

**The Performance of Justice:  
Good-Natured Rule Breaking in Calderón's *El alcalde de Zalamea***

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This paper represents my third look at Calderón's *El alcalde de Zalamea* through the optic of performance. Since performance-based approaches have evolved in recent years—although not entirely in step with my own development—I thought it might be useful to contextualize this latest reading according to my previous work. My first encounter with *El alcalde* focused on the rural mayor's self-conscious mimicry of his military “guest” Don Lope de Figueroa's words and actions when they are surprised by Captain Álvaro's theatrical attempts to penetrate Crespo's manor and, eventually, kidnap and rape the rich peasant's daughter Isabel (Nelson 1998). I called this initial approach “emblematic” because Crespo's use of brief refrain-like dialogue together with his exaggerated performance of conventional, i.e., clichéd, postures and gestures reflects the kind of visual and discursive mimetic practices found in early modern emblem theory and practice.<sup>1</sup> In particular, the final spectacle, in which Crespo unveils Don Álvaro's garrotted corpse, whose meaning he allegorizes within a small number of pithy sentences framed, in turn, by more extensive discursive commentary, meets all of the requirements identified in John T. Cull's study of the theatrical use of emblems. By framing Crespo's strategic staging of a wondrous visual spectacle according to the notion of emblematic performance, we come to recognize how his clever manipulation of aristocratic behaviour and institutions acts to obfuscate his personal motives.<sup>2</sup> This opaque resistance of Crespo's words and actions with respect to intentionality is the central interpretive problem of *El alcalde*, as it is impossible to close the distance between what Bruce Burningham might call his *actorly* intent and its *performative* effects, his private agenda and public mask (131). As George Mariscal argues in *Contradictory Subjects*, the modern critic's attempt to close this space through a search for unity and authenticity says more about our need to impose modern definitions of subjectivity on early modern culture than Calderón's theatrical ambiguity.<sup>3</sup> It was in fact Crespo's self-conscious avoidance of authenticity that led me to consider his ability to manipulate ‘from below’ through the optic of performance; however, as previously stated, my initial approach was informed primarily by the history of medieval and early modern courtly competitions and games—such as *empresas*, also known as devices, or *invenciones*—as opposed to twentieth-century acting theory.<sup>4</sup>

In revising that essay for my book on the emblem, it occurred to me that Calderón may have had a much more personal stake in his authorship of the play, not in the way a nineteenth-century romantic poet embodies his artistic pathos, but certainly one tied to his and other early modern artists' efforts to create a legitimate courtly and social space for his artistic practice: what Francisco Sánchez has termed a “literary republic.” I am returning

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<sup>1</sup> See Peter Daly and Daniel Russell.

<sup>2</sup> See Ruano de la Haza.

<sup>3</sup> Mariscal writes: “I propose that early modern culture produced subjects through a wide range of discourses and practices (class, blood, the family, and so on) and that to view any of these as autonomous and originary is to efface the ways in which the construct of the individual was emerging from competition between discourses and was being constituted within writing itself” (5).

<sup>4</sup> See Nelson 2010, chapter 4; and Díez Garretas.

to this approach here, since one of my goals is to question the text-performance dichotomy as it is generally deployed, not only in what Burningham characterizes as the “narratological” lens of many *comedia* analyses (138), but also in performance approaches that hypothesize more speculative *actorly* possibilities.<sup>5</sup> It is worth remembering, for example, that playwrights like Calderón (and Cervantes) took a keen interest in the editing and publication of their plays, a process that involved patrons, censors, publishers, typesetters, engravers, readers, etc., not unlike how a dramatic performance implicates patrons, censors, producers, costume-makers, spectators and, yes, actors. As I write in *The Persistence of Presence*, “If the material circumstances of Calderón’s texts are their revisions, rewrites, excisions, additions, pirated copies of manuscripts, and anthologies that evidence the editorial intervention of actors other than the writer himself, then it stands to reason that writing and rewriting, drafting and correction are not prologues or postscripts to the establishment of the archetype but rather its very process of production and dissemination” (133). As Cervantes so masterfully demonstrates in his prologues, the publication of a book in itself entails a special kind of authorial performance, one that proves essential to understanding the material circumstances and possible meanings of the work. In sum, we should not so easily divide a play’s creative processes between writing and performance; nor should we draw sharp distinctions between reading a play and seeing a performance, especially with a playwright who is recognized for maintaining firm control over the production of his plays, both staged and published.<sup>6</sup> The mere knowledge that one is seeing the performance of a written text mitigates the dramatic spontaneity and frames the act of reception.

In light of all of this, my claim here will be that Pedro Crespo should be viewed as authorial avatar of sorts, one who models a witty mimetic praxis in the interest of creating a legitimate social and, more importantly, juridical space for his *peasant* family. This enterprise—*empresa*, in emblematic terms—is, in turn, analogous to efforts by early modern writers and painters to assemble honourable *occupations* out of what traditionally were considered to be artisanal activities (see Hauser). In Sánchez’s words, “the conscious articulation of self-interest with politically legitimate norms emerges as the means for social advancement” (64). As suggested above, such a reading will need to rely quite heavily on analogies. For example, in *El alcalde*, the geographical displacement of the conflicts surrounding the aforementioned socio-political struggle to a rural and quasi-military dramatic space masks the author’s social investment in the plot, just as the removal of Isabel’s rape to the countryside avoids making direct reference to a pressing urban problem concerning the seduction and rape of lower class women by aristocratic subjects.<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding the spatial displacement, I will argue that the existence of a written canon of legal precedents concerning the dishonouring and corruption of lower class women by wealthier or more noble men (Barahona), framed by a confusing matrix of competing juridical procedures and rituals (Susan Byrne), offers Calderón the opportunity to reimagine juridical practices and the role of the *letrado* in their interpretation and use.<sup>8</sup> My

<sup>5</sup> Burningham writes: “Literary thinkers tend to see the entire creative process as one framed by the playwright on one end and the spectator on the other in much the same way that written narrative is ultimately framed by the author and the reader, respectively” (138).

<sup>6</sup> See Greer on Calderón’s control over the production of court spectacles, especially the Introduction.

<sup>7</sup> See Renato Barahona.

<sup>8</sup> Calderón’s presentation of Don Álvaro’s pseudo-courtship and eventual rape of Isabel, as well as his attention to legal detail in Isabel’s mountain lament and Crespo’s offer of Isabel’s hand in marriage to his

primary theoretical tools for carrying out this analysis will be Catherine Bell's notions of *ritual agency* and *redemptive hegemony*, which are useful for identifying and analyzing Calderón's authorial performance and its aesthetic and historical implications. I will end the paper with a reflection on the implications of this reading on current debates concerning José Antonio Maravall's notion of *baroque guided culture*.

Bell defines redemptive hegemony as "a practical construal or consciousness of the system of power relations and as a framework for action...characterized by relations of dominance and subjugation" (84). None of this seems very remarkable until she specifies that "rather than an embracing ideological vision of the whole, [redemptive hegemony] conveys a biased, nuanced rendering of the ordering of power so as to facilitate the envisioning of personal empowerment *through activity* in the perceived system" (84; my emphasis). Accordingly, I will read Pedro Crespo as a *ritual agent* who uses ritualized mimetic performances to construct what Pierre Bourdieu calls a *limited and limiting space*, through which he and his family can access some of the privileges and protections traditionally reserved for the blood-based caste of the nobility (Ratner).<sup>9</sup> There are of course some important caveats to keep in mind here, first and foremost that Zalamea is situated on the frontier: just because the small town mayor can speak directly to the king on the plains of Extramadura does not mean that Calderón will be able to do so in Madrid. Still, we can probably assume that there is a significant relationship between Felipe II's territorial expansion of his reach into Portugal and Crespo's attempt to extend his own juridical reach into the world of monarchical privilege. Unlike the picaresque Don Mendo, who unsuccessfully attempts to buy his way into the nobility (Lauer), Crespo pivots the monarchy and its legal apparatuses towards his own concerns, responding to the monarchy's penetration into his home with a kind of performative *reciprocity* (Burningham 135).

This juridical element is worthy of close attention in *El alcalde*, although my discussion will not be as detailed or extensive as Susan Byrne's recent study *Law and History in Cervantes' Don Quixote*. Byrne's analysis of how Cervantes combines competing legal traditions and contradictory historical allusions and structures in the metafictional worlds of *Don Quijote* illuminates analogous elements, problems, and concerns in Calderón's theater (19). To see how this functions in practice, I will first take a look at one of Crespo's interactions with Don Lope de Figueroa. We would do well to remember that Pedro Crespo does not invite Don Lope into his home. As a peasant, he is obliged to billet the king's soldiers, and Don Lope selects Crespo's home due to Don Álvaro's previous staged attempt to gain access to Isabel's room. Thus, even before the first interaction between the patriarchs, we are immersed in a context saturated by legal obligations, macro- and micro-power relations, and deceptive theatrical performances. In the following scene, all the characters—Crespo, his son Juan, Isabel, and Don Lope—are perturbed by the raucous noise of the singers hired by Don Álvaro to serenade Isabel:

CRESPO (Aparte) A ventana señalada  
va la música. ¡Paciencia!

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daughter's rapist conform with the juridical record of attempts by dishonored women's families to seek restitution through the courts, as presented in Barahona.

<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to note that Bourdieu applies the notion of 'limited and limiting' agency to specifically individualistic and ethnocentric ideological phenomena, which is of course describes Crespo's case (Ratner).

*Se canta dentro:*  
 Las flores del romero,  
 niña Isabel,  
 hoy son flores azules,  
 y mañana serán miel.

DON LOPE (Aparte) Música, vaya; mas esto  
 de tirar es desvergüenza...  
 ¡Y a la casa donde estoy,  
 venirse a dar cantaletas!...  
 Pero disimular\_  
 por Pedro Crespo y por ella.  
 ¡Qué travesuras!

CRESPO Son mozos.

(Aparte) Si por don Lope no fuera, yo les hiciera...

JUAN (Aparte) Si yo  
 una rodelilla vieja<sup>10</sup>  
 que en el cuarto de don Lope  
 está colgada pudiera  
 sacar... Hace que se va.

CRESPO ¿Dónde vas, mancebo?

JUAN Voy a que traigan la cena.

CRESPO Allí hay mozos que la traigan.

*Cantan dentro:*  
 Despierta, Isabel, despierta!

ISABEL (Aparte) ¿Qué culpa tengo yo, cielos,  
 para estar a esto sujeta?

DON LOPE Ya no se puede sufrir,  
 porque es cosa muy mal hecha. (Arroja don Lope la mesa)

CRESPO Pues ¡y cómo si lo es! (Arroja Pedro Crespo la silla)

(II, 335-361)

Before analyzing the dialogue and gestures of the characters, it is worth mentioning that the courtship simulacrum orchestrated by Don Álvaro with the help of his soldiers echoes key elements of documented legal cases relating to early modern sex crimes, including the deceitful use of courtship rituals and the use of go-betweens (Barahona 6). This observation is corroborated by the fact that all of the characters in Crespo's house agree that this is an impertinent expression of courtship. Unlike the spectators, the characters have not been privy to Don Álvaro's orchestration of the spectacle in the interest of seducing Isabel, which only serves to heighten the awareness that there is something amiss in the way in which the performance insinuates a foreign intrusion into Crespo's *habitus*. It is also clear that all of these characters are schooled in the art of dissimulation,

<sup>10</sup> There is little doubt that this is an allusion to Don Quijote's dubious family arsenal. Likewise, the violent reaction of don Lope echoes Don Quijote's reaction to Maese Pedro's puppet theater, which also features a threat of rape and a scene at the window of a castle.

as none of them reveals their true intentions, preferring to carry on at first as if nothing out of the ordinary were occurring. This game mainly belongs to Pedro Crespo, whose mimetic praxis throughout the play consists of reflecting back onto noble subjects their behavior while concealing his own designs. As Gebauer and Wulf point out, “The history of mimesis is a history of disputes over the power to make symbolic worlds, that is, the power to represent the self and others and interpret the world. To this extent mimesis possesses a political dimension and is part of the history of power relations” (3). Notice how Crespo waits for Don Lope’s cue before allowing himself to express his ‘anger,’ unlike his impatient son Juan, who immediately begins to look for a weapon. Juan’s impetuosity throughout the play serves two ends: on the one hand, he is the perfect foil for Crespo’s calculated behavior; on the other, his rash behavior is often mirrored by the knee-jerk reactions of Don Lope, providing another oblique reflection of Crespo’s measured words and actions. Here, Crespo’s apparently spontaneous violence is tacitly sanctioned by Don Lope’s outburst and, at the same time, contrasted to Juan’s quixotic dash for the old buckler. In a later scene, Crespo declares that, like Don Lope, he has not slept a wink because of the intense pain he is feeling in his leg, thus sympathizing in a physical way with his guest’s old war wounds.<sup>11</sup> This physical connection with Don Lope establishes what Juan Carlos Rodríguez would call an “organicist” link between the peasant and the aristocrat, a subtle incursion into a caste ideology that roots noble identity in a blood-based genealogy (54-5). In both instances, Crespo’s mimicry could be interpreted as ironic, or a parody, but Don Lope does not take notice of the potential undercurrent until it is too late.

Bell’s notion of ritual agency argues that the interpretive blockage concerning Crespo’s performances arises from what Edward Said calls “the practical worldliness of the text” (cited by Bell 81–2).<sup>12</sup> The practical worldliness of the peasant’s difficult devices is embodied in the highly ritualized nature of his social interaction with the other characters in the play, most especially with respect to the king. As William Blue observes with respect to Lope’s Peribáñez, Crespo is “a master of language’s subtleties. He may dress like a farmer and use ‘farmerly’ images, but only an innocent would be fooled” (50). Crespo’s formal and formalized objections and interjections, his recurrence to tradition (even where no tradition exists),<sup>13</sup> his attention to rhetorical frames and juridical rules, and the convincing nature of his eminently theatrical performances are the very essence of his daring enterprise as well as the key to the king’s resigned acceptance at the end of the play.

But before jumping to the climax and denouement, let us look at the recognition scene on the mountain between Crespo and his daughter Isabel. To begin, it is important to note that Isabel’s kidnapping and rape can and probably should be classified as a gang rape. As Barahona points out in his study of the prosecution of Vizcayan sex crimes, most cases in which the victim was abducted were carried out with the assistance of accomplices (73),

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<sup>11</sup> Another Cervantine allusion that recalls Sancho’s ‘explanation’ to the innkeeper’s wife concerning the bruises all over his body after he, Don Quixote, and Rocinante were rolled by the Yangüesan horsetraders: “‘No caí,’ dijo Sancho Panza, ‘sino que del sobresalto que tomé de ver caer a mi amo, de tal manera me duele a mí el cuerpo, que me parece que me han dado mil palos’” (*I*, 16; 125).

<sup>12</sup> Bell summarizes Said’s notion: ‘The practical worldliness of the text is not simply the socio historical context of the work or any type of irreducible essence within the work. [It is] its own practice of the strategies of social action inherent in texts and textualization’ (113).

<sup>13</sup> Charles Aubrun concludes, ‘the juridical foundation of Calderón’s thesis is debatable, and even fallacious’ (171).

which also squares with the aesthetic tradition of rape.<sup>14</sup> Think, for example, of Melibea's complaint to Calisto in *La Celestina* that her sexual initiation, hurried along by Calisto's insistent hands, is to be witnessed by her servant and his bodyguards. Calisto's answer, of course, is that he prefers to have witnesses for his moment of triumph.<sup>15</sup> Later in the same play, Celestina herself complicates the reader's enjoyment of textual sexuality—sexuality?—by literally drooling at the sight of Pármeno and Areusa's erotic acquaintance, a blind date she forcefully manipulates... with her bare hands!<sup>16</sup> And let us not forget the defilement of Doña Elvira and Doña Sol by the Infantes de Carrión in *El poema del Cid*. Moving to Renaissance and Baroque painting, there are numerous representations of the collective Rape of the Sabine Women. More to the point are the various renditions of the rape of Lucretia, which inevitably include one or more witnesses of Tarquino's crime and/or Lucretia's suicide. In *El alcalde de Zalamea*, Isabel opens this flood of allusions when she refers to Don Álvaro as 'the first' (el primero) to take hold of her.<sup>17</sup> We also need to keep in mind the aforementioned juridical context surrounding the kidnapping, seduction, and/or rape of a lower class woman by aristocrats. This is especially the case in Crespo's offer of clemency—and his daughter's hand in marriage—to Don Álvaro, in which Calderón summarizes any number of legal cases documented by Barahona. As Barahona explains, it was not uncommon for the victims of such crimes to seek redress in what today would be considered a civil lawsuit.<sup>18</sup>

Returning to the scene of the crime, when the spectator regards Pedro Crespo in his abject state on the mountain, the dishonoured father offers a pathetic spectacle, lamenting his fate with his hands tied around an oak tree.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, the relative mobility of Isabel intimates that even though the daughter has suffered great physical and psychological violence, the crime may have affected her father more deeply. Modern sensibilities will be offended by this reading, but in Calderón's play, as in the honour system in general, the victim of rape is not the woman per se but her honour, which may explain the public nature of these crimes as they are portrayed.<sup>20</sup> In Barahona's words, "Far more important to

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<sup>14</sup> See Nelson 2011.

<sup>15</sup> "MEL.—Apártate allá, Lucrecia. / CAL.— ¿Por qué, mi señora? Bien me huelgo que estén semejantes testigos de mi gloria. / MEL.—Yo no los quiero de mi yerro. Si pensara que tan desmesuradamente te avías de haver conmigo, no fiara mi persona de tu cruel conversación" (501). What follows is the voyeuristic comments of Calisto's servants Tristán and Sosia, who hear but cannot see the sexual encounter.

<sup>16</sup> "ARE.—No soy de las que públicamente están a vender sus cuerpos por dinero. ¡Assí goze de mí, de casa me salga si, fasta que Celestina, mi tía, sea yda, a mi ropa tocas! CEL.—¿Qué es esto, Areúsa? ¿Qué son estas extrañezas y esquividad, estas novedades y retraymiento?" (380).

<sup>17</sup> I would tend to agree with Burningham's argument concerning the ability of the actor to bring potentially volatile nuances to a script. In this case, I don't know how many times I have overlooked this detail, but I am sure that an actor would not let the implications of 'el primero' slip past the spectator.

<sup>18</sup> An interesting facet of this legal tradition is that formal appeals of local decisions were brought to Valladolid for consideration by crown justices (Barahona 122). Calderón would not be unaware of the legal implications of Crespo's daring proposal to keep the trial of Don Álvaro from likewise being relocated to the capital.

<sup>19</sup> Barahona documents the case of 'Domingo García, father of María García, [who] filed charges of *estupro* in 1633 against Bartolomé de Uberichaga; the act had been carried out in a barren and uninhabited area and the defendant had raped her, an attack that, according to the accusation, merited the death penalty" (69). I am not suggesting that Calderón was alluding to or even aware of this case, but it does establish that a legal tradition did exist.

<sup>20</sup> María de Zayas's collection *Desengaños amorosos* offers an important and powerful corrective to this simultaneous socialization and objectification of sex crimes (see Vollendorf).

victims was to establish their respectable social condition” (126). In this case, Isabel’s calculated performance of victimhood with her father reveals a split between her social obligation and her will to survive. Moreover, the tension between her familial duty—basically a death sentence—and the desire to save her own life and honour will ultimately serve as a catalyst for Crespo’s own transformation.

Both characters begin Act 3 by decrying the irremediable course of events and calling death down upon themselves. But then something momentous happens: first, with Isabel and then, Pedro, a highly ritualized literary-legal language steps in to reconfigure the meaning of their downfall from one of absolute annihilation to that of a temporary setback. It is significant that Crespo’s tutor in the production of *redemptive hegemony* is his own daughter, who models and performs the strategic ritual use of allegorical discourse for her own ends. When Isabel discovers her father with his hands tied to an oak tree, the alienation of father and daughter is poetically mitigated by the interlaced *redondillas*. The mimetic harmony is quickly undone, however, by Isabel’s fear of patriarchal retribution: “Hay muchas cosas que sepas, / y es forzoso que al decir las, / tu valor se irrite, y quieras / vengarlas antes de oír las” (Act 3, vv. 107–110). So before untying him, she narrates the harrowing tale of her violent abduction and rape.

[Isabel            Estaba anoche gozando  
                       la seguridad tranquila de tus canas,  
                       mis años me prometían,  
                       cuando aquellos embozados  
                       traidores – que determinan  
                       que lo que el honor defiende,  
                       el atrevimiento rinda –  
                       me robaron; bien así  
                       como de los pechos quita  
                       carnicero hambriento lobo  
                       a la simple corderilla.  
                       Aquel capitán, aquel  
                       huésped ingrato que el día  
                       primero introdujo en casa  
                       tan nunca esperada cisma  
                       de traiciones y cautelas,  
                       de pendencias y rencillas,  
                       fue el primero que en sus brazos  
                       me cogió mientras le hacían  
                       espaldas otros traidores  
                       que en su bandera militan.  
                       Aqueste intricado, oculto  
                       monte, que está a la salida  
                       del lugar, fue su sagrado.] (Act 3, vv. 110–35)

The first image that Isabel evokes reflects Crespo's self-fashioned patriarchal image onto his incapacitated state, mimetically empowering his imagination.<sup>21</sup> To paraphrase, in spite of the careful watch of the vigilant shepherd, Isabel (the innocent lamb) was violently ripped from the breast of the ewe by bloody-mouthed, treasonous wolves. The trope of the innocent victim of rape, however allegorical it may seem, is a vital structure in the legal prosecution of sex crimes, according to Barahona's study. With respect to the plot, Isabel's emblem of ritualistic bestiality unequivocally identifies Álvaro and his men as *Other*, while increasing the dramatic tension. Bell cites Radcliffe-Brown, who argues that ritual not only alleviates anxiety but, more importantly, creates it or even amplifies it. The role of this dramatic anxiety is to increase the dependency of ritual participants on the forms and structures of ritual activities in resolving the crisis (28). In this way, Isabel's rape is removed from the world of mundane sexual aggression toward a universal plane where abominations must be violently purged from the social body.

Before finishing, Isabel recounts how her brother Juan entered, after the rape, and attacked the captain before being overrun by his gang. At the conclusion of her simultaneously defiant and obedient performance, Isabel offers up her life to her father; but before doing so she displaces her own disgrace to the margins and redirects her father's self pity and anger onto Juan and Álvaro respectively. This subtle redirection of the gaze permits us to read the following comment by Bell in several ways: "the ritual construction of power ... involves dynamics whereby the power relations constituted by ritualization also empower those who may at first appear to be controlled by them" (207). It is apparent that Isabel has exercised a particular type of power in order to save her own life. In addition, she has empowered her father in several ways: 1. she emblemizes their collective disgrace in ritualistic terms, which lessens his personal burden; 2. she redirects his gaze toward her brother, whose life and honour are both intact and, more importantly, in peril; 3. finally, she gives her father a concrete aim, which is to pursue redress and redemption by confronting the captain in Zalamea. It is worth asking at this point who is more intent on avenging Don Álvaro's crime, Isabel or her father?

Whatever the case, the lessons of Isabel's ingenious self-defence will not be lost on Pedro. I say 'ingenious' because after her father checks his impulse to kill her, Isabel turns to the audience in an aside and says: "Fortuna mía, / o mucha cordura, o mucha / cautela es ésta" (Act 3, vv. 296–8). This is a very interesting and revealing comment on her father's words and behaviour, as *cordura* means prudence, while *cautela* can refer to prudence and caution, or artfulness and cunning. It also allows us to recognize that Isabel is at once the powerless object of a familial conflict between Don Álvaro, her brother, and her father; and a prudent and artful actor who interpellates other readers and spectators into a particular way of interpreting her tragedy. Her ritual agency exploits a dynamic that limits her own movement in order to position herself advantageously as both link and obligation in the redemptive hegemony of her and her family. The sense of a calculated and strategic practice goes a long way towards explaining the behaviour of Crespo.

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<sup>21</sup> Fernández de Heredia's emblem book contains an emblem of Hercules ripping oak trees up from the earth after finding out he has been unwittingly poisoned by Deinara (Bernat Vistarini and Cull, 414). It makes for an interesting contrast with Crespo's more calculated, if equally vengeful, response to being dishonored. See also Charles Ganelin for a useful analysis of hand imagery in Tirso de Molina, useful here due to Calderón's focus on Crespo's and eventually Felipe II's hands in relation to their ability to take control of the circumstances around them.

Like his daughter, Crespo will resolve his personal dilemma by producing an emblematic spectacle in which his intentions are cloaked and his personal agenda for vengeance abstracted into a ritualized performance of justice. In said performance, the dead body of the captain becomes infused with the presence of real power, i.e., the consent of the king. According to Cull,

the culminating moment of many Golden-Age dramas occurred, in fact, in one of these discovery scenes or ‘appearances’ (*apariencias*), often (but not exclusively) towards the end of the play. A curtain was drawn to reveal a marvelous scene in one of the niches at the back of the stage, or an appearance of great visual impact was lowered into view by means of stage machinery. The combination of striking visual motifs (*pictura*) with commentary in the form of dramatic dialogue (*subscription*) imitated the structure of the emblem ... These scenes, designed to provoke *admiratio* in the spectators, often embodied the play’s central message, or moral. (620)

Felipe II’s *apariencia* on stage represents one such emblematic moment in the *comedia*, in which the king embodies the presence of a transcendental *deus ex machina* who restores order by invoking a superior idea of what Parker has called ‘poetic justice.’<sup>22</sup> In this case, however, the king is immediately stripped of his power to see and act when Crespo figuratively binds his regal hands within a universal rhetoric of justice. Like his daughter before him, Crespo anticipates the doubts and concerns of the king and deftly shifts the focus of the inquiry away from the way in which his own hand has surreptitiously guided events, and toward the heinousness of the crime, which he methodically and ritualistically contrasts to his measured application of due process.

[FELIPE II:]	¿Y qué disculpa me dais?
CRESPO:	Este proceso, en que bien probado el delito está, digno de muerte por ser una doncella robar, forzarla en un despoblado, y no quererse casar con ella, habiendo su padre rogádole con la paz. <sup>23</sup>
DON LOPE:	Éste es el alcalde, y es su padre.
CRESPO:	No importa en tal caso; porque, si un extraño se viniera a querellar, ¿no había de hacer justicia? Sí. ¿Pues qué más se me da hacer por mi hija lo mismo

<sup>22</sup> See A. A. Parker.

<sup>23</sup> This dialogue, in turn, mimetically reproduces the language and structure of almost every legal account of sex crimes in Barahona’s study.

que hiciera por los demás?  
 Fuera de que, como he preso  
 un hijo mío, es verdad  
 que no escuchara a mi hija,  
 pues era la sangre igual.  
 Mírese, si está bien hecha  
 la causa; miren, si hay  
 quien diga que yo haya hecho  
 en ella alguna maldad,  
 si he inducido algún testigo,  
 si está algo escrito demás  
 de lo que he dicho, y entonces  
 me den muerte. (Act 3, vv. 866–94)

When the king demands an excuse (*disculpa*) for Crespo's refusal to obey Don Lope's orders, Crespo responds with 'este proceso,' providing a summary of his investigation and prosecution of the crime. By bringing the king's gaze away from his transgression—*culpa*—and redirecting it to his legal practice, Crespo converts the violent execution into a text, a legal brief that the king should read in light of the mayor's objective presentation of the case. At the end of his declamation, Crespo moves even more forcefully into the literary republic by shifting the terms of his performance to writing: "if there is anything *written* other than what I have said, then put me to death" (my emphasis). Put another way, a written account would be a literal death *sentence*. Like Isabel, Pedro uses his first-hand knowledge of the crime to disarm and defy the king and his advisor, all the while insisting that he is placing himself under their power. As such, the king's authority no longer issues from his 'royal presence,' but must contend with an empirical and specific historical circumstance of which he has no direct knowledge.

Surprisingly, Felipe sanctions the means by which Crespo has substantiated the case; nevertheless, the peasant's summary of his process is not verifiable in any absolute sense. Thus, the king cannot sanction the ends (the imprisonment of Don Álvaro), and so he orders the matter be handled by his own judicial body. The fragmentation and scepticism produced by asymmetrical juridical spaces is crystallized in Felipe's rebuttal to Crespo's performance: "Allá hay justicia."<sup>24</sup> Naturally, Crespo has anticipated this attempt by the king to wield his absolute juridical prerogative, just as his daughter had done with him in the wilderness; indeed, his risky wager is meaningless without this knowledge of how legal proceeding are commandeered by the Court.<sup>25</sup>

Crespo now makes his risky play by handing over the "prisoner" to the king. Felipe II is completely amazed by the gruesome spectacle of his captain's garrotted body; more to the point, he is suddenly at a loss to make sense of the entire situation, which is, after all, his primary role in the *comedia*. He attempts to take control with the *rhetorical* question "¿cómo así os atrevisteis?" (Act 3, vv. 900–1), but Crespo strategically takes the question *literally* rather than acquiesce to the power of the king. As the grim reality of Álvaro's dead

<sup>24</sup> See Salomon's discussion of examples of how provincial *alcaldes* exploited their economic superiority to take advantage of the *hidalgo* class (707).

<sup>25</sup> Byrne provides valuable documentation and analysis of the antagonisms between monarchical and religious juridical institutions in early modern Spain (chapter 3).

body sets in, Crespo levels the playing field through another astute use of mimicry, referring to himself as the exclusive seat of legal justice in the territory, just as Felipe II is the only seat of justice in the imperial realm. We have already seen this strategy of corporeal mimicry in Crespo's throwing of the chair and his sympathetic leg pains. Through this invocation of parallel juridical spaces and practices, he reconfigures the institutional relationship between the king, legal discourse, and the exercise of State-sanctioned violence. As a result, there are two possible solutions to this deadlock: either the king punishes Crespo, thereby reifying the juridical fragmentation of the empire and his monarchical body; or he grants a previously excluded subject the power to act on his behalf. In the second case, juridical language becomes at once universal and contingent, as its conversion into a discursive practice—as opposed to a divine right—allows properly educated subjects to wield its language and power according to their personal objectives, as long as they simultaneously *redeem monarchical hegemony*. In effect, the king becomes subject to the universality of his own language and is compelled to occupy a *limited and limiting space* in the symbolic order. To conclude his defence, Crespo anchors his act in a reconstruction of the monarchical body: “Toda la justicia vuestra / es sólo un cuerpo no más; / si éste tiene *muchas manos*, / decid, ¿qué más se me da / matar con aquesta un hombre / que esta otra había de matar? / Y ¿qué importa errar lo menos, / quien acertó lo demás?” (Act 3, vv. 937–46; my emphasis). After binding king's hands in a discourse of universal justice, Crespo now rearticulates the fragmented political body by turning himself and Don Lope into equally prudent and efficacious hands, equal extensions of a monarchical body. In the end, the rhetorically interrogative *inscriptio* artfully places the responsibility for a correct reading of the macabre emblem into the hands of a reader whom he has just disarmed: “¿qué importa errar lo menos, / quien acertó lo demás?” That the king takes ownership over the device and thus shares in the collective responsibility for Crespo's violent action is signalled by his transformation of the mayor's question into an affirmation of his own power: “Don Lope, aquesto ya es hecho, / bien dada la muerte está: / no importa errar lo menos / quien acertó lo demás” (Act 3, vv. 937–46). In initiating his self-defence by mimicking the king's words back to him, Crespo has turned the tables: the king now mimics him.<sup>26</sup> In broader terms, the monarchy can now be seen to base its political and social economy on the currency of Calderón's dramatic representation—*el gran teatro del mundo*—which brings me, finally, to Maravall.

It should be apparent by now that one of the goals of this paper has been to support Maravall's hypothesis of baroque guided culture while providing substantial nuances to it through Bell's notion of redemptive hegemony. Nevertheless, given Laura Bass's recent volume of the *Bulletin of the Comediantes* dedicated to a reconsideration of Maravall, it is probably best to tackle the relation between my interpretation of *El alcalde* and Maravall

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<sup>26</sup> Lest we become swayed by Calderón's representation of the monarchy and lose sight of its documented responses to rebellious peasants, Noël Salomon recounts the reaction of Charles I to the execution of Juan Palafox in Monreal: “Under the reign of Charles I the [townspeople] killed Juan Palafox, their master, with a crossbow, in the town of Monreal. The response of the king was to send an armed force, commanded by the governor of Aragón, to the town of Monreal, which was set ablaze and almost completely destroyed, while some of the inhabitants received an exemplary punishment” (720). Salomon provides similar examples involving Felipe II, including the town of Ariza (721). In sum, there are marked contradictions between the edicts cited by Díez Borque concerning the behavior of the king's troops and the monarchy's violent reaction to attempts by rural inhabitants to take matters into their own hands after having suffered abuse by the royal troops (Introducción).

head-on. On the one hand, it is not illogical to posit that Calderón challenges the very monarchical–seigniorial apparatuses of power that, according to Maravall, compel baroque playwrights and poets to propagate a conservative and even reactionary cultural and political paradigm in and through their art. Crespo basically moves from committing murder to appropriating a legal process, making a spectator and possibly even a fool out of the king. In my view, such an argument overlooks the fact that Crespo and, by extension, Zalamea are much more subject to the institutional power of the monarchy at the end of the play than at the beginning, a reading that is anticipated by Domingo Induráin’s observation that both of Crespo’s children are handed over to the monarch at the end of the play: Isabel is placed in a convent; and Juan becomes the squire of Don Lope (311). I would, however, modify Induráin’s conclusion by classifying Crespo’s posture here as one of *accommodation* rather than *obedience*. But even this allowance conforms largely to Maravall’s thesis, more specifically his definition of the role of baroque *desengaño* as an ideology of accommodation.<sup>27</sup>

This does not mean that I discard all anti-Maravallian arguments. Both Cascardi and Mariscal point out that Maravall’s notion of subjectivity errs on the side of simplicity, especially considering how complex his understanding of crisis and repression is by comparison. In Cascardi’s words: “Maravall’s focus on institutions and ideas tended to efface subjectivity at the concrete level. [He] makes it difficult to see how the manner in which individual subjects inhabit social or political structures might in fact alter the constitution of those same structures” (144). That being said, anti-Maravallians generally give short shrift to one of the first historiographical approaches to early modernity to underline the overwhelming atmosphere of crisis ushered in by rapidly changing economic and geopolitical realities as well as the vacuum that opens up when the medieval Ptolemaic worldview collapses in the face of Copernican and Galilean science. These same crises overturn scholastic linguistic and hieroglyphic paradigms, leading to hybrid literary forms that attempt to control semantic polyvalence through strict rules, such as the emblem. According to David Graham, “[t]he [medieval] device is static semiotically and in space-time, inextricably bound to its subject and object, to which the reader is thus linked...[while] the emblem is dynamic, free to float through spacetime, freshly linked to and recreated by each and every reader!”<sup>28</sup> Graham’s description of the historical movement from the medieval device to the modern emblem is close to Maravall’s definition of how cultural guidance functions in the baroque as opposed to the Middle Ages, or even the Renaissance: “What we might call a simple *static guidance controlling by presence* had to give way before a *dynamic guidance controlling by activity*” (68). Granted, Maravall is not very successful in explaining how this dynamic guidance functions, which is why I have used Bell’s understanding of ritual agency and redemptive hegemony. For me, the overriding question is not whether some sort of transgression takes place in the play; it most decidedly does. But transgression is not the same thing as

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<sup>27</sup> Maravall cites Gracián, who writes: “‘Things commonly do not pass for what they are but for what they appear.’ Because of this, in an early formulation it was not important to the political or moralistic writer of the baroque to divest reality of the veil that covered it, but to become accommodated (or for us to accommodate ourselves) to that immediate reality” (194). For a more developed analysis of the phenomenon of accommodation see Nelson 2014.

<sup>28</sup> Graham generously shared the PowerPoint presentation for his conference paper delivered at the 2014 *Renaissance Society of America* conference held in New York City on March 27-29.

subversion, as I have argued previously (Nelson 2002). Indeed, Victor Turner and others have pointed out that transgression is a prerequisite for redemption in ritual practice.<sup>29</sup>

As Bourdieu states in a way that helps us understand both Pedro Crespo's and Pedro Calderón's mimetic praxis

between the *responsible* man, whom the excellence of a practice ... in line with the official rule...predisposes to fulfill the functions of delegate and spokesman, and the *irresponsible* man who, not content with breaking the rules, does nothing to extenuate his infractions, groups make room for the *well-meaning rule-breaker* who by conceding the appearances or intent to conformity, that is, *recognition*, to rules he can neither respect nor deny, contributes to the —entirely official—survival of the rule. (40)

To summarize Bourdieu's difficult prose, transgression and resistance contribute to the health and even the expansion of hegemony. As for the king, his words and actions do nothing to suggest that he actually believes Crespo's words.<sup>30</sup> I would argue that he simply accommodates himself to Crespo's superior wit and identifies the mayor's utility as a territorial representative. This is where the limited participatory nature of spectatorship meets the limited agency of an actorly performance, although we still have yet to appreciate the creative impulse behind the entire enterprise.

And here is where Maravall errs on the side of historiographical positivism, since although his model describes how aesthetic strategies such as *suspensión*, *terribilitá*, anamorphosis, or the technique of incompleteness work on the irrational psychological *resortes* of the reader/spectator, it fails to understand how art not only reflects or responds to social and political crises but also how it participates in the fabrication of crises that call for aesthetic closure and resolution, what Bell calls *escalation and resolution* (88-9). And this, I would argue, is how Calderón's authorial performance is best understood. Like Gracián, his disenchanting view of baroque culture and society does not lead to a questioning or overturning of the order of things; rather, his art configures a series of limited and limiting performance strategies for negotiating power structures in order to simultaneously redeem his own art and reify the courtly space in which he moves.

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<sup>29</sup> Turner writes: "...it is precisely because the whole community is threatened that such countervailing rites are performed—because it is believed that concrete historical irregularities alter the natural balance between what are conceived to permanent structural categories" (177).

<sup>30</sup> As Roy Rappaport argues, "Acceptance not only is not belief. It does not even imply belief" (194).

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