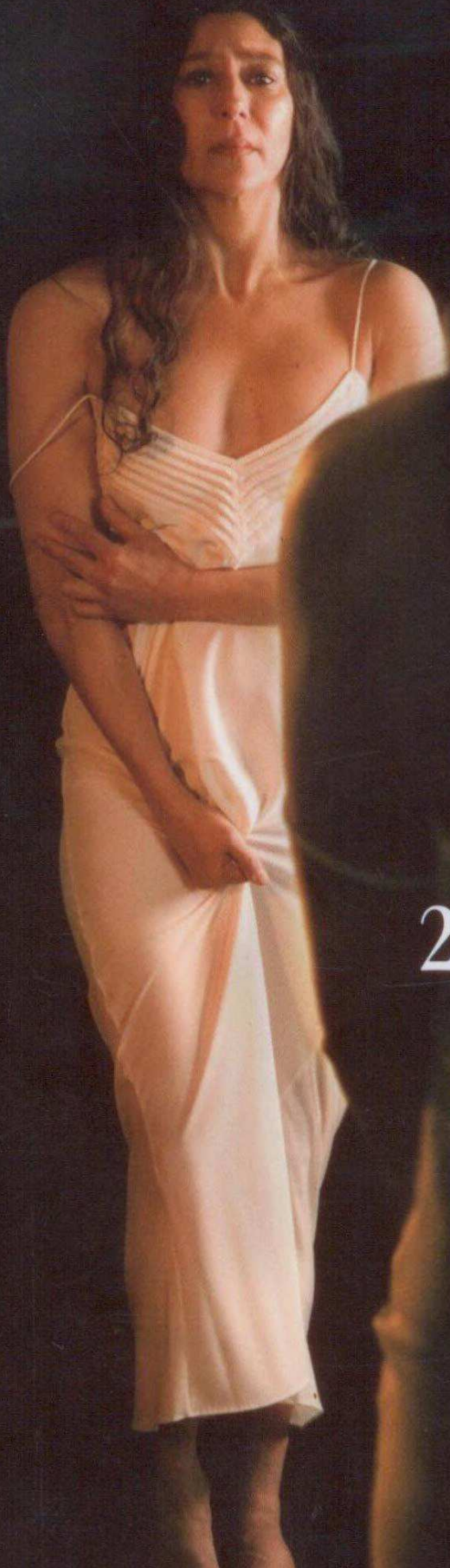


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Published semiannually by the Comediantes, an international group of scholars interested in early modern Hispanic theater, the *Bulletin* welcomes articles and notes in Spanish and English dealing with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century peninsular and colonial Latin American drama. Submissions are refereed by at least two specialists in the field. In order to expedite a decision, contributors should send a copy of the essay and an abstract to the editor by e-mail attachment (edward.h.friedman@vanderbilt.edu). They should also submit a hard copy and a CD to the editor's address, along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Essays should adhere in format to the current *MLA Handbook*. All rights remain with the author. Contributors are asked to subscribe to the journal. Books for review should be sent directly to the book review editor. Advertising space is available.

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The *Converso* Perspective in *El aucto de los desposorios de José*..... 1

Charles Patterson

ABSTRACT

El aucto de los desposorios de José is one of several plays of the Golden Age based on the Old Testament story of Joseph. It is unique, however, because its primary source material is not the Bible, but rather a late-classical Hellenistic Jewish novel entitled *Joseph and Aseneth*. This essay analyzes the play's adaptation of its source material to a sixteenth-century context. I argue that *Desposorios* subverts the prevailing emphasis on blood purity in Spain by converting a Jewish story into a dramatization of Christian conversion. Through the process of adaptation, the anonymous playwright inscribes a *converso* perspective on the story, characterized by a sense of equality, a socially critical attitude, and ambiguous communication. The overall effect is an appropriation of Christian values in order to make the argument for the full acceptance of New Christians into Spanish society. This subversive element to the play makes it worthy of more scholarly attention than it has previously received. (CP)

Royal Obligation and the "Uncontrolled Female" in Ana Caro's

El conde Partinuplés 15

Jonathan Ellis

ABSTRACT

In her adaptation of the medieval romance that served as the source material for her *comedia*, Ana Caro preserved in her title the name of the original titular hero Partinuplés, yet she chose to make the protagonist of her work Rosaura, empress of Constantinople. This crucial change allows her to present the perspective of a female character forced to operate as a monarch within the expectations of a patriarchal system of government. The circumstances are analogous to Caro herself working within the male-established customs and expectations of *comedia* authorship. In the play, one issue in particular serves as the focus and source of all the conflict: Rosaura must contend with the demand of her subjects that she marry and produce an heir. While the matter of succession must be in some way addressed by all monarchs, it is a problematic one for a female monarch if there is a suspicion that the marriage is a means of containing and controlling her. Rosaura's situation is further complicated by the presence of a prophecy in the plot that foretells disaster to herself and her kingdom should she marry. This essay specifically examines the

methods and character of Caro's heroine in dealing with these circumstances. In her absolute dedication to fulfilling her duty and obligations, she serves as an exemplum for Partinuplés. In addition, she insists on the right of consent in the marriage and thereby hopes to avoid the disaster of the prophecy, illustrating a common concern for female characters of the *comedia*, the desire to subvert arranged marriages. This essay further contextualizes the question of female rule and royal marriage in light of the literary model of Lope de Vega's *La reina Juana de Nápoles* and the historical models of Elizabeth I of England and Isabel of Castile. (JE)

The Body Politic and Its Parts in *El médico de su honra* 31
 Ryan Prendergast

ABSTRACT

This article examines how the representation of threats to and damage inflicted upon the physical body in Calderón de la Barca's *El médico de su honra* correlate with the text's problematic depiction and incisive critique of Spain's political body. It explores the modes in which homosocial relations determine the infliction of violence on those excluded from the bonds between noblemen. The play demonstrates how male and female physical bodies—seen in different stages of injury—have clear ties with the health of the body-state. There is a critique of the self-interested and politically driven means by which the aristocratic male characters, namely, Pedro, Enrique, and Gutierre, negotiate their own relationships and form the basis of the political body. These characters attempt to further establish and solidify their status and protect their interests, despite the cost to themselves and other subjects, that is, the body politic's "parts," and as a result, to the well-being of the kingdom as a whole. Through the various damaged bodies, *El médico* reveals a connection between its characters' physical health and the pervasive sickness of the nation controlled by some problematic parts. And it suggests that the relations between and among noblemen are at the heart of the sociopolitical ills. (RP)

Dating Calderón's Autobiographical Ballad "Curiosísima señora" 47
 Geoffrey M. Voght

ABSTRACT

In 1853, Juan Eugenio Hartzenbusch published a 187-verse fragment of an autobiographical ballad by Calderón de la Barca on which Cotarelo y Mori relied at times in his 1924 biography of the famous dramatist. In 1962, E. M. Wilson printed an altered but more complete version of this *romance* attributed to Don Carlos Alberto de Cepeda y Guzmán, a poet from Sevilla born in 1640, concluding that someone adapted Cepeda's original poem to make it refer to Calderón. Doubts regarding who composed the comic self-portrait persisted until 2003 when Professor Agustín de la Granja of the University of Granada reestablished Calderonian authorship, published our most reliable text of the 244-verse ballad, and argued that it was composed for a poetic contest held after a bullfight on 4 May 1623. The main purpose of the present study is to review briefly some of de la Granja's reasons for believing that the poem was composed in 1623, to summarize problems with this early dating, and to explain why composition in the 1637-1640 period may better fit some elements found in Calderón's poem. The texts of the incomplete version published in the nineteenth century by Hartzenbusch and of a manuscript

of the complete ballad from the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid are published in the appendix to this article. (GMV)

Songs, Song-Texts, and Lovesickness in Agustín Moreto's
Yo por vos y vos por otro 65
 George Yuri Porras

ABSTRACT

In recent years, a considerable amount of scholarship has been produced on the function of music in the drama of Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca. But songs, dances, instruments, and other music references abound in the works of other important Spanish Golden Age dramatists. Because of the significant role music plays in many of his plays, special attention should be devoted to the repertoire of the preeminent dramatists Agustín Moreto. This essay focuses on the relationship between music and text in *Yo por vos y vos por otro* (1676), and particularly on how music is utilized during critical junctures as a way to underscore, on the one hand, the work's references to period notions of lovesickness, and on the other, to support the work's dramatic structure and technique. The function of music in this play is an example of the need for further study and reevaluation of a significant portion of Moreto's repertoire. (GYP)

A Study of Women's Intelligence in Moreto's *No puede ser* 79
 Tania de Miguel Magro

ABSTRACT

Critics of Moreto commonly highlight his characteristic development of strong female characters and his tendency to prioritize reasoning over action. This article connects both tendencies by analyzing what I call "women's intellect" in the play *No puede ser*, in order to better understand Moreto's representation of women. In a world in which women are supposed to remain obedient and silent and in which action is reserved for men, Moreto presents women who, in order to fulfill their needs and desires without threatening the status quo, are forced to rely on their wits. The *damas* in *No puede ser* have intellectual abilities that surpass male understanding, not because they are superior, but simply because, as they point out, society has forced them to develop certain survival strategies. To all outward appearances they seem obedient and never lose their decorum, but, through the use of reason, they are able to figure out a way to impose their own will on a recalcitrant world. (TdMM)

Damas indias: America's Iconic Body and the Wars of Conquest in the
Spanish Comedia 103
 Benito Quintana

ABSTRACT

In the *comedias de Indias*, the Christianization of America, the glory of the Spanish monarchs, and the deeds of the conquistadors are showcased as the motivations that drive the wars of conquest. The visual iconography developed in Europe after the encounter with America allegorized the New World as a woman whose nude body and aggressive nature was framed by exotic flora and fauna. In contrast, Europa was portrayed as a fully dressed woman surrounded by symbols of

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order, knowledge, religion, and war. This representation reinforced the notion of Europa's self-assigned rightful ownership of true culture and civilization and a right for conquest and colonization. This need for America to be conquered in order to conform to Europa's idealized perception of culture and civilization is fictionalized in the *comedias de Indias*, in which the playwrights present onstage the sensual, exotic, and aggressive nature of the indigenous females, and the Christian and civilizing purpose of the European conquistadors. The romantic desires connecting the *damas indias* to the *galanes españoles*, the complexity of the intrigues and romances as presented on the stage and the visual iconography of the period evidence how the battles between the conquistadors and the indigenous men can be seen as symbolic attempts to wrest America away from the *galanes indios* who tenuously possess her. (BQ)

Recruiting the Literary Tradition: Lope de Vega's *Fuenteovejuna* as Cultural Weapon during the Spanish Civil War 123
 Jason T. Parker

ABSTRACT

Few readers or spectators disagree about the internal dynamics of Lope de Vega's play *Fuenteovejuna* (1612). The people of Fuenteovejuna rise against a tyrannical, unjust ruler who fails in his duties as a nobleman and represents a threat to the village's loyalty to the Catholic monarchs of Spain. Nonetheless, external factors lead *Fuenteovejuna* to remain a highly controversial work that has been read and interpreted in wildly divergent ways. This paper examines contradictory approaches to the play during the Spanish Civil War in order to consider how contexts and influences outside the text perform a vital role in its interpretation. Contemporary sociopolitical issues colored Nationalist and Republican approaches to *Fuenteovejuna*, thereby producing radically dissonant readings of Lope's work that justified each group's ideological position within the civil conflict. The desire to find symbolic or allegorical meaning in the characters and circumstances of the drama opens the way for modern ideologies, politics, social issues, and cultural paradigms to flood the work with new meanings. (JTP)

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Editor's Note

We are happy to present a wide range of essays and reviews on multiple aspects of the Comedia, from pre-Lope drama to plays by Lope de Vega, Pedro Calderón de la Barca, Ana Caro, and Agustín Moreto (represented in two essays), as well as colonial Latin American theater and the staging of early modern drama during the period of the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939. As is our custom, and a source of pride for the *Bulletin of the Comediantes*, the contributors range from established senior scholars to talented younger colleagues.

It is our pleasure to announce the addition of two new members of the Editorial Advisory Board: Laura Bass of Tulane University and Vicente Pérez de León of the University of Melbourne. We welcome them and thank them for their willingness to serve.

We also would like to thank Bradley Nelson for his years of service as assistant editor. Brad is giving up that position and will become a member of the Editorial Advisory Board. The new assistant editor is Gwen H. Stickney of North Dakota State University. We are grateful that she has accepted the position and look forward to working with her.

We invite submissions on all aspects of early modern and colonial theater, and we acknowledge the support of Comediantes in the United States and abroad.

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A Study of Women's Intelligence in Moreto's *No puede ser*

Tania de Miguel Magro
West Virginia University

IN THE LAST FEW DECADES, and often in connection with the popularity of feminist theater, there has been an increased interest in the study of women in seventeenth-century Spanish theater, particularly since the publication in 1974 of Melveena McKendrick's *Women and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*. Scholars have centered their work on the study of female representation and discourse, in an attempt to define the ultimate message of the genre in relation to women.¹ Conclusions differ greatly from those who see the *comedia* as a subversive proto-feminist genre, to those who read the text as a reaffirmation of patriarchal domination. This debate is closely linked to that of the ideology of the Baroque theater as a whole. For example, the consideration of the genre as patriarchal and repressive towards women is directly connected with a reading of the *comedia* as propaganda for the expansion of monarchical, Christian, and aristocratic values. According to this interpretation—sustained among others by José Antonio Maravall, José María Díez Borque, and Felipe B. Pedraza—every play aspires to indoctrinate its audience with ideas such as the divine origin of social stratification and the patriarchal system. Under this theory, female characters are one of the many elements that send the message of the need to perpetuate and reaffirm the established order. Therefore, even though women on stage may enjoy a freedom of action and speech unheard of for the real women of the time, at the end of each play they are relegated to their place in society. Those women who conformed to the norm are rewarded with a suitable marriage, while those who went too far by breaking the "natural" laws of honor, religion, or the social order, are punished and expelled from the community. This reading considers that the real message of a play is to be found in the conclusion, when order is reestablished. As Felipe Pedraza and Milagros Rodríguez Cáceres explain,

Las mujeres decididas, que rompen con las convenciones sociales (hasta cierto punto), abundan

en la comedia. El dramaturgo casi siempre se coloca de parte de la sublevación de la mujer y exalta el amor como fuerza fundamental que mueve el comportamiento de las criaturas escénicas. El contraste se produce, y muy vivo, con las fuerzas impositivas de la sociedad, encarnadas en la figura del padre o del hermano ... No hay que olvidar, no obstante, que toda la actividad femenina conduce, pese al enfrentamiento con la estructura social representada por el padre, a confirmar y perpetuar el mismo modelo a través del matrimonio. (81)

Edward H. Friedman offers a perspective based on the substantial differences between comedy and tragedy: "Serious drama in the Golden Age customarily directs the audience to view events from the male perspective, whereas comic plays—which may foreground their irreverence and their status as anomaly and as free play—often adopt a female perspective" (298). For Friedman, saturnalian comedy allows deviation from the social code, and therefore allows the empowerment of women, but this power is only temporary.

The comic medium permits nonconformity to the degree that the social order is disturbed but not disrupted. That is why endings in comedy are frequently paradoxical. Women get what they want—marriage, which reintegrates them into the society from whose rules they have transgressed. They are free to enter a new space—a new house—that is different from yet ultimately the same as the one they have connived to abandon. (298)

According to Friedman, women are temporally allowed to voice their complaints and fight for what they want, and in the comedy, because what they want is the perpetuation of their submission to the order (represented by a marriage to a same-class suitor), they are granted their wishes. But in tragedies, as the fulfillment of their desires will imply breaking social harmony, they are punished. The fate of women is thus just repeating the general message of the text: conforming to the norms brings happiness and social acceptance, breaking tradition leads to destruction.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, we find scholars who interpret the *comedia* as a feminist genre. Bruce Wardropper provides a perfect example of this view, which strikes me as an unsustainable overstatement:

En mi opinión, la comedia—y muy especialmente la comedia española del Siglo de Oro—no es cosa de mucho ruido y pocas nueces, sino expresión positiva

de la necesidad de cambio, de la necesidad de una sociedad más abierta, de la necesidad de entrada de lo femenino en el gobierno masculino de la sociedad. No sólo constituye la reclamación de un cambio, sino la de una inversión: se pide lo saturnal, se pide el mundo al revés. (235)

Melveena McKendrick defends a similar perspective:

The theatre by its nature, needed heroines, and heroines it usually got. And its anti-heroines answered the demands of plots and themes which were, if anything, feminist in implication. ... it is probably true to say that in the seventeenth century the dramatist succeeded the courtly lover, albeit in a different way, as the champion of women and the upholder of the feminist cause. (12)

What is the ultimate message of the genre in relation to women? Does Golden Age theater reinforce male domination, as Maravall and Pedraza argue? Or on the contrary, as Wardropper claims, does the *comedia* propose the need to restructure society by allowing women to be part of the public sphere? This essay does not pretend to provide a definite answer, primarily because I do not think there is one. Both types of readings might not necessary contradict or exclude each other. It seems clear to me that one can not assume that there is such a thing as a common message in all the plays of the genre and that one author always maintains a single point of view. The second problem is that both interpretations tend to prioritize a small fragment of a play over the piece as a whole. I propose to look at each play individually and to accept the possibility that authors might not always be taking a clear, consistent position.

As most critics of Moreto have pointed out, when comparing his female characters to those created by his contemporary playwrights, it is clear that the women in Moreto's *comedias* are more prone to openly defend their rights, especially when it comes to selecting a husband. It was this particular tendency that led Juan Luis Alborg to deem Moreto a feminist author:

Quizá convenga recordar, al paso, que es muy frecuente hallar en las comedias de Moreto demostraciones inequívocas de su opinión sobre la libertad de la mujer para escoger marido, libre de las tradicionales imposiciones familiares; manifestación de un feminismo, que se supone peculiar de Rojas, pero que es en Moreto no menos evidente, aunque no se muestre en su obra con aparato de tragedia. (795)

But the fact that many female leading characters express their discontent when selecting a husband, does not make Moreto a feminist. As Ruth Lee Kennedy explains, "In her relationship with her father, filial respect serves, on the part of the heroine, as a deterrent to action but not to dignified protest" (91). Moreto might be pointing out a problem, but he is not necessarily promoting radical change. In reality, when Moreto's women complain to their fathers or brothers, the men ignore them. Spanish theater will still have to wait a century to find a real open defense of a woman's right to select a husband.²

Although female characters in Moreto argue for their right to have an opinion, they do not rebel against authority. It can be argued, of course, that real rebellion does not truly happen in any play of the period. Even when looking at extreme examples, such as Laurencia in *Fuenteovejuna*, what we find is a woman inveighing against men precisely because they do not honor their traditional male responsibilities. So when I say that these women do not rebel, I mean that they are not even rebellious by genre standards. Unlike the heroines of other contemporary playwrights, Moreto's heroines are always virtuous and never indecorous. Ruth Lee Kennedy explains this uniqueness by contrasting Moreto to Lope de Vega: "'Recato,' 'decoro,' 'respeto,' 'discreción': these are the terms which are as indispensable in the portraits of Moreto's heroine as is 'brío' in the description of Lope's" (88). Juan Luis Alborg offers a similar analysis:

Los [galanes] de Moreto sienten, por lo común, un gran respeto a la mujer, que también en sus comedias ofrece predominantemente parecidas virtudes de moderación y buen sentido: recato frente al "brío" de tanta heroína de Lope y de Tirso. No encontramos, pues, en Moreto mujeres que, como muchas de aquel último, corran tras sus galanes, vestidas de varón, para exigir reparaciones amorosas; tan sólo en dos ocasiones presenta Moreto mujeres en traje masculino, y aun esto en episodios secundarios. (793)

How is it then that Moreto, whose female protagonists are characterized by their modesty and respect, appears to many critics to be a feminist? The answer is to be found in the other particular trait of his style, the tendency to value reason over action. As the rest of the characters, women rely on their intellectual capabilities to obtain what they want. It is in those passages in which the female characters analyze their situation where critics have found a feminist subtext. In several plays of the author, the ladies are able to develop a logical reasoning that exposes the internal contradictions of a social system that suppresses their rights and freedom. They may not try to bring down the structure, but they clearly expose its defects. These women are not irrational

rebels, but very intelligent individuals who present the audience with a picture of their unjust situation—a subordinate position that no one in the audience could deny. To all outward appearances, Moreto's *damas* appear obedient, and they never lose their decorum, but rather, using their wit, they are able to figure out a way to impose their own will on a recalcitrant world. The creation of strong female characters is not unique to Moreto. Many can be found, for example, in Tirso de Molina's plays, such as *La prudencia en la mujer*. What makes them different is that they rely on reasoning more than on acting.

Generally speaking, a *comedia de enredo* involves a young aristocratic couple (or more than one couple) whose love faces some obstacle that must be overcome. The major part of a typical play consists of the lovers' struggle against some external hindrance. Lope's main characters, both male and female, are dominated by their passions, which lead them to make irrational choices. By contrast, it is impossible to find in Moreto any character as passionate as Lope's Laurencia in *Fuenteovejuna* or Calderón's Rosaura in *La vida es sueño*. When confronted with an obstacle, Lope's and Calderón's characters *act*, while Moreto's *think*. There is also a lot of action on Moreto's stage, which was what the audience was expecting; but Moreto's action is more quotidian. His plays are more *comedias de ideas* than Lope's. Moreto's ladies court danger merely by talking to their lovers in the garden without their father's consent or by sneaking paramours into their rooms;³ there is no cross-dressing, running away, or taking arms.

In Moreto, before pursuing any venture, each character meditates at length, and it is this logical rumination that becomes the core element of the play. Critics have proposed different theories for this tendency to reason. Ruth Lee Kennedy, Josep Lluís Sirera, and Hilda Rissel see in Moreto a playwright who is already marking the transition to Neoclassicism. Perhaps the predominance of reason over action is just Moreto's personal style, but whatever the reason, philosophical considerations are not mere comments on the action, but rather the motor of action. Because doing is preceded by thinking, and the former happens equally in men and women, females are given more space to have a voice. In Moreto's harmonic world, one's will is imposed not by force but by reason, and the best reasoning always wins. There might not be social equality between genders—Moreto does not even mention that possibility—but at least women can escape from irrational or unjust treatment.

No puede ser represents a perfect example of Moreto's particular treatment of both the female figure and the importance of intellectual abilities. The play opens at Doña Ana's house in Madrid, where she hosts a poetic academy. During one of the academy's meetings, Doña Ana presents the audience with the following riddle:

Este fuego que arde en mi,
otro fuego le encendió,

que arde tambien como yo,
y à vn tiempo ardemos ansi.
El humo que exhala el fuego
conviene à mi perfeccion,
y el cubrirme es por razon
de que no le exhale luego:
Mientras que no me consumo,
quando mas tierra me dàs,
mas me abrigas, y arde mas,
cô que he de arrojar mas humo:
No dexando yo de arder,
salir en vapor presumo;
dezid quien soy yo, y el humo,
que guardar no puede ser. (5)⁴

None of the attendants can figure out the enigma, until Don Félix de Toledo, a close friend of Doña Ana, resolves it:

El humo denso que exhala,
es su honor, la tierra luego
con que le cumbren, es cierto,
que son las guardas que tiene
su honor, y mientras queriendo
mas guardas ponerle intentan,
se enciende mas su deseo,
y crece el daño; de donde
se infiere con claro exemplo,
que quando la muger quiere,
si de su honor no haze aprecio,
guardarla, no puede ser,
y es disparate emprenderlo. (6)

The answer to Doña Ana's riddle—it is impossible to guard a woman who does not want to be guarded—will become the center of the play. Immediately everyone concurs with her opinion, except for Don Pedro, her cousin and future husband, who thinks they are all wrong:

Porque del hombre el desvelo,
puede assegurar su honor,
y con cautela, y esfuerço,
vencer puede esse peligro;
que las mugeres que vemos
libianas, no es por su industria,
sino descuido del dueño. (6)

She tries to convince him, but he perseveres in what is presented as a mistake from the beginning. Although in love, Doña Ana realizes she cannot marry a man who is so blind, and she decides to prove him wrong before the wedding. Doña Ana is not trying to demonstrate superiority over Don Pedro. She really wants him to value her moral virtue, not her intellectual assets, and in order to do so she needs to force him to see the truth. According to Don Pedro,

... las mugeres que vemos
libianas, no es por su industria,
sino descuido del dueño. (6)

He thinks that if a woman acts immorally, it is her guardian's fault for not having watched her properly. This makes Doña Ana upset because it implies that if women's flirtatiousness is men's fault, then their virtue is also men's achievement. Therefore, according to Don Pedro's line of reasoning, there is no objective value in an honest woman, as preserving her integrity is not her free choice but the imposition of her "owner's" zeal. Doña Ana realizes she cannot marry a man who does not fully understand and appreciate her virtue, which in her case is particularly precious, because she has guarded her virginity even though there was no man in charge of it (she seems to live alone, without a father or brother). The argument rests on deeply moral terms, but it also moves into another level. What starts as a topic of honor develops into a new confrontation, now an intellectual one. Doña Ana and Don Pedro dispute whether a man's strategies for guarding a woman or her efforts to escape from his guard will prevail. Or to put it in other words: who will be the one able to develop a plan the other cannot figure out.

After failing to convince her fiancé through reasoning, Doña Ana physically will have to show him the truth. Don Félix de Toledo, a good friend of the couple, is ready to help her. He will pretend to seduce Doña Inés de Pacheco, Don Pedro's beloved sister, in order to show Don Pedro that he cannot guard any woman. What starts as a game gradually develops into real love, and Don Félix moves from wanting to give Don Pedro a lesson to really desiring to marry Doña Inés. Tarugo, Don Félix's servant and the *gracioso* in the play, develops a trick by which Don Pedro himself will introduce his sister's lover into their own house and eventually walk her into Don Félix's hands without even realizing it. Tarugo arrives at Don Pedro's home with fake presentation letters, supposedly signed by the Marquis of Villena, Don Pedro's good friend, in America. In the letters, Don Pedro is asked to host the rich and eccentric Tarugo. Although worried about his sister, Don Pedro cannot but accept the petition of the Marquis. After all, as Tarugo has explained, there is nothing to be afraid of because he has a weird disease that makes him collapse if he sees a woman during the night. Tarugo ends up living like a king at Don Pedro's expense for some time, while serving as an intermediary between Don Félix and Doña Inés,

who soon falls in love. Tarugo, a master in the art of make-believe, tells Don Pedro that he is in Spain to arrange the marriage between his own sister back in America and Don Félix, and that this is why Don Félix needs to visit him in the house. Don Pedro continues to believe all the lies created by Tarugo and Doña Inés, while persevering in his idea of the possibility of guarding a woman. At the end, when confronted with the truth, Don Pedro admits that he was wrong and that it is impossible to guard a woman if she does not want to be guarded. Doña Ana accepts him now as a husband, and Don Félix and Doña Inés also get married.

The characters and the plot reproduce the traditional *comedia de enredo*: two pairs of lovers come across an obstacle that endangers their love, but after going through a difficult muddle, at the last minute everything untangles and they get married. The multiple scenes of action, danger, and humor act like a frame for the discussion of two main philosophical questions. This essay concentrates on the analysis of one of those: women's intellectual capabilities. But in order to fully understand the significance of this play, the reader also needs to consider Moreto's analysis of the theological principle of free will.

In Moreto's time, "women's intelligence" (or lack of it) was already an old debate, often linked to the question of whether women possessed a soul. The natural intellectual inferiority of women had been supported by philosophers as influential as Plato, Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and St. Augustine. Moreto, on the other hand, departs both from those who defended the innate inferiority of women and those who posited a mental equality between sexes. Moreto does not compare *levels* of intelligence but rather different *models* of intelligence. For him, men and women simply think differently. Or, to be more specific, women can think in a way that cannot be apprehended by men and that allows women to get what they want from a society that does not permit them to publically defend their interest. It is not by chance that this special ability, commonly referred to as "ingenio" (wit) throughout the play, is shared by the servants. They too have the need for strategies to thrive in an oppressive environment.

Generally speaking, *No puede ser* considers women as having an intellectual level comparable to that of men. Each individual is capable of a certain degree of logical reasoning or artistic sensibility, independently of gender. Doña Ana Pacheco is a literate woman and a poet, and these attributes do not conflict with her other more traditionally feminine aspects. The first description we have of her is provided by Don Félix:

Doña Ana Pacheco, es,
por su virtud estimada,
por su ingenio celebrada,
por sus partes lo que vès;
es sola, rica, y discreta,
su honestidad conocida,

y el empleo de su vida
le dà el estudio. (1)

She has all the proper attributes of a wife-to-be by the operative standards: virtue, beauty (*partes*), honesty, and nobility (as implied by her last name). She also possesses *ingenio* and a peculiarity: she dedicates her time to study. The audience will immediately place her in the category of literate woman (*mujer letrada*), but soon discovers she lacks the negative traces often connected to this figure. For example, a prototypical literate woman is Diana from Moreto's *El desdén, con el desdén*. She is an avid reader who disdains both love and men. Even though she is the only descendant of the Count of Barcelona, she refuses to get married and openly rejects any suitor, up to the point of threatening to commit suicide if she is forced to tie the knot. Her loftiness is blamed on her excessive dedication to study. In the end, Diana is a positive character who ends up falling in love and fulfilling her duties as woman and heiress. Nevertheless, she connects with the tradition that links excessive reading in a woman with an unnatural contempt for men and marriage. In some extreme cases, literate women can also be portrayed as masculine, and therefore a threat to society, because they challenge a system based on differentiated gender roles. A clear example of this type is *La serrana de la Vera*, by Vélez de Guevara, in which the main character's rejection of men takes her to the point of killing any male that crosses her path.

Contrary to many literate women in Golden Age theater, Doña Ana has no aversion to men (at least not an open one), and she opposes neither love nor marriage. In fact, she is from the beginning engaged to Don Pedro. It seems pretty clear that she is going to marry because she wants to, not because she needs to or is forced to do so. As far as we know, she lives alone (except for the company of a female servant), probably because she is an orphan. She is rich and keeps an active social life, for which she is respected. Doña Ana is willing to get married, and when she discovers that her future husband is extremely jealous and wrong about certain questions, she does not reject him, but rather helps him to become a more deserving partner. She postpones the wedding until he recognizes his mistakes, but she never even considers cancelling it.

Doña Ana, although not the most archetypical case of the literate woman, is not an exception in Spanish literature. Examples of this type of woman that do not include the negative characteristics commonly connected to them can already be found in medieval texts. In the *Libro de Apolonio*, for example, Tarsiana was described as a woman of culture with many similarities to Doña Ana. They are both well-respected artists—one a poet, the other a musician—who use their outstanding intelligence to achieve their goals. They also share a need to be recognized for their personal values by the men they love. In *Woman and Society in the Spanish Drama of the Golden Age*, Melveena McKendrick includes a chapter entitled "The Scholar, The Career Woman" in

which she analyzes the figure of the cultured woman who is not aloof. According to McKendrick: "Apart from those heroines whose learning is introduced as a justification for their *esquivez* and who are duly taught the error of their ways, there are few female scholars in the drama" (219). In fact, McKendrick considers Doña Ana to be "by far the most impressive (by normal standards) of the learned women of the seventeenth-century woman" (227).

While literature in general presented literate women as rare exceptions, this is not the case of Doña Ana. In the very first scene of the play, Don Félix clarifies that she is not the only female poet in Madrid, although she is the best.

Aunque ella no es la primera,
pues en Madrid, oy se ven
mugeres, que hazen tambien
versos, que embidia qualquiera;
te asseguro de doña Ana,
que sin ser sola, pudiera
ser en esto la primera. (1)

Doña Ana's artistic tendencies are thus viewed as normal, and that is a constant throughout the play in reference to female intelligence. In that sense, Moreto represents a very modern perspective in which women are naturally seen as intelligent, but without a need to insist on it. In this environment, it is not a surprise that Doña Ana holds a poetic academy in her home. During the seventeenth century in any major city of Spain, one could find several academies that integrated writers and other artists, sometimes under the aegis of a wealthy nobleman. Being the host of an academy, especially in the Court, meant not only social and economic status but also being considered a prominent member of the intellectual community and a patron of the arts.

Doña Ana is the only female member of the academy, and she is the one in charge. It is Doña Ana who decides in which order the guests will declaim, and she is also the first one to judge the quality of each poem. The last composition of the night is Doña Ana's above-mentioned riddle, an illustration of her outstanding intellect and artistic ability. Several members of the academy try to resolve the riddle, but they cannot. Don Pedro himself surrenders to her wit. Finally, Don Félix finds the solution. What this riddle proves is that, regarding artistic talent, there is no apparent difference between men and women. Doña Ana creates an enigma too difficult for many in the play, but easy enough for Don Félix: she is neither superior, nor inferior. Agustín Moreto has no intention of presenting one sex as superior to the other. There are individual degrees of excellence not related to gender.

What is true for artistic faculties is also true for logical reasoning: it is independent of gender. In this point I dissent from Hilda Rissel, who argues that Moreto connects reasoning mostly to women:

Female characters and their values gain importance in the development of the dramatic plot, at times to the point of replacing male values. This feminine perspective has an impact on the plot in that it dialectically opposes two points of view, feminine *Cordura* and male *Locura*. Feminine reason is more clear-sighted than the male. (12)

In fact, as we have seen, resolving the riddle in this play required applying logic to poetry, and some characters were better than others at this, independent of their gender. But the best portrayal of different levels of reasoning takes place at the end of the academy, when Don Félix reveals the meaning of the riddle—it is impossible to guard a woman if she does not want to be guarded—, a notion with which Pedro disagrees. For the rest of the play Doña Ana will try to show him his error through the use of three cognitive strategies: logical reasoning, examples from authority, and practical experience. The first two do not work, not because Doña Ana's discourse has any flaws, but because Don Pedro is unable to fully assimilate her reasoning. And this, once again, has nothing to do with gender, but rather with individual skills.

Doña Ana's first attempt to instruct Don Pedro is to engage him in a dialogue that will invalidate his point:

D. Ped. Quanto fuere riesgo humano
lo alcanza el entendimiento,
y el hombre es capaz de todo.

D. An. Pues si vos presumis esso,
en platica lo pongamos. (6-7)

Doña Ana argues that the more care a man puts into guarding a woman, the more strategies she will develop to escape his prison. He insists that a clever man will lock all doors, and she responds that she will always find her way out. She points out to him that he cannot expect a young woman never to leave the house, and he answers that he will always accompany her. Doña Ana keeps pressing, what happens when you have to go out and the woman is left alone in the house? Don Pedro has a solution: he will have sentries. And she insists: what if they are not loyal? Pedro answers that an intelligent man knows whom he can trust. She responds that servants can fall asleep. To this objection, Don Pedro cannot find an answer, and he gets upset:

Esse es vn caso imposible,
y fuera caerse el Cielo,
y me cierro en mi opinion,
que esos son vanos intentos. (7)

Doña Ana's first approach in trying to disillusion Pedro is very similar to that of the Socratic method. She keeps asking him questions based on his own answers in an attempt to take him to a point in which he can no longer answer, thus exposing the internal contradiction of his own argument. Doña Ana achieves her goal, but he is too stubborn to recognize that he is incorrect.

In this first part of the argument, the intellectual capabilities of men and women are labeled with different words, creating a distinction that will prevail for the rest of the text. When referring to men, the three most commonly repeated terms are *discreto*, *entendimiento*, and *juicio*, and, for women, *industria* and *ingenio*. It is important to point out that while the male characteristics are not presented as exclusive to men but rather as part of a more general human nature, the female ones seem to be the exclusive province of women (and as we will see later, servants), or at least to reach their maximum potential in women. The three universal abilities are pure cognitive skills, while the two exclusively female lean more towards a sense of practical clever resourcefulness. Consequently, any woman should be able to find out a way to trick any man. Although he may have an intelligence level potentially similar (or even higher) than hers, she will always have a wit that he is unable to grasp.

When analyzing the definition of each of these terms in the two most well-respected dictionaries of the time (*Diccionario de autoridades* and Sebastián de Covarrubias's *Tesoro de la lengua castellana o española*), the distinction between the two sets of mental capacities becomes clear. Covarrubias defines *discreto* as "el hombre cuerdo y de buen seso que sabe ponderar las cosas y dar a cada una su lugar," and *Autoridades* as "el que es agudo y elocuente, que discurre bien en lo que habla o escribe." The definitions that *Autoridades* provides for the other words used by Don Pedro are also very illuminating. For example, *entendimiento* is defined as "una de las tres potencias del alma, que (según San Agustín) es aquella virtud que entiende las cosas que no ve, y más claramente, es una potencia espiritual y cognoscitiva del alma racional, con la cual se entienden y conocen los objetos, así sensibles como no sensibles." *Juicio* means "potencia o facilidad intelectual que le sirve al hombre para distinguir el bien del mal, y lo verdadero de lo falso." These words all signify abilities to think, talk, and write; but they do not mention the capacity of acting. They are all, in one way or another, faculties of the soul.

However, the two female skills (*ingenio* and *industria*) refer to practical abilities to get things done. According to Covarrubias, *industria* is "la maña, diligencia y solercia con que alguno hace cualquier cosa con menos trabajo que otro," while *ingenio* is "una fuerza natural de entendimiento, investigadora de lo que por razón y discurso se puede alcanzar en todo género de ciencias, disciplinas, artes liberales y mecánicas, sutilezas, invenciones y engaño." The explanations in *Autoridades* help to clarify the concepts even further. *Ingenio*

is defined as "facultad o potencia en el hombre con que sutilmente discurre o inventa trazas, modos, máquinas y artificios, o razones y argumentos, o percibe y aprehende fácilmente las ciencias. Se toma también por las mismas trazas, mañas o artes de que se usa para conseguir alguna cosa." *Industria* is defined as "destreza o habilidad en cualquier arte. Se toma también por ingenio y sutileza, maña o artificio." Notice that even though there is an acknowledgment of an intellectual component in both of these terms, they also represent the skill to get something done. *Ingenio* and *industria* are what help achieve a goal, and, as the definitions point out, goals can be achieved through reasoning, skill, or cunning, but also through devices, tricks, or subtlety. These are exactly the feminine abilities that escape male understanding, and the ones that will enable Doña Ana to prove her point. The rest of the characters are perfectly aware of the power of wit. For example, Don Félix points out to Don Pedro that the less intelligent woman, because of her *ingenio*, will be able to trick the most cautious of men:

Don Pedro,
daos por vencido, que todos
nos rendimos a este riesgo,
sin agraviar las mugeres;
pues de la mano del Cielo,
viene solo la que es buena;
y vive Dios, que si en esto
tuviaesedes cien cabeças,
como tuvo Briareo,
y en ellas los ojos de Argos,
y de Mercurio el ingenio,
os avia de engañar
la muger que sabe menos. (8)

Even before the disagreement between Doña Ana and Don Pedro starts, she had already referred to the importance of *ingenio*. The first poem read in the academy was a little song composed by Doña Ana and sung by musicians: "Es el ingenio noble como el Sol, / Que con la luz que alumbrada calor" (4). With these two hendecasyllables, Doña Ana frames the goal of the academy: to praise the virtues of wit. She is, without a doubt, referring to the generic value of intellectual life, but that is not all. Her choice of wording is not irrelevant; the song mentions *ingenio*. At this point, the spectator does not yet know that, when using this expression, Doña Ana is not referring just to an abstract mental ability, but rather to a feminine quality that allows women to get what they want. The entire play will actually prove the existence and practical uses of this peculiar quality, the *ingenio*. As in many other plays of the Golden Age, music acts here as a sort of Greek chorus; it is the voice of knowledge.

The three words most frequently used by Pedro to talk about the intellectual abilities that assure any man the capacity for guarding any woman (*discreto*, *juicio*, and *entendimiento*) imply sharpness, sensibility, prudence, wisdom, understanding of facts and concepts, and distinction between good and evil and true and false. From the moment Don Pedro talks, the more he insists on having these qualities, the more we realize he lacks them. What he really shows himself to be, as all characters note, is *necio*, which is the word most commonly used to refer to him. He is not simply *tonto* (Cov. "simple y sin entendimiento"), or *mentecato* (Cov. "falto de juicio"), or *bobo* (Aut. "de poco entendimiento y capacidad"), or *bestia* (Aut. "rudo, ignorante, basto, que sabe poco");⁵ he is "necio." According to Covarrubias, *necio* is "el que con ignorancia está engañado en algo, no cae en la cuenta hasta que ve que es al contrario de lo que pensaba, y, si es cuerdo y prudente, en conociendo su error le deja y no prosigue más en ello." Similarly, *Autoridades* defines *necedad* as "ignorancia total de las cosas en quien debía o podía saberlas. Se toma también por el dicho o hecho fuera de razón, nacido de la ignorancia de la casa o de las circunstancias de ellas. Se toma así mismo por imprudencia, terquedad o porfía." According to the definitions of *necio*, Pedro does not necessarily lack intellectual skills. He is just mistaken about something specific, and his ignorance persists because he is very obstinate. But he can escape error if he is shown the truth, and that is exactly what Doña Ana, Don Félix, and Doña Inés will do.

Nevertheless Don Pedro's *necedad* is not his only problem. Actually, he does not exactly come across as a particularly intelligent man; *entendimiento* and *juicio* are two characteristics that he is also lacking. He might be an easy target, but that does not diminish the power of female wit. Examples of women using their wit to deceive their parents or brothers can be found throughout the genre. In the play, Don Pedro's stubbornness makes him often look ridiculous and his reasoning process is not always very good. In the third act, for example, Don Pedro encounters Don Félix in his own house, where he is so jealously keeping his sister Doña Inés. Don Félix is in the house without permission and Don Pedro, instead of interpreting the event as evidence of the impossibility of guarding his sister, comments:

Miren si dezia yo bien,
que era imposible mi agrauio,
guardando tanto mi honor;
porque aunque este hõbre ha entrado,
suceder puede vna vez
en vna casa vn acaso;
mas no es para cada dia,
señores, no ay que dudarlo,
el que guardare su honor,
hallara lo que yo hallo. (34)

This interpretation is hilarious: because there is a young man secretly hidden, he deduces that this is proof of the impossibility of being offended in his honor. Moreto, a master of irony, makes Pedro announce his own ignorance without his noticing it. Indeed, there is no doubt that he who guards his honor will find what Pedro finds: a man seducing his sister in front of his own eyes.

Don Pedro's inability to see what is obvious also has to do with his lack of *ingenio*. After all, as mentioned in the *Autoridades* definition, *ingenio* is the faculty to invent deceptions and also the capacity to perceive and apprehend them. When Tarugo dresses up as a tailor and enters Don Pedro's home, Doña Inés, who has never seen him in her life, immediately realizes that he is not who he pretends and that he is connected to Don Félix. However, when minutes later Don Pedro enters the room, he is easily convinced of the lack of risk, in a hilarious scene that once again proves his poor reasoning abilities and his incapacity to recognize that he is being tricked:

D. Pe. Hermana, què haze aqui este hombre?

D. In. El sastre embiado le ha,
porque corta de vestir
con gran destreça, y me trae
algunas telas que venden,
por si las quieres comprar.

D. Ped. Antojos trae?

Taru. Porqué no?

D. Ped. No lo vi en sastre jamàs.

Taru. Si el sastre es corto de vista,
y vè bien por su cristal,
porqué no se ha de poner
antojos?

D. Ped. Es gravedad
à que el sastre no se atreve.

Taru. Yo he visto sastre, que trae
relox en la faltriquera.

D. Ped. Mira tu hermana, si ay
tela alguna de tu gusto,
y se la puedes comprar.
Y tu Manuela à mi quarto
lleva luz, que quiero yà
recogerme.

[.....]

Taru. Yà la tragò, vive Christo;
pues mas falta que tragar. (15)

Notice how Tarugo and Doña Inés use their *ingenio* to fabricate lies and answers that Don Pedro has no problem believing. The wit of women and servants falls outside Don Pedro's scope of understanding, and, therefore, he is not able to perceive it.

Indeed, Don Pedro is stubborn and not particularly intelligent. In certain moments, he is capable of logical reasoning. After discovering a portrait of Don Félix in his sister's bedroom, the first thing Don Pedro does is to contrast the man in the painting with Don Félix, who also happens to be in the house. Even though Don Pedro's first impulse is to attack Don Félix—"A darle de puñaladas / el furor me precipita" (18)—Don Pedro realizes that Don Félix may be free of guilt, so he decides to act with moderation until obtaining "cabal información" (18). Don Pedro shows that although obstinate in his idea of the possibility of guarding a woman, he is also willing to investigate and discover the truth. Therefore, it will be possible to change his opinion when provided with enough evidence.

Given his stubbornness, talking Don Pedro out of his mistake is not an easy task. Doña Ana's first attempt, logical reasoning, did not work, so she then employs a new rhetorical strategy: arguing from authority. This ancient method of discourse resorts to the life or words of a respected figure to support an argument, and was still common in oratory and in academic teaching during the seventeenth century. Doña Ana advises Don Pedro that with his attitude he is not just contradicting her personal opinion, but a universal truth proven by the experience of the wise:

No hagays tal por vida vuestra,
señor don Pedro Pacheco,
y no querays saber vos,
mas que todo el mundo en esto,
y advertid, que la experiencia
de los sabios, conociendo
que aquesto no puede ser,
nos dexò varios exemplos;
en las fabulas antiguas. (7)

Doña Ana illustrates her point, the impossibility of guarding a woman, with the mythological tale of Danaë, who, even though locked by her father in a tower, was still raped by Jupiter, who had metamorphosed into golden rain. Doña Ana reinforces the conclusion of the mythological story with a folk tale (the authority of common sense represented by popular tradition):

Và vn caminante à vn Lugar,
en muchos caminos vemos,

que desde el principio suele
verse el Lugar à lo lexos;
siguiendo el camino à vezes
se và la senda torciendo,
que parece que se aparta
del lugar; y es, que el primero
que descubriò aquel camino
hallò algun mal passo en medio,
con que fue fuerça torcerle
para ir al lugar mas presto.
Si alguno por su agudeza
este camino siguiendo,
pensasse que iria mas breve
si le siguiesse derecho,
y haziendo norte à los ojos,
abriesse camino nuevo,
despues que con mas trabajo
huviesse andado gran trecho,
daria con el mal passo
del pantano, ò el despeño,
con que era fuerça bolver
à su camino primero. (8)

Folk tales are very dear to Moreto, who in several plays includes in the first scenes a popular tale that acts as prolepsis of the plot. Similarly to the walker of the story, Don Pedro is trying to find the truth, but instead of following the path already opened by others, he insists on making his own. He will waste time and energy, eventually being forced to go back and accept the original pathway.

Like the walker, Don Pedro will not be convinced until he physically sees he is wrong, so authoritative tales do not make him change his mind. From this moment on, the indoctrination will necessarily have to be achieved through practical experience. When Doña Ana recapitulates the whole process, she explains,

Yo en fin, como siento en èl
tal error, he procurado
suauizarle con razones,
moverle con desengaños.
Mas siendo su terquedad
tanta, que al fin yo no basto,
me vali de la experiencia,
que es argumento mas claro. (37)

Don Pedro will be the one to provide the guinea pigs for the experiment: himself and his sister:

Yo no soy
casado, ni en Madrid tengo
mas que vna hermana, y del Sol
à defenderla me atrevo. (8)

Doña Ana and Don Félix see at this moment the perfect occasion to demonstrate to Don Pedro that he is wrong. Don Félix will court Doña Inés, Don Pedro's sister, with the help of his servant Tarugo. As is common in many of Moreto's plays, the name of the *gracioso* is ironic. "Tarugo", means dumb, but he is clearly very smart. The word "tarugo," as Covarrubias points out, also means "un clavo de madera con que se aprietan las junturas y ensambladuras de dos maderos, cuales echan en las puertas y ventanas." A *tarugo* is therefore the piece that helps close doors and windows, and Tarugo will be the one who opens the doors and windows of Doña Inés's room to Don Félix.

Tarugo possesses a wit that is comparable to that of the ladies in the play, and the other characters continually praise his *ingenio* and *industria*. Why is that? What do these ostensibly different individuals share? The answer is very simple. Both women and servants are second-class citizens in seventeenth-century Spain, and because they are oppressed by society, they find themselves forced to develop skills that are unnecessary for noblemen. Women and servants have just adapted to an environment in which their wit gives them an edge.

Wit helps both the ladies and the servants get what they want. Tarugo applies his tricks to help his master Don Félix seduce Doña Inés, but he also obtains personal benefits. He introduces himself into Pedro's home in order to be able to open the way to Don Félix, but while he is there, he takes advantage of the situation as much as he can. With the excuse of being one of Don Pedro's closest friends, he establishes himself in Don Pedro's house and lives like a king, continually eating meat, drinking chocolate and beer, and making Don Pedro serve him. His wit is such that he is able to put himself in the position of giving orders to a nobleman. Of course, the situation is temporary, and the natural social order, as in any other comedy of the time, is not overturned. Tarugo has no real intention of staying in a social position that is not his own, but he has no problem in enjoying the privileges for a while. Those who possess *ingenio* are able to use it to get what they want: Doña Ana shows Don Pedro his mistake, Doña Inés marries Félix, and Tarugo eats and drinks as he pleases.

Women's wit is not exclusive to this particular play or even to Moreto. It is actually a trademark of the *dramatis personae* of the *dama* in Golden Age theater. In fact, it had already been pointed out by Juana de José Prades in her study *Teoría sobre los personajes de la comedia nueva en cinco dramaturgos*. De José Prades explains how in the baroque theater there were six generic character types that always had the same qualities: male lead (*galán*), female lead (*dama*), male servant, female servant, father (or brother), and powerful man (*poderoso*). One of the idiosyncratic marks of *damas* is what she calls audacity

and insincerity, which help women achieve the love of their men. Even though the words selected differ, the concept is the same. Audacity and insincerity are the equivalents of *ingenio* and *industria*. Juana de José Prades explains why the ladies often resort to lying, one of the most common *industrias*:

La dama defiende su firme propósito amoroso, cercado de tantos enemigos, con las únicas armas que tiene a su alcance: ocultación, cautela, disimulo. Esto desarrolla en ella una cualidad negativa que llega a serle habitual: la *insinceridad*. Esta insinceridad no llega a constituirse en hipocresía, porque la dama no tiene propósito deliberado de mentir y disimular, sino que son las circunstancias externas a ella misma, las apuradas situaciones en que se ve, las que le obligan a esta permanente insinceridad, en la que la primera ocultación o mentira trae aparejada todas las siguientes. (83)

Women lack a public voice to defend their rights or to ask for what they want. They are expected to be submissive and silent, and most of them know that openly rebelling against authority is not going to get them anywhere. That is why they have to resort to trickery. As de José Prades points out, insincerity (and we can add the *ingenio* and *industria*) is not a negative quality *per se*, but a necessary last resort. Actually, Moreto clearly points out that women have to resort to it in order to keep their free will and virtue. In *No puede ser*, this need for an alternative fighting tool is more prominent in Doña Inés than in Doña Ana, because Doña Ana, unlike most theatrical ladies, actually has a voice and is not subject to the commands of any man.

Immediately after Don Pedro decides to prove his point by guarding his sister, he rushes back home from the academy and locks her in. When she perceives his excessive zeal, she deduces that her brother has lost his mind. As a good sister, she does not complain but asks the servant the reason for what is going on. Alberto, Don Pedro's servant, explains to Doña Inés what happened at the academy and also lets her know how Don Félix is going to try to seduce her to prove Don Pedro wrong. From this moment we know that there is no way Don Pedro is going to be able to achieve his purpose. When supporting his view against Doña Ana's, the first thing he said to her was that a man knows which servant to trust to help him guard women. Reality is very different: as soon as Don Pedro leaves the room, Alberto betrays him and takes the side of Doña Inés and Doña Ana.

It is, in fact, Don Pedro's wish to keep his sister away from Don Félix that pushes them together. Doña Inés decides to let Don Félix seduce her for two main reasons: to teach her brother a lesson and to defend women's dignity. She

also wants to show that a man cannot guard a woman, for the same reasons Doña Ana embarked on this adventure.

No ay muger tan necia, a quien
el mas discreto, y sagaz,
si ella no quiere guardarse,
piense que la ha de guardar:
y es fuero de nuestro honor;
porque si fuera verdad,
que el hombre guardarla puede,
aunque le intente agrauiar:
consistiendo esto en el dueño,
a quien sujetas estan;
ni en la honrada huviera honor,
ni en la libre liviandad;
y mi hermano ha de saber,
que esto en mi eleccion està,
y no ha de hazer accion suya,
la que fue mia no mas. (13)

In this discourse, Doña Inés's first monologue of the play, she displays a superb level of reasoning and understanding. She will actually be the one who will fully develop the concept of women's free will as a prerequisite to honor and virtue, an idea that Don Pedro is clearly unable to grasp. Although nothing is said about Doña Inés's artistic skill, she clearly possesses the other two types of female intellectual abilities. Her first intervention in the play proves her reasoning capacities, and she will also show very early her *ingenio*. Together with Doña Ana and Tarugo, she is a main contributor to the elaboration of the multiple tricks and lies that will allow the entrance of Don Félix into the house. Although it is predominantly Tarugo who lays out the entire plan, both Doña Inés and Doña Ana come up with very practical ideas of their own to facilitate the completion of the task. However, Don Félix, is a mere supporter and participant in the enterprise, because as a nobleman he lacks the necessary *ingenio* and *industria*.

As Inés clearly states, she will facilitate the plan of Doña Ana and Don Félix to prove her own virtue and to defend the dignity of women as a whole. Eventually she will fall in love with Don Félix, and the enterprise to contradict her brother will include a new interest that will come later. Her first intention was to set an example to show men the value of women:

Esto es defender la causa
de todas, sepan que ay
que agradecer à la honrada,
si à la libre ay que culpar. (13)

Doña Inés is aware of the fact, that as a woman living under the care of her brother, she does not have the space to publically voice her desires and beliefs, so she needs to do it silently, using her wit. It is only logical that the fight for the defense of women's dignity is won by using weapons that only they possess.

It has already been clarified that *ingenio* and *industria* are qualities that allow women and servants to survive in an adverse environment, providing them with extra abilities to achieve their goals. But Moreto develops the idea further, demonstrating that these qualities benefit all members of society. I am here trying to answer the question I posed at the beginning: what is the ultimate message of the play regarding women? As I will argue, defending women's right to fulfill their desires and denouncing their situation of submission, does not necessarily entail a criticism of the system or a desire to openly fight the social structures and the status quo.

What in the first act seemed to be just an intellectual debate over who can trick whom develops into a prototypical *comedia de enredo* at the beginning of the second act, when Don Félix and Doña Inés truly fall in love, but there is an obstacle: Pedro has already offered his sister's hand to another suitor. The new turn of events further legitimates Doña Inés's conduct. Her lies and mischievous acts are now directed to assuring her wedding with Don Félix. They are both young and virtuous, and, what is more important, they share a common social status. Therefore, from the ideological perspective of the genre, their love is a rightful one, and any measure taken towards achieving their marriage, as far as it does not affect anyone's honor, is justified. In reality, their marriage will perpetuate the order. In a society that denies young women the right to express their preference for a future husband, women are forced to use their wit to achieve their goals without having to openly contradict the will of their superiors. Furthermore, even in the event of a father (or brother) selecting a wrong suitor, the bride should not complain, but she is allowed to resort to her wit to prove that a mistake is going to be made, in such a way that she assures her future happiness without undermining the male authority or public reputation.

When Don Pedro starts suspecting that Don Félix is seducing Doña Inés, he immediately decides to marry her to Don Diego de Rojas to prevent any possible damage to the family's honor. But, as he himself recognizes, this marriage is not entirely fair, as Don Diego belongs to a lower economic stratum:

el remedio es, que yo case à mi hermana;
que don Diego de Rojas me la pide,
y aunque no es rico, quando el riesgo mide
la descomodidad, y la deshonra,
no ay mas comodidades que la honra. (21)

Later on, Don Pedro will even use the word "mentecato" to refer to Don Diego. From this moment, Doña Inés finds herself forced to resort to her wit to avoid

being married to a man that she does not love and, what is more important, who does not measure up to her status. Such a marriage will be bad not just for her but for the society as a whole, as it breaks the strict separation between classes. Thus, female *ingenio* becomes a tool that helps perpetuate the equilibrium of a highly stratified society, by avoiding an unequal marriage, while preserving the authority of the household.

When Don Pedro announces to his sister that he is going to marry her to Don Diego, she expresses her opposition to the decision. As in many other plays of the period, it is common in Moreto's work for a woman to complain about her lack of voice in the matter of her own marriage, given that it is she, and not the parent, who will have to live with the husband:

D. In. Y sabes tu si yo quiero?

D. P. Pues queriendo yo, no es llano, que has de querer tu tambien?

D. In. No, que soy yo quien me caso. Si tu huvieras de vivir con mi marido à tu lado, bastava que tu quisieses; pero auiedo yo de estarlo, es menester que yo quiera el marido, y no tu, hermano, que no ha de ser la eleccion de quien no ha de ser el daño.

D. Ped. Pues como tu me respondes con essa libertad?

D. In. Passo; pues no tengo yo alvedrio?

D. Ped. Doña Inès, no en este caso. (36)

Doña Inés, as all the other female leads in Moreto's works, manifests a disagreement with a system that forbids women to chose or reject a suitor, but she does it only in the privacy of their house. At the end she caves in to the authority of her brother, or she at least stops opposing his wishes, because as soon as he leaves the room she keeps trying to figure out a way to marry Don Félix. At the end, after several tricks and many lies, Don Pedro sees with his own eyes how his sister has escaped the house and finally admits that it is impossible to guard a woman. Female wit has won the battle.

This essay has attempted to add new elements to the ongoing dialogue, but there remains much work to be done to understand women in seventeenth-century theater, and even more in the case of Moreto's work. There continues to be a need to analyze the female character as more than a mere component of

the social structure presented on the stage, because in many plays there is more to them than submitting to or rebelling against the patriarchal order. Female characters are able to find a solution without submitting to social pressure or rebelling openly against it. In *No puede ser* the philosophical weight of the play rests on the shoulders of the female characters. It is they who develop and demonstrate the validity of the ideas presented in the play. For Moreto, each gender has a different understanding of the world; they each have their own intellectual qualities that allow them to negotiate a path through life. *Damas* have certain intellectual abilities that surpass male understanding, not because they are superior, but simply because society has forced them to develop certain survival strategies. We see women using the tools of the system to achieve their personal goals. They may complain about their second class status, but they accept it and adapt themselves to the circumstances. They might not like the system, but they do not openly fight it nor try to destroy it. What they do is develop ways to fulfill their wishes from within the social norm.

Notes

1. This essay will deal with the representation of female characters by male playwrights. Many of its conclusions probably could not be applied to the works of authors such as María de Zayas or Ana Caro.

2. Claims similar to those sustained by Moreto's females will appear again in the neoclassic play *El sí de las niñas* by Leandro Fernández de Moratín. By early nineteenth century, the defense of a woman's right to select a husband will not be just a complaint in the mouth of a young girl in love, but the topic of the play, and an exhortation for social change.

3. While most critics consider this tendency to ward reasoning Moreto's trademark style (see the works of Ruth Lee Kennedy, Frank Casa, María Luisa Lobato, and James A. Castañeda), for Alonso Cortés this constitutes Moreto's major defect: "Moreto no es un poeta arrebatado y calenturiento; acaso su mayour defecto estribe en ser demasiado reflexivo" (ix).

4. Because there is no critical edition of *No puede ser*, all quotations have been taken directly from the most reliable original source: *Segunda parte de las Comedias de Don Agustín Moreto*. For the purpose of this article, I have used the copy kept by the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid with signature T-6884, volume 4. No modifications or modernizations of spelling or punctuation have been made on the quotes, except for the abbreviation of common words such as "porque" or "cuando" that are spelled out here.

5. Although some of these words are occasionally used to refer to Pedro, their frequency is much less, and many times they appear as requirement of the rhyme. When other characters want to specifically define his problem, they always go back to the idea of "necio."

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Damas indias: America's Iconic Body and the Wars of Conquest in the Spanish Comedia

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THE ENCOUNTER, CONQUEST, AND COLONIZATION of the Amerindians by Spain had a racial, religious, political, cultural, and philosophical impact that deeply affected both societies.¹ Christopher Columbus's descriptions of the Caribbean islanders; Hernán Cortés's admiration for Mexico-Tenochtitlan; and the novelty, contrast, and grandiosity of the Peruvian and Brazilian landscapes were soon assimilated and reinterpreted in Europe's allegorical iconography.² As various narrative forms describing the New World and the conquistadors' experiences expanded throughout Europe, artists and philosophers began to depict what America represented in terms of material wealth, civilization, and adventure. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, these artists and philosophers allegorized the New World as a nude woman framed by untamed flora and fauna. Their images characterize America by her nakedness, her violent nature, her passive and welcoming attitude to the newcomers, by aggressive flora and fauna, and by the dangers hidden within her. In contrast, Europa is portrayed by these artists and philosophers as a fully dressed woman surrounded by symbols of order, knowledge, religion, and war. The contrasting images, then, emphasize the abundance and power to conquer possessed by Europa vis à vis the poverty and savage nature of America and its need to be conquered. This problematic representation reinforced the notion of Europa's self-assigned rightful ownership of true culture and civilization and a right for conquest and colonization.³

This need for America to be conquered to conform to Europa's idealized perception of culture and civilization is fictionalized in the *comedias de Indias* where the playwrights present onstage the sensual, exotic, and aggressive nature of the indigenous females and the Christian and civilizing purpose of the European conquistadors. The romantic desires connecting the *damas indias* to the *galanes españoles*, and the complexity of the intrigues and romances as presented on the stage, seem to follow standard *comedia* practices and be collateral topics to the primary purpose of the conquest. Nevertheless, the