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KING, CONSCIENCE, AND
THE MONSTROUS OTHER
IN CALDERÓN'S *AMOR,
HONOR Y PODER*

In *Amor, honor y poder*, Calderón dramatizes the resistance to tyranny by a female subject for whom the sacraments and conscience precede obedience as a vassal. Although the king, Eduardo, at first fails to seduce the daughter of Count of Salveric, in the end he compels his virtuous subject to marry him. This seemingly happy resolution of the play creates an unsettling effect that undermines the official ideology of royal absolutism in early seventeenth-century Spain.

Calderón's play is a literary reincarnation of the legend of the Countess of Salisbury, which began with the chronicles of Jean le Bel in the late fourteenth century. Le Bel describes how, during a visit to a castle near the Scottish border, Edward III raped the countess "so savagely that never about was a woman so badly treated; and he left her lying there all battered about, bleeding from the nose and the mouth and elsewhere.... Then he left the next day without saying a word" (qtd. in Packe 120). Jean Froissart based his own chronicle on Le Bel's but turned the rape into a dalliance between the king and the countess over a game of chess. In a later version of his chronicle, Froissart omitted the countess scene altogether (Gransden 334).

Calderón's source for *Amor, honor y poder* may have been a retelling of the Countess of Salisbury story, written by Pierre Boaistuau and Francois Belleforest and first published in France in 1559. This source was based on Matteo Bandello's 1547 Italian language novella. Calderón may have read one of the Spanish language editions of Boaistuau and Belleforest which were published in Salamanca (1589), Burgos (1596), and Valladolid (1603) (Cruikshank 81). Another possible source for *Amor, honor y poder* may have been Diego de Ágrede y Vargas' *Eduardo, rey de Inglaterra* (Vila Carneiro 104).

As Shakespeare did in *Edward III*, Calderón brings out the monstrous aspect of Edward III through comic elements in his play. Since it was risky for Calderón to represent a flawed Spanish monarch on stage (ter Horst 176), England was an apt setting for his critique of tyranny in the plays *La cisma de Inglaterra* and *Amor, honor y poder*. Less than a year before the performance of *Amor, honor y poder*, the Archbishop of Granada had admonished Felipe IV for his extramarital affairs (Redworth 63). It is possible that the character of Calderón's Eduardo may have been in part an oblique criticism of the libertine ways of the Spanish monarch who had thirty-two children out of wedlock (Schjeldahl 74).

The fictional England of *Amor, honor y poder* closely resembles Calderón's Spain. The encounter with the Other in the play is a voyage of self-discovery. Peter Burke describes two contrary responses to encounters with other cultures. One response is to assimilate others to ourselves, thereby erasing cultural distance. The other response is to reconstruct other cultures as opposite to our own (Burke 123–124). Calderón's response appears to be the former one, for the England of *Amor, honor y poder* bridges the cultural distance from Spain.

Amor honor y poder may be Calderón's earliest play and was first performed in Madrid in June 1623 during the visit of Charles Stuart, the Prince of Wales, who was courting the Infanta María (Cruickshank 75). King James I had concluded a peace treaty with Spain in 1604, and he hoped that a Spanish dowry would make him less financially dependent on Parliament. "The Spanish Match," as it is known, would have united the royal families of Catholic Spain and Protestant England, but it never materialized. The Pope's insistence that Charles convert to Catholicism, together with anti-Catholic popular sentiment in England, all but doomed the proposal (Redsworth 7–8, 15–17).¹

The first scene of the first act of *Amor, honor y poder* takes place in the countryside near the Castillo de Salveric (Salisbury Castle). Enrico, the son of the Conde de Salveric, has heard that the king is hunting nearby. At first, Enrico appears overly protective towards his sister Estela. Before Eduardo even appears on stage, Enrico cautions her not to be seen by the king and orders her to return at once to the castle. However, his fear of Eduardo proves well-founded.

As Estela turns back towards the family castle, Enrico sees a horse plunge down a mountain, carrying the Infanta Flérida. In Calderón the image of a woman on an out-of-control horse symbolizes unbridled sexual desire (Valbuena Briones 61; Cruickshank 83). We sense the erotic overtones as Estela describes how princess and horse seem to merge into a single creature as they hurtle towards an abyss:

Tan igualmente ligeros
 los pies y manos levanta,
 que parece que a los cielos
 tira la yerba que arranca,
 tan bañado en sus espumas,
 que parece que un mar pasa,
 y que pegado en los pechos
 el mar a pedazos saca.
 Firme la dama la oprime;
 y aunque sean tan contrarias
 la de un bruto y la de un sol
 son dos cuerpos con un alma. (59–60)

¹ For a fine overview of the anti-Spanish pamphlet literature that appeared in England during the negotiations for the Spanish Match, see Eroulla Demetriou, "Genes and Jabs: Spanish Genealogy as Portrayed by English Protestant Pamphleteers during the Spanish Match Negotiations (1617–1624)," (in:) *Strangers in Early Modern English Texts* (Ed. Jesús López-Peláez). Frankfurt am Mein: Peter Lang, 2011: 191–203.

The images of beast and sun are fused into the person of the princess. Solar imagery denotes both divinity and royalty, while the image of a beast anticipates the prurience and tyranny of Flérida's brother, Eduardo.

Startled by the sight of a woman on horseback, Enrico exclaims,

Hoy baja
despeñado otro Faetonte.
Poco le debo, si aguarda
más ocasión mi valor
para mostrarse, pues basta
el ser mujer. (59)

Enrico's seemingly chivalrous words reveal a view of women as weak creatures, a view shared by other male characters in the play. In Greek mythology, Phaeton was the son of Helios, the sun god. Phaeton asked Helios to prove his paternity by lending him the sun chariot for a day. Unable to control the horses of the sun chariot, Phaeton scorched the earth, turning the Sahara into a desert. When Mother Earth could no longer bear the heat, Zeus hurled a thunderbolt at Phaeton who fell to his death (Hamilton 131–134). The allusion to the Phaeton myth enriches a play about a monarch who is given to lust, engaged in scorched earth tactics during his wars in France, violated Biblical sacraments, and was considered by many to have incurred divine wrath by trying to act like a god.

Enrico intervenes just in time to rein in the princess' horse. The king arrives on the scene and thanks Enrico for saving Flérida. Eduardo then proceeds to show a rather pronounced interest in Estela even before he meets her:

Rey. – ¿Vive todavía el conde?

Enr. – Sí, señor.

Rey. – Fué la privanza
de mi padre. ¿Y sólo tú
su soledad acompañas,
o vive también Estela
con vosotros?

Enr. – [**Aparte.**]

(¡Cosa extraña;

¡Que no pudiese encubrirlo!)

Aquí está, señor, mi hermana
que también del campo gusta.

Rey. – Mucho le debe a la fama
que dice que es muy hermosa.

Enr. – Siempre la opinión se alarga;
que no es muy hermosa Estela:
el no ser fea le basta.

Rey. – Dícenme que es muy discreta.

Enr. – Sabe, señor (cosa es clara),
lo que tiene obligación.
una mujer en su casa.

Rey. – Mucho me holgara de verla. (61)

Moments after Enrico downplays his sister's beauty, Estela returns from the castle with water for the princess. Eduardo orders Enrico to leave so as to be left alone with Estela. The king asks Estela for water and then expresses his passion for her using fire imagery. Estela compares herself to the cold water that will quench the flames of desire:

Aquí vuestra Majestad
podrá templar el rigor
de tanto fuego mejor,
porque tanta claridad
quizá ofende por verdad;
y si este cristal deshecho
abrsa y quema, sospecho
que en mi pecho se ha de hallar
el hielo, para templar
el fuego de vuestro pecho (62)

There exists a different kind of love interest in the case of Flérida who reciprocates Enrico's passion, however guardedly. In an aside, she describes her love for Enrico in terms of a fall that recalls their first meeting:

Llevóme mi deseo.
Otra al caer tropieza;
Pero al revés ha sido,
yo tropecé después de haber caído (64)

Enrico shares his monarch's impetuosity and echoes his language, as when he tells Flérida:

Es cierto;
Mas procedes tan tirana
Que cuando te doy la vida,
en satisfacción me matas (60)

Eduardo also engages in this curious process of inversion when he complains that Estela is his tyrant shortly before he sexually harasses her.

The king decides to remain at the castle. That night he knocks on Estela's bedroom door with his face cloaked. Estela immediately regrets asking the stranger's identity. Forced to reveal himself, Eduardo assures Estela,

Obligarte y persuadirte
siempre mi deseo fué,
más amante con finezas,
que tirano con poder. (68)

The seemingly chastened king abases himself before her: "Y porque veas también / que soy Rey y soy amante, / mírame humilde a tus pies" (68). Estela is not fooled by this false show of humility. Although as a subject she cannot physically resist her monarch, Estela pronounces passive resistance:

No se atreva poderoso:
que si en un vasallo fiel
no hay contra el poder espada,
hay honor contra el poder. (68)

Calderón refracts our view of tyranny through the comic mirror of Tosco, Estela's half-wit servant. While looking for firewood, Tosco becomes alarmed when a lost hunter asks him for directions:

Cazad. – Dime el camino en que estoy;
que ni sé por dónde voy
ni sé la senda que sigo.
Corriendo el monte venía
con otros monteros yo,
y en el monte me cogió
el crepúsculo del día.
Tosco – ¡Lleve Barrabás el nombre!
¿El qué le cogió, señor?
Cazad. – El crepúsculo.
Tosco – Es traidor, o es encantado ese hombre?
¿Y cómo le cogió? ¡Hay tal!
¿Aquesto en el monte había?
¿Crepúsculo tiene el día?
Y diga, ¿no le hizo mal? (64)

Tosco perks up when he hears the 'culo' in 'crepúsculo' and the verb 'coger.' Imagining that a monstrous rapist is on the way, he hastens back to the castle in terror. There, Estela asks Tosco if he has barred the bedroom door as she muses, "El poder de un Rey es un rayo / que lo más alto abrasó" (67). This pun on *abrazar*, 'to embrace,' and *abrasar*, 'to burn,' recalls the Phaeton myth and the punishment for usurpers of divinity.

Tosco's fear foreshadows the king's trespass. As he trembles in the dark, Tosco laments that his new smock would soon be soiled by the 'crepúsculo.' A voice is heard at the door. Believing that it to be Enrico's, Estela orders Tosco to open the door only to find the king and his courtier Ludovico. Unable to sabotage the king's seductive designs, Ludovico reflects, "(¿Qué atrevido es el poder! / Ni pone límite al miedo, / ni guarda respeto al ley)" (68). This concern for religious and natural law to constrain monarchs reflects, at least to some extent, Ludovico's own love interest in Estela.

As Eduardo attempts to enter her bedroom, Estela firmly tells him to desist:

El paso ofendes
el vasallo más fiel
el honor más invincible
y la más constante fe. (68).

After a futile appeal to the non-existent conscience of the king, Estela hits upon a ruse:

Todos los hombres queréis
fáciles mujeres antes,
pero Lucrecias después.

Obligarte con honor
 siempre mi deseo fué;
 pero si fácil te obligo,
 espérame aquí: veré
 qué gente hay en esta sala
 para que tú entres después
 a donde mi amor te espera. (69)

Estela's allusion to Lucrecia recalls the legend of the Roman woman who killed herself after being raped by the son of Tarquin, a Roman king.² The Lucrece legend also enhances our sense of the king as a menace in *Edward III*, Shakespeare's version of the Countess of Salisbury legend.

Though not the subject of *Amor, honor y poder*, the brutal military tactics of the historical Edward nonetheless constitute its subtext. The king's aggressive pursuit of Estela resembles a military campaign, as when the king says,

Siento temor
 con el amor en batalla;
 y cuanto el amor me anima,
 tanto el temor me acobarda. (62)

We also see this conflation of love and war in Shakespeare's *Edward III*, in which the monarch repeatedly uses military metaphors and war imagery to describe his pursuit of the Countess of Salisbury. Edward III describes his pursuit of the countess as "A lingering English siege of peevish love" (2.1.23), and he attempts to coerce her father, the Earl of Warwick, "To bear my colours in this field of love" (2.1.295). An erotic undercurrent pervades the battle scenes such as when the Black Prince tells "danger woos me as a blushing maid" (4.4.132). In both Shakespeare and Calderón, the overall effect of grotesque martial-amorous imagery is to heighten the monstrosity of the monarch.

The king boasts to Ludovico that Estela awaits him: "Que llegué, vi y vencí" (69). His echo of Julius Caesar's famous phrase ("veni, vidi, vici") reinforces the Roman context evoked by Estela's reference to Lucrece. Convinced that Estela has given in to the king, Ludovico thinks to himself, "¡Ay cielos! / Mas ¿qué me espanto? Es mujer" (69). Ludovico shares with other male characters an oppressive masculinity that distorts his perception of Estela.

Estela manages to bar the door and prevent Eduardo's entry into her bedroom, but her reprieve is only temporary. In order that Enrico not interfere with his seduction of Estela, Eduardo sends him to request a decision from Flérida regarding a marriage proposal from Teobaldo, a Hungarian prince. Eduardo has told Teobaldo:

A la Infanta dije yo
 mi intención, y en ella vi,
 ni bien concedido el sí,
 ni bien declarado el no. (70)

² This passage may have inspired these lines in Sor Juana's famous "Hombres necios": "Queréis con presunción necia / hallar a la que buscáis, / para pretendida, Tais, / y en la posesión, Lucrecia" (Medina 229). Tais (or Thais), an Athenian consort of Alexander the Great, was famed for her beauty.

This indecision would sound contemporary to Calderón's audience who would readily associate it with Prince Charles and his proposed marriage to the Infanta María.

As D. W. Cruickshank notes, the name of Teobaldo evokes that of King James's favorite residence, Theobalds, where Charles spent much of his childhood, and which had been given to James by Robert Cecil, the first earl of Salisbury (82-83). Teobaldo's words, which open Act Two, recall the protracted negotiations for "The Spanish Match", which ultimately ended in failure, as love interest gave way to frustration and illusion to political realities:

La esperanza en el amor
es un dorado veneno,
puñal de hermosuras lleno,
que hiere y mata en rigor:
es en los dulces engaños
edad de las fantasias,
donde son las horas días
donde son los meses años;
un martirio del deseo,
y una imaginada gloria,
verdugo de la memoria. (70)

Eduardo asks his sister to convince Estela to reconsider her refusal. As they stroll in the garden, Estela confides to the princess her unhappiness, but the infanta shows little understanding or empathy:

Est. – Triste estoy.

Inf. – Ese es indicio
de amor. ¿Quieres bien, Estela?
Bien puedes hablar conmigo.

Est. – Dijéralo a ser verdad;
mas ni quiero, ni he querido
bien en mi vida.

Inf. – ¡Ay Estela!
¿Tan neciamente has vivido?
Ven a la fuente de Venus;
quizá, viendo tu artificio,
te obligará a querer bien
un Adonis escondido. (76-77)

The Adonis, of course, is Eduardo who, hidden in the garden, eavesdrops on their conversation.

Having failed to entice Estela to become her brother's mistress, the princess pursues her own love interest but Enrico soon finds himself in danger. Enrico spots the king trying to kiss his sister. Estela begs the king to hide, fearing that Enrico cannot control his fury. Enrico discovers the king in his hiding place and taunts him, pretending that he is only a statue, a mere counterfeit of himself:

Este es del Rey tan natural retrato,
 que siempre que su imagen considero,
 llevo a verle quitándome el sombrero,
 con la rodilla en la tierra: así le acato.
 Y si del Rey me ofendiera
 de suerte que en la honra me tocara,
 viniera a este retrato y me quejara,
 y entonces le dijera
 que tan cristianos reyes
 no han de romper el límite a las leyes; (79)

Since he cannot attack the king, Enrico lunges at Teobaldo instead and wounds him. Enrico echoes Pontius Pilate, who washed his hands while claiming to be innocent of the death to which he was about to condemn Jesus:

No pudo, al golpe bárbaro, inhumano,
 detenerse la mano;
 mas ya que tales mis desdichas fueron,
 pude hacer atrevido
 que no las digan ya los que las vieron
 que si la sangre lava
 esta desdicha brava,
 eres mi rey, no puedo con la tuya,
 y fué fuerza lavarla con la suya. (80)

Although Enrico laments that “Contra el poder, honor importa poco” (80), the echo of Pontius Pilate undercuts his code of honor. Like the king, Enrico transgresses laws and religious precepts to the point of violence. “Honor,” displaced rage against the king, and above all, jealousy, motivate Enrico to assault Teobaldo, his rival for the hand of Flérida.

The Count of Salveric, who is now Eduardo's chief minister, is given the task of imprisoning his own son. The princess urges Enrico to escape after she obtains a key to his cell. Enrico refuses to do so, for it seems that he must observe the law, if only as a reproach to a king who does not. Tosco is also arrested. At Enrico's request, he had hidden from the king in the garden. When Eduardo discovers Tosco, he asks for the whereabouts of Estela. Tosco's description of Estela parodies Enrico's earlier apprehension when the king asked about her:

Dirélo sin faltar nada;
 que eres Rey, y a mucho obligas.
 Estela es coja y mulata,
 aunque tan branca la ves;
 zurda y tuerta, porque es
 el ojo izquierdo de prata;
 seis dedos en una mano
 tiene; y con tormento eterno
 sabañones el invierno,
 y suda mucho el verano.
 Una sarna la acompaña
 Tanto que nunca la deja; (76)

When he protests his arrest, Tosco refers, in a comic metathesis, to his “Majestad” as “Jamestá.” The transposed phonemes recall King James who was King of England at the time of the first performance of *Amor, honor y poder*:

Preguntar, señor, quisiera
 ¿qué delito cometí
 para que su Jamestá,
 con tanta regulidá,
 se acuerde también de mí?
 ¿Para qué me quiere preso?
 A ser mi hermana muy bella,
 yo sirviera al Rey con ella,
 sin enojarme por eso.
 Si Enrico le descubrió
 estando escondido allí
 también me descubrió a mí,
 y no tome enojo yo. (80)

The expressed willingness of Tosco to give up his sister for the king’s pleasure prefigures Enrico’s mutability at the end of the play.

Calderón demystifies power through these words of Enrico: “nadie muere en viendo al Rey la cara” (88). In *Amor, honor y poder* the king purports to project a sun-like majesty that would blind those who would seek to know him, allowing him to remain unknowable, mysterious, or ambiguous. Shrouding his French war campaigns in chivalric aura, the historical Edward created the Order of the Garter after the battle of Crécy. The order’s motto was “Hony soit q’mal y pense” (Vale 81) (“Shame on whoever might think ill of it”). Another motto of Edward III, proof that the king was not given to self-doubt or quibbling, was “Dieu et mon droit” (“God and my right”). This motto concisely expresses Edward’s lasting belief that victory on the battlefield was sign of divine judgment (Rogers 206).

In the end, Eduardo seemingly comes to his senses, apparently moved by Estela’s threat of suicide when she pulls out a dagger: “Ya solamente he sido / quien vencedor se coronó vencido” (88). Eduardo achieves an ostensible and belated self-command when he realizes that to get Estela, he must marry her. The play concludes with the king announcing to his courtiers their forthcoming marriage:

Rey.– Estela es quien merece
 partir conmigo la imperial corona
 que luciente en mis sienes resplandece
 porque veáis en tal feliz estado
 vencido mi poder, su honor laureado.
 No repliquéis [**A Estela.**]
 sentaos en esta silla;
 pues solo merecísteis ocupalla,
 siendo del mundo espanto y maravilla.

Est.– No merezco esos pies. (88)

Estela's words convey the sense that because she is unfit to touch his feet, she is therefore undeserving to be Eduardo's bride – a polite way to refuse a loveless marriage. Her words also carry another meaning: that Estela does not wish to be trampled upon. Indeed, Eduardo's command, "No repliquéis," is intended more for Estela than for the members of his retinue. Estela, however, has little choice but to become an object of wonder and terror when her father kisses her hand as the new queen, thereby sealing her fate.

Eduardo is incapable of introspection, let alone love. Dian Fox appears untroubled by Enrico's acquiescence in a marriage that his sister clearly does not want:

Eduardo III pursues Estela regardless of her objections. The woman's extraordinary virtue in the defense of her honor finally so overwhelms the King that he reforms. Eduardo takes two unconventional steps which allow love to abolish social differences: agreeing to make Estela his queen, he betrothes her brother to his own sister, the Infanta. (30)

What social differences does Eduardo abolish? It is hardly a great social leap for the king to marry the daughter of a count who happens to be his chief minister. Eduardo denies Estela the right that he grants to his sister, namely the right to marry for love.

Aside from the king's own words, there is no evidence in the play that Eduardo reforms or that he cares about the happiness of Estela. He shows no inclination to listen to her. His sudden decision to marry Estela represents a tactical shift rather than a change of heart on the part of the king, and is born out sexual frustration and thwarted desire rather than out of admiration for virtue. Eduardo makes a prompt and public announcement of his impending marriage, certain that Estela understands that the king would take revenge against her family should she refuse to marry him.

To Enrico's delight, Eduardo grants Flérida her wish to marry Enrico instead of Teobaldo. With the king about to marry his sister, and his marriage to the princess assured, Enrico ceases his tirades against power. He asks for forgiveness from Eduardo, who readily grants it to his future brother-in-law. The play ends with an obsequious Enrico asking the king: "Que me dejes besar tus pies suplico; / porque a tus plantas puesto, / *Poder, amor y honor* den fin con esto" (88). The conclusion of the play is too abrupt and contrived to be anything but intentionally disturbing.

The first three words of the last line of the play are the same ones contained in the title of the play but their order has been changed. 'Poder' precedes 'amor' and 'honor' in a chiasmic structure that parallels the reversal of Enrico who evidently cares more for power than for his sister. Despite Eduardo's conquest of Estela, there nonetheless remains something that the king cannot possess. Ultimately conscience will exorcise the terrors of history as the Swiss philosopher Henri-Frédéric Amiel explains:

It is not history which teaches conscience to be honest; it is the conscience which educates history. Fact is corrupting, it is we who correct it by the persistence of our ideal. The soul moralizes the past in order not to be demoralized by it. Like the alchemists of the middle ages, she finds in the crucible of experience only the gold that she herself has poured into it (49).

Although power prevails in *Amor, honor y poder*, Calderón finds in the sacraments a means for conscience to resist tyranny and, as the title of the play suggests, for love to prevail over honor and power.

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Résumé

Le roi, la conscience et l'Autre Monstrueux dans la comédie
Amor, honor y poder (Amour, Honneur et Pouvoir) de Calderón

Dans sa première comédie *Amor, honor y poder (Amour, Honneur et Pouvoir)* qui est la réincarnation littéraire de la légende de la Comtesse de Salisbury, Calderón dépeint la résistance à la tyrannie par une sujette du roi, pour laquelle les sacrements et la conscience prévalent sur l'obéissance d'un vassal à son suzerain. Quoique d'abord le roi, Edouard, n'ait pas réussi à séduire la fille du comte de Salveric (Salisbury), à la fin il contraint sa sujette vertueuse à l'épouser. Ce dénouement apparemment heureux de la pièce provoque un effet troublant qui sape l'idéologie officielle de l'absolutisme royal en Espagne de la première moitié du XVII^e siècle.

Streszczenie

Król, sumienie i potworny Inny w komedii *Amor, honor y poder* Calderóna

W swej pierwszej komedii *Amor, honor y poder*, będącej literackim ucieleśnieniem legendy o hrabiance z Salisbury, Calderón pokazuje opór, jaki przeciwko tyranii stawia królewska poddana, dla której sakramenty i sumienie stoją ponad posłuszeństwem wasala wobec władcy. Chociaż królowi Edwardowi najpierw nie udaje się uwieść córki hrabiego Salveric (Salisbury), to na końcu zmusza swą cnotliwą poddaną do poślubienia go. To pozornie szczęśliwe rozwiązanie sztuki zaburza i podkopuje oficjalną ideologię królewskiego absolutyzmu w Hiszpanii pierwszej połowy XVII wieku.

