a "deshabillé flojo" (65).

<sup>32</sup> Along with hysteria and ennui, infertility becomes a key psycho-physical problem within the Realist and Naturalist novel. In Spain alone, there are two infertile wives that appear in canonical novels: Jacinta in *Fortunata y Jacinta* and Ana Ozores in *La Regenta*.

<sup>33</sup> One possible visual sign of Leonor's profession is her clothing. Although Galdós gives no specific instruction as to costuming, Josep Yxart describes Leonor's appearance in the Barcelona debut as distinctly "chula" and "vengadera" (317).

<sup>34</sup> Ángel Berenguer classifies the theater of the early twentieth century with three classifications: the continuation of Realist and Neoromantic dramas by aging playwrights of the nineteenth century, popular comedies and musicals (*sainetes, zarzuelas, cuplés, flamenco*), and the development of modernist dramas and poetic tragedies (70). The last category includes the tragedies of Eduardo Marquina, Francisco Villaespesa, and Apelles Mestres, among others.

<sup>35</sup> In most cases, poetic tragedians such as Francisco Villaespesa imitated Romantic language and employed nineteenth century conventions. As Chris Perriam notes, the poetic tragedians

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“shamelessly plundered Romantic discourses...bringing sumptuously exotic pseudo-history onto the stage” (53). Unamuno differs substantially from his fellow tragedians in that he specifically avoids this sort of hyper-Romantic visual aesthetic.

<sup>36</sup> While *Fedra* is the only Unamunian drama that portrays an adulteress, Unamuno wrote several dramas that became part of his *teatro desnudo*. His earliest works include *La esfinge* (1898) and *La venda* (1899), known as his early autobiographical dramas. Later in his career, he developed his dramatic style with *Soledad* (1921), *Raquel, encadenada* (1926), and *El otro* (1926). In several cases (*El esfinge*, *El otro*), Unamuno used ancient tragedy as a textual basis for his dramas. For an in-depth overview of Unamuno’s theatrical oeuvre, see Iris Zavala’s *Unamuno y su teatro de conciencia*.

<sup>37</sup> Although the *pueblo* is the primary focus for both Unamuno and Ganivet, both authors also characterize *lo castizo* through the western traditions that influenced the historical development of the Castilian spirit. Both authors note the importance of Greco-Roman philosophy and pragmatism, as well as the development of Catholicism through the Judeo-Christian tradition.

<sup>38</sup> In her book *Gender and Nation in the Spanish Modernist Novel* (2003), Roberta Johnson argues for a gendered interpretation of intrahistory. In order for Regeneration to be productive, the individual must blend into the vastness of venerated tradition, thereby homogenizing and strengthening the national spirit (36). Gender is included in this overall homogenization, with the result that women are absorbed into the “mar eterno.”

<sup>39</sup> Although Ganivet often echoes Unamuno’s characterization of *lo castizo*, the two philosophers differ on one crucial point: the way in which Spaniards should put national regeneration into action. For Unamuno, the rejuvenation of *lo castizo* is promoted through Spain’s interaction with other nations, particularly the European powerhouses (30). Conversely, Ganivet blames foreign influence for Spain’s turn of the century stagnation, and therefore argues that Spain should foster internal regeneration through the conservation of national energy (30, 33). Despite this difference in ideology, both authors attempt to usher in a rejuvenated Spanish national identity through the rediscovery of Iberian spirit and tradition.

<sup>40</sup> The one possible exception to this generalization was Azorín, whose articles denouncing marriage in the newspaper *El país* seemed to reveal the author’s potential empathy towards feminist ideas (Johnson *Gender* 55-6). However, even Azorín flip-flopped on his characterizations of women’s roles in Spanish society. Within a few years, he changed his position completely, indicating that indeed marriage was a binding contract from which even an abused woman could not or should not escape (52). For more details on Azorín’s inconsistent views of gender, see Fernando Ibarra’s article “Clarín and Azorín: La mujer española.”

<sup>41</sup> Unamuno continually uses the destructive mother as a stock character in both his novels and dramas. Perhaps the best narrative example is Unamuno’s later novel *Tia Tula* (1927), in which the fiercely independent protagonist steals her sister’s children by acting as their mother; moreover, she refuses to marry any of her suitors. In Johnson’s interpretation, Tula dies because she must be “neutralized”—that is, her defiance of traditional constructs requires that she be eliminated from society (69). This punishment of destructive women carries over into several of Unamuno’s dramas, including the mourning mother in *Soledad* (1921), and the barren wife in *Raquel, encadenada* (1921). The dangerously passionate mother is such a dominant theme in Unamuno’s tragedies that Iris Zavala cites the “madre anhelante” as the thematic center of the Unamunian drama (61, 168).

<sup>42</sup> Unamuno’s interpretations of Greek myth are among many examples in which the early twentieth century author intertwines ancient narrative with the modern problems of abulia and stagnated

growth. Pérez de Ayala's *Prometeo* (1916) offers a portrait of a Greek professor whose life mirrors that of iconic figures of Greek antiquity—specifically; his life becomes a parallel journey of Odysseus's trials in the *Odyssey* (Landeira 99). In poetry, Antonio Machado praises the Greek gods in his *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (Orringer "Regeneration" 23). Later in his career, Valle-Inclán often alludes to and then distorts the "dialogues, scenes, metaphors and characters" from *Oedipus Rex* into his *esperpentos* (Orringer 27). Regardless of the genre, the interest in Greek texts and myths provided inspiration for the regenerationist movement—specifically, the authors sought to rejuvenate national identity through "classical ideals" (Orringer 21).

<sup>43</sup> Although Unamuno wrote the play in 1910, the earliest performance of the work did not occur until 1918, and this was an intellectual reading at the famed Ateneo. Eventually *Fedra* was performed as a full production in 1921 in Zamora's *Teatro moderno* and in a 1924 revival in Madrid's *Teatro Martín*. For more details on the reception of the 1921 performance, see María Teresa García-Abad García's article "La recepción de *Fedra* de Unamuno." For the most part, both productions failed to attract public or critical attention (Franco 20-1).

<sup>44</sup> For some critics, this simplicity belies the categorization of these works as only "drama." Barbieri characterizes Unamuno's dramatic works as dramatic essays (46). Lucile Charlebois also believes Unamuno's dramas to project something other than dramatic techniques. The relative lack of plot in Unamunian dramas (including *Fedra*) suggests that Unamuno's goals are to explore the psychic state of his characters and comment on the nature of drama. For this reason, Charlebois characterizes Unamunian drama as something of a mixture between a character study and a philosophical, metaliterary discourse on genre (24).

<sup>45</sup> The unlikely reconciliation between father and son is atypical of the use of the erotic triangle in the Spanish tragic tradition. For his part, Carlos Feal Deibe suggests that the sudden happy ending in Unamuno's *Fedra* may express a personal, autobiographical wish—that is, Unamuno is expressing his desire to reconcile with his own father (27).

<sup>46</sup> Unamuno's use of the feverish kiss in *Fedra*, while reminiscent of Romantic tragedies, also reiterates a convention that is used in his own period. Valbuena-Briones notes that Unamuno's kiss of desire bears a striking resemblance to similar incestuous interaction in Jacinto Benavente's works, *El nido ajeno* (1896) and *La malquerida* (1917) (7). The use of the kiss becomes a powerful textual reference and visual sign for spectators in the early twentieth century theater.

<sup>47</sup> By the 1920s, the popularity of Neoromantic, Realist and poetic tragedies had finally subsided. In their place were many different forms of avant-garde experimentation: the tragic farce (Arniches, Valle-Inclán), symbolist and modernist drama (Gregorio Martínez Sierra), and numerous dramatists who experimented with surrealism from the late twenties through the thirties (Lorca, Azorín, Rivas Cherif, Max Aub, Rafael Alberti, among others). For more information on the Spanish transition from traditional tragedy to avant-garde drama, see the collection of essays in *El teatro de España: Entre la tradición y la vanguardia*.

<sup>48</sup> Although the nineteenth-century depiction of the adulteress finally lost momentum in the 1920s, the adulteress does resurface as a vehicle for social commentary in Lorca's well-known dramas of the 1930s (*Boda de sangre*, *La casa de Bernarda Alba*). However, Lorca's use of the adulteress departs from the traditional framing both aesthetically and ideologically. It is for this reason that this chapter focuses on the break with the Baroque-Romantic model of the tragedy that occurs specifically during the 1920s.

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<sup>49</sup> Before his series of *esperpentic* works, Valle-Inclán experimented with melodrama and marionettes in such works as his *Comedias bárbaras* (1907-1916). Some early works, such as *Teatro de ensueño* (1904), mirrored Valle-Inclán's romanticized modernist aesthetic that characterized his *Sonatas*. In the interim before the *esperpento*, Valle-Inclán created a number of transitional farces that presaged his deformed style—among them are *El embrujado* (1912), *La reina castiza* (1912), and *La farsa de la cabeza del dragón* (1914). Along with his use of the *esperpento* in *Martes de carnaval*, Valle-Inclán continued to create several *esperpentic* dramas, many of which were directed by Rivas Cherif. These original works included *Divinas palabras* (1920), *Luces de bohemia* (1920, 1924), and *La rosa del papel* (1924). For further information on the breadth of Valle-Inclán's theatrical oeuvre, as well as his transition from modernist drama to the *esperpento* and tragic farce, see *Ramón del Valle-Inclán: An Appraisal of His Life and Works*.

<sup>50</sup> The most common definition of the *esperpento* is the effect of its aesthetic—for example, a distortion or deformation of reality. Austin Díaz characterizes Valle-Inclán's grotesque reality as the juxtaposition of the “esquinario” with the “macabre” (368). Martha Paley de Francescato goes even farther, defining the *esperpento* as a “copia grotesca de la civilización europea” (484). Depending upon the context, the term *esperpento* may constitute a generic classification, a theatrical technique, or the resulting aesthetic on stage.

<sup>51</sup> As explained in Chapter Two, the *turno pacífico* was a political system that ensured peaceful transitions between rulers of different political parties. The liberals and conservatives would “take turns” at power, and this system maintained political stability for much of the Restoration (Varela 11).

<sup>52</sup> Rubia Barcia notes that shortly after *La hija del capitán* was pulled from the shelves, Valle-Inclán became increasingly more explicit in his political criticism. He even gave an interview to *El liberal* in which he expressed his support for socialist colleagues and their ideology (22-3).

<sup>53</sup> Raymond Carr indicates that while the dictator's frequent speeches initially endeared him to the Spanish public, they eventually incited a decline in his popularity in the mid-to-late twenties.

<sup>54</sup> Here the use of metatheater parallels Brecht's use of *V-effekte* to prevent the spectator from enjoying an Aristotelian catharsis. The lack of ghosts in Valle-Inclán's *esperpentos* is due in part to his ability to interrupt and impede spectator recognition.

<sup>55</sup> Although Valle-Inclán is using *El médico* as his primary point of Baroque allusion, he also evokes textual haunting through initial allusions to varied works in Spanish cultural memory. Weingarten notes the obvious reference to *Celestina* through the characterization of Doña Tadea (955). López de Martínez extends Valle-Inclán's use of textual ghosts to other Baroque tragedies of honor, including *Un secreto agravio* and *El pintor de su deshonra* (20).

<sup>56</sup> According to the collection of articles in *A Companion to Spanish Surrealism* (edited by Robert Harvard), several Spanish authors of the 1920s and 1930s experimented with surrealist techniques. The Spanish poets most related to the surrealist movement were Rafael Alberti, Vicente Aleixandre and Luis Cernuda, while Ernesto Giménez Caballero best epitomized surrealist narrative. Artists from Luis Buñuel to Salvador Dalí visually represented the Spanish contribution to surrealism. The use of surrealist aesthetic on stage is “in play” in several productions, particularly Federico García Lorca's early experimental dramas. During the 1930s, surrealist techniques became commonplace throughout avant-garde theater, including but not limited to the works of Concha Méndez, Max Aub, and Rafael Alberti. For more information on the surrealist influence on Spanish avant-garde theater, see Agustín Muñoz-Alonso López's introduction to *Teatro español de vanguardia*.

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<sup>57</sup> Before his experimentation with the surrealist aesthetic in the late twenties and early thirties, Ramón Gómez de la Serna had produced a number of dramas, some of which had touches of other avant-garde techniques like expressionism and symbolism (Soldevila-Durante 72-3). Early in his theatrical career, Gómez de la Serna collaborated with el *Teatro de arte* under the direction of Alejandro Miquis (Herrero Vecino 37). During this period he wrote and staged *La utopía* (1909), *Cuento de calleja* (1909), *Beatriz* (1920), and *El drama del palacio deshabitado* (1920). These works and others were published within either the journal *Prometeo* or the collection of *Obras completas* that would later be known as “Teatro muerto.” For specific information on the artistic process of Ramón during his time at the *Teatro de arte*, see Carmen Herrero Vecino’s work *La utopía y el teatro: La obra dramática de Ramón Gómez de la Serna*.

<sup>58</sup> After the debut of *Los medios seres* in 1929, Ramón’s theatrical productions waned considerably. The three works he wrote during the 1930s (*Charlot*, *Escaleras*, and *El lunático*) were not performed until after Ramón’s death in 1963 (Herrero Vecino 75-77).

<sup>59</sup> The aesthetic deviance from the Baroque model is accompanied by significant social and legal advancements in feminist causes during the 70s and 80s. While adultery remained a crime punishable by law throughout the dictatorship (1939-1975), it was finally revoked in 1978. The creation of a democratic constitution during the transition helped paved the way for social change in the following years, as Article 14 of the new Constitution provided for protection against sexual discrimination (Montero 382). Soon to follow was the legalization of divorce in 1981, despite great opposition from the Church (382). This series of legal changes was instigated in part through feminist activism, which would later influence the portrayal of the adulteress on stage. In fact, Lidia Falcón came to exemplify the feminist movement in Spain in the seventies and eighties, and her short dramas produced in the 80s and 90s were often characterized as feminist propaganda. For more information on Falcón’s contributions to the feminist movement and feminist drama, see John P. Gabriele’s work *Lidia Falcón: Teatro feminista*.

<sup>60</sup> The link between pre-war socialism and the avant-garde aesthetic is best exemplified by surrealist dramas produced by openly Marxist dramatists during the 1930s. Robert Harvard, in fact, cites Rafael Alberti as the surrealist who most overtly intertwined his political ideology (Marxist materialism) with an avant-garde aesthetic (149,153). Due to severe censorship after the war, the avant-garde groups with socialist or Marxist tendencies could no longer develop their aesthetic, with the result that tragic realism dominated the Spanish stage during the dictatorship.

<sup>61</sup> For the purposes of this brief epilogue, I offer a general overview of theatrical genres and a few examples of the use of the adulteress after the civil war. My intention is to present a series of works that present different frames of the adulteress, all of which require further contextualization and analysis. In this sense, this epilogue provides suggestions for future research on this topic, and suggests that the use of the adulteress on stage remains a fruitful source of critical exploration as late as the 1990s.

<sup>62</sup> For an in-depth analysis of Ruiz Iriarte’s critique of the postwar bourgeoisie, see Marion Holt’s *The Contemporary Spanish Theater* and his article “The Metatheatrical Impulse in Post-Civil War Spanish Comedy.”

<sup>63</sup> For an analysis of Muñiz’s social commentary in this tragic farce, see Loren Zeller’s “La evolución técnica y temática en el teatro de Carlos Muñiz.”

<sup>64</sup> Cesar Oliva offers a concise study of both Arrabal’s and Riaza’s use of avant-garde techniques in his *Teatro desde 1936*. For more specific analysis of the Riaza’s use of surrealism, Theater of Cruelty



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and Theater of the Absurd, see Hazel Cazorla's articles "The Duality of Power in the Theater of Luis Riaza" and "The Ritual Theater of Luis Riaza and Jean Genet."

<sup>65</sup> For a panoramic explanation of the theater groups and dramatists who participated in the second wave of Spanish avant-garde (1965-1985), see Óscar Cornago Bernal's *La vanguardia teatral en España*.

<sup>66</sup> In his article "Paloma Pedrero's Theater: Seeing is More than Believing," Dennis Perri characterizes the women's relationship as an erotic, bidirectional scopophilia. In this sense, both women act as subjects *and* objects; this complex relationship enriches the nature of their interaction and further confuses their gender or sexual categorization.

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