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"Tis a Shame to Live": The Loss of Feminine Virtue and "la Honra" in the Stage Plays of the Golden Age in England and Spain.

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Abstract

The Renaissance of the 16th to 17th centuries was a period of creative and literary advancement in both England and Spain. This study analyzes the different approaches to theatre plays in each country, notably highlighting the Spanish playwrights' and audience's evident rejection of the tragedy genre, in contrast to the English's acceptance of it. My analysis focuses on how each nation commonly portrayed the rape plot, in which a woman was permanently robbed of her feminine honor, or *honra*. I first revise the cultural and legislative context behind the crime of rape, and then I examine its presence in English revenge tragedies by the likes of Shakespeare and Middleton and in Spanish honor plays by Vega and Calderón de la Barca. The conclusion I have reached is that throughout the Golden Age of creative invention, the rape of women was equally utilized by the playwrights of both England and Spain to create conflict for their male characters, but Spanish plays were more compassionate and progressive in their depictions.

Keywords: England, Spain, Revenge Tragedy, Honor Play, Rape, Women

Resumen

El Renacimiento de los siglos XVI y XVII fue un periodo de avances creativos y literarios tanto en Inglaterra como en España. Este estudio analiza el enfoque diferente de cada nación respecto a las obras de teatro, destacando el evidente rechazo por parte de los dramaturgos y de las audiencias españolas del género de la tragedia, en contraste con la aceptación inglesa del mismo. Mi análisis se centra en como cada nación retrataba la trama de la violación, en la cual a una mujer le robaban permanentemente su honra femenina, o *honor*. Primero reviso el contexto cultural y legislativo detrás la violación como crimen, y luego examino su presencia en las tragedias de la venganza inglesas de Shakespeare y Middleton y en las obras de honra españolas de Vega y Calderón de la Barca. He llegado a la conclusión de que durante la edad de oro de las invenciones creativas, la violación de la mujer era utilizada a la par por los dramaturgos de Inglaterra y España como conflicto para sus personajes masculinos, pero su representación en las obras españolas era más compasiva y progresista.

Palabras clave: Inglaterra, España, Tragedia de la Venganza, Obra de Honra, Violación, Mujeres

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Introduction

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, English audiences and playwrights exhibited a fascination with tragic plays; the revenge tragedy, in particular, stands out as one of the most relevant theatrical movements of the time, popularized by Christopher Marlowe and repeatedly utilized by other contemporary figures like William Shakespeare. However, this passion of the English people for theater with tragic and often gruesome endings is not shared by their Spanish counterparts, who showed a preference for the comedy tradition, with neater, less egregious resolutions. Spanish playwrights were more interested in exploring the intricacies of honor (*la honra*) and what it meant to lose such.

The idea of injuring someone in a way that calls for vengeful action and of taking away something precious to them that defines their personhood was hence easily represented, on occasion, through the rape of a virtuous woman. And although the perception of women's virtue and *honra* was very similar in both England and Spain during the Golden Age, the preference of each nation for the revenge or the honor play, respectively, resulted in a difference in outcomes for the rape plot when it was incorporated: As a general rule, in the English revenge play, severe violence was inflicted both upon rapist and victim, and the woman had to be killed to restore her virtue; whereas in the Spanish honor play, the woman was allowed to move on with her life despite her loss of *honra*, and the aggressor was justly punished. Moreover, the rapists in English revenge plays often belonged to a low-to-middle class, usually beneath that of the lady. Meanwhile, in the Spanish honor play, the perpetrator was commonly a figure of authority or otherwise of a higher social class.

It is necessary to consider the specific ways in which virtue and *honra* in women were perceived during the late Renaissance in the English and Spanish traditions, respectively. In addition, the basic features that characterize both the revenge tragedy and the honor play, and the nuances that differentiate them from one another, are likewise crucial to acknowledge. Once established, this theoretical framework helped carry out the analysis of various plays from the English and Spanish traditions and their respective portrayals of the rape plot and the violated woman. The selected plays are well-known examples of each nation's literary work, ranging from the writings of Shakespeare to those of Lope de Vega.

1. Honor of Women in the Golden Age in Spain and England

The patriarchal society of the 16th and 17th centuries placed women in a position under which their honor was defined by their sexual virtue, that is, their virginity before marriage, and their loyalty to their husbands once married. Furthermore, this virtue ought to be preserved by the woman's father or male relative up until he gave her out to her husband, who then became her primary protector. These beliefs regarding the honor of women were an agreed consensus in both England and Spain, although there were certain differences in the considerations regarding the matter of rape and the consequences such an event brought to the victim, her family, and the perpetrator.

Suzanne Gossett points out that in the stage plays of the English Golden Age produced during the end of Queen Elizabeth I's reign and the start of the Jacobean era, the completed act of rape was not often represented—with only four extant instances. In these plays, not only was the assaulted woman avenged by a male character of her family unit, but the rapist is deemed as ignoble, and "the moral condemnation of rape is constant and unambiguous." (Gossett 306) The perpetrators of the crime are lascivious men commonly enticed by the purity of their victims, whom they either overpower or trick one way or another, and these men's only just ending is death at the hands of other men. For the women, however, even if their victimhood is acknowledged and pitied by the other characters or by the narrative itself, their fate is no different to that of their assaulters: the only way to cleanse their irreparably stained honor is by the means of eternal rest. The heroines commonly choose not to question the status quo of the patriarchy and comply with their expected demise. This model heavily follows the basic premise of *The Rape of Lucrece* by Shakespeare: the lustful villain rapes a married, chaste woman who commits suicide in response, which then calls for a revolt from the men around her.

W.S. Holdsworth writes in his book *A History of English Law* that, after the Norman conquest, the standard of prosecution for the crime of rape that was set was followed up to the Elizabethan period, with the punishment only growing harsher with the rulings of the Statute of Westminster I (1275). The resolution often times heavily relied on the appeal of the victim, although Holdsworth also clarifies that in certain circumstances "the appeal…was compromised, on the basis of marriage" (Holdsworth 316). However, after the Statute of Westminster II (1285), the woman was deprived of the freedom of election she previously had, and both parties would have limitations on the acquisition of land and inheritance were she to consent to him after the violation. These laws extended to the nonconsensual abduction of girls under sixteen years old, for this was an offense "punishable with fine or imprisonment; and a long term of imprisonment was imposed on those who in addition violated or married such heiresses" (Holdsworth 514). Likewise, if the aforementioned victim of the abduction were to consent, she would still lose her land privileges, and those could only pass on to her next of kin. It can be deduced, then, that the law did not preoccupy itself so much with the feelings and wishes of the raped woman as it did with the strict protection of a property—that being, her virtue. Nevertheless, these sexual attacks often went unreported, as F.G. Emmison's findings in *Elizabethan Life: Morals and the Church Courts* indicate. Despite this seemingly harsh prosecution of the crime, it was common for the accused to be absolved, and for the injured woman to do penance in his place. Moreover, if the victim became pregnant because of the rape, marrying her aggressor was considered the best outcome for her family, as it was preferable to bastardy. Ultimately, the woman's social standing and resources were what gave her case the most credibility.

The traditional model of the rape plot in English theater morphs into a different formula in the Jacobean period, as now the classic resolution inspired by *The Rape of Lucrece* is

left aside, opting for a different, presumably happier ending in which both the raped woman and the rapist stay alive, and she marries him as an alternative to death to preserve her and her family's honor. Gossett attributes this change to "a combination of the changing social climate and the growing vogue for tragicomedy" (Gossett 314). Furthermore, she points out how, in this new interpretation of the rape plot in a tragicomic context, the crime is often not really presented as a tragic event but instead as a simple human mistake that can be corrected through marriage. Rape becomes "just an unfortunate side effect of that valuable commodity, manliness," and in committing the rape, "the men have proved their manhood in the process and will be desirable husbands." (Gossett 324) The victim's value is restored by marrying their assaulter since the social expectation is that women ought to belong to the first man to have sex with them. All the while, the heroine's personal feelings and conflicts on this sacred union are rarely explored.

In the Spanish theater, no woman of any social standing was safe from being sexually assaulted, the only way they might escape the situation being through the intervention of a male relative or because of their own cleverness. Similarly to English conventions, rapists are portrayed as tricksters or savage men driven by an insatiable lust for their victims, and they are more likely to be nobles or somewhat belong to a high social class. Frank P. Casa, in his article "*El Tema de la Violación Sexual en la Comedia*," reasons that this latter fact might be because violent crimes like rape were expected among the commoners and thus lacked dramatic interest and social conflict. There is an "implicit contradiction between the brutal act and the belief in the inherent moral value of the nobility, which dominated the era."[1] (Casa 204) Gustavo Correa calls the innate honor of

[1] Original in Spanish: "*contradicción implícita entre el acto brutal y la creencia en el valor moral inherente en la nobleza que domina la época*"

the well-born the "honra vertical" (Correa 100), which he defines as "existing in birthright or of extraordinary or unusual merits."[2] (101) The political subtext of these stories is heavy, as the sexual aggression of the aristocratic rapist constituted not only an offense to the community of the victim and the social order as a whole, but it was also presented as an act of rebellion against the authority of the monarch and, by extension, against God. For this reason, it was not rare for these plays to highlight the figure of the king, who would come to either approve the punishment inflicted upon the noble by an external agent or even go as far as actively participate in the said punishment himself.

For men, to have *honra* was intrinsically linked with the values of traditional virility, among those strength and courage—paradoxically, these also included the sexual "conquest" of women and their virtue, which in contrast resided in their spotless purity. Moreover, the rape plot is never explored through the lens of the violated victim, that is, the woman—but is used instead to reflect on the nature of man through the perspective of, more commonly, a father or a brother. Casa proclaims the rape of Lucrece to be the most influential rape in Western culture, and he mentions how, like the English playwrights, the Spanish tradition closely aligned with the core premise of the Roman tale: the assault of a chaste woman is a vehicle for the revolution of men.

The Spaniards' rejection of the tragedy genre and their inclination towards comedy meant that the type of tragic violence often seen in English stage plays was absent in their Spanish counterparts. It was not uncommon that the final resolution to the conflict involved the rapist meeting his end, but the woman most usually did not die. Casa explains how the violation often took place in the chambers of the woman, which also carried along a violation of the sacred home, as happens to Dorotea in chapter 28 of *Don Quixote*,

[2] "*Existe en virtud de nacimiento o de méritos extraordinarios o fuera de lo común*"

or in the wilderness, which brought about an undertone of animalistic aggression to the perpetrator, as exemplified by Don Álvaro in *El Alcalde de Zalamea*. But the rape was not always explicitly violent, as on occasions it was done with the cooperation of the woman through the means of trickery; for example, by the man making false promises of marriage. Again, in unison with the Jacobean English rape plot, in these comedies there was a kind of rape that was deemed, if not acceptable, forgivable. An otherwise honorable man could have slipped, taken over by passion, and still redeemed himself if his actions afterwards merited it. Rape was once again perceived not as an attack on the personhood of the woman, but as damage to property that disrupted the social order of her community. This rupture of the woman's honor then had to be fixed either by her marriage to the aggressor, her removal from society to a convent, or, most tragically, her death.

2. Characteristics and Structure of Honor and Revenge Plays

Honor, vengeance, and the revenge of a stained honor were themes commonly explored in the stage plays of the Renaissance period, both in England and Spain—however, each nation had clear preferences for one or the other. Whereas English playwrights were fascinated by the tragedy genre and had no qualms giving their characters gruesome endings, their Spanish counterparts widely frowned at such violent resolutions and instead opted to write comedies or tragicomedies. In turn, the English public welcomed with open arms narratives of violent and often inequitable retribution for a wronged party—and Tanya Pollard states that the rising popularity of this genre "speaks to the attraction of seeing frustrated victims satisfy their demand for justice" (59) under the unstable political and religious climate of Elizabethan England. Meanwhile, the Spanish people enjoyed less egregious plots in which the focus resided in the just application of an established honor code, resulting in a Spain where "there never was any tragedy, not even in the time of the Renaissance," as literary historian Federico Carlos Sáinz de Robles asserts in his dictionary of literature (MacCurdy 3).

The motives behind these peculiar differences in taste of genres between the Englishmen and the Spaniards are debatable, seeing as there is no consensus among scholars on a specific determining factor. Some critics, such as Molly Smith, theorize that the English's insensitivity towards extreme brutality might be a result of the very common public executions that occurred during the Elizabethan era. Smith argues that Elizabethans must have been familiarized with the spectacle of the hanged body, since during this period more than six thousand hangings took place at Tyburn. (217). Theater and public executions were, similarly, well-attended forms of entertainment for both the upper and lower classes. Therefore, it is plausible to assume that the violence of one spectacle might have infiltrated the other. However, these hangings were not exclusive to

an English public; as Oliver Olmo stresses in his article "The Death Penalty and Historical Change in Spain," similarly to England, in Spain "executions were judicial acts, but they were also exhibitions of state power" (308). How, then, is one nation so enthralled by the sensationalism of horrid on-stage deaths while the other dismisses them? The answer is unclear, but scholars have suggested that Spaniards were not put off by death itself but instead by the melodramatic treatment of it —they preferred to celebrate it, as they did in bullfights or in Holy Week (MacCurdy 4).

On the other hand, one common explanation given for the Spaniards' dislike of tragedy during the Golden Age is Spanish playwrights' demonstrated rejection of the neoclassical tradition. Certain Hispanists have simply assumed that those dramatists were ignorant of these rules, but MacCurdy counters this belief and affirms that they were very aware but deliberately chose to break them. This aversion to classical precepts seems to have been carried on from the Middle Ages, during which there was a general hostility in Spain towards Latin and classical studies, as teachers were "academically despised, socially humiliated, and poorly compensated" (Di Camillo 1195). Regardless, the true reasoning behind this phenomenon remains unresolved.

Revenge plays, as the name suggests, revolved around the central action of the protagonist taking vengeance upon an antagonist who (he believes) has in any significant way injured him or someone in his kin. During the Tudor era, the act of what was called a 'private revenge' was a matter of self-government and often took the form of a duel or a blood feud. Furthermore, Ronald Broude asserts that "neither Tudor political theory nor Tudor religion rejected the blood-for-blood ethic, which was the basis of private, public and divine vengeance alike" (Broude 50)—thus, this fact, combined with the established lack of scruples English playwrights had in writing gory scenes, often resulted in popular stage plays where the initial quest spirals into a gruesome cycle of violence for many of

the characters involved. Because of the nature of these stories, a revenge play necessarily fell into the tragedy genre. The revenge tragedy tradition was first established in Elizabethan England with *The Spanish Tragedy* by Thomas Kyd, in which the father of Horatio, Hieronimo, aims to take revenge for his son's death. Kyd's play, additionally, influenced the best-known and most studied example of a revenge drama: Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, in which the young prince of Denmark grapples with the weight of having to take revenge on the usurper of the throne and murderer of his father.

Honor plays, similarly, centered on the offense done to a principal character by an external agent, and the conflict laid in the resolution given to said offense. The key differences between the Spanish honor play in comparison to the English revenge tragedy are the type of afflicted injury and the genre of the play itself. While the antagonist's wrongdoing in the revenge drama could be of many kinds, in the honor play, it had to be dishonor. Hieronimo does not plan to stab Lorenzo because he has tarnished his son's honor, just like Hamlet is not pressured into murdering Claudius because his father felt disgraced. Their respective quests for revenge do not start on account of social shame being forced upon their beloved relatives but on account of the same act that permeates throughout their entire tragic plot: unwarranted, cold-blooded murder. Spanish honor plays lack the same intrinsic, senseless violence that characterized the English tradition; if a character were to die, it was the aggressor who had committed the offense. And since taking away someone's honor was a vile act that meant "the annihilation of the individual being… but also of his social being,"[3] (Correa 104) any punishment inflicted on the antagonist was not seen as bloody vengeance but as righteous retribution. Furthermore, this resolution, even if initially effectuated outside of the law, was often approved by the highest authority of the nation, that is, the monarch. Thus, the overwhelmingly tragic

[3] "*El aniquilamiento del ser individual… pero también el de su ser social*"

nature of the revenge play is nowhere to be seen in the honor play, in which the ending to the conflict is ultimately that of a comedy. While in the revenge tragedy popularized in England, the scale of the conflict becomes so unmanageable that reconciliation and return to the status quo are impossible; in the honor comedy of Spain, this is the expected resolution.

3. Women's Honor in English Revenge Plays

To explore the differences in the treatment of a woman who has lost her honor after a sexual violation, I first examined the presentation of such a crime and its eventual resolution in various English revenge tragedies and then contrasted my results with their alternatives in Spanish honor plays. *Titus Andronicus* (1593) by William Shakespeare and *The Changeling* (1622) by Thomas Middleton and William Rowley are suitable revenge plays for this analysis, as the rape of a woman and the consequent loss of her feminine virtue are at the heart of both plays' central conflict, creating a thirst for revenge in the main characters.

3.1. Titus Andronicus

3.1.1. Lavinia's Rape

Titus Andronicus is widely regarded as Shakespeare's most violent play, and this is not solely due to the number of on-stage deaths (although that is an important factor nevertheless) but to the particularly horrific circumstances under which they take place. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that these multiple atrocities include rape. The egregious assault of Titus' only daughter, Lavinia, becomes the center of Titus and Tamora's conflict, and it is the latter's ultimate act of revenge.

In this play, the ravishing of a woman is explicitly portrayed as an act of vengeance and a political weapon. But the identification of rape as a political offense, David Willbern argues, does not start with Lavinia. In the very beginning of the play, the city of Rome is referred to as a female entity, one that the Roman soldiers have defended from the Goth's attack—"more precisely, attack in this play means sexual attack." (Willbern 161) Such symbolism is perceptible in the language Bassianus employs when he encourages the Roman citizens to choose him as emperor:

BASSIANUS. Romans, friends, followers, favorers of my right,
If ever Bassianus, Caesar's son,
Were gracious in the eyes of royal Rome,
Keep, then, this passage to the Capitol,
And suffer not dishonor to approach
The imperial seat, to virtue consecrate,
To justice, continence, and nobility;
But let desert in pure election shine,
And, Romans, fight for freedom in your choice. (1.1.9-17)

He first personifies Rome by giving her eyes, and he speaks of reigning her as preventing her 'dishonour' and maintaining her 'virtue.' Furthermore, later in the same scene, Saturninus addresses Rome directly and asks her to "Open [her] gates and let [him] in" (1.1.62)—the sexual connotation easy to discern.

3.1.2. Treatment by the Narrative

Tamora's sons Demetrius and Chiron, the perpetrators of Lavinia's assault, exhibit many of the traits commonly associated with rapists in 16th-century English theater. They are lascivious men who both lust after Lavinia even with the knowledge that she is betrothed and are, in fact, above all attracted to her yet-to-be-consummated chastity: "Come, mistress, now perforce we will enjoy/That nice-preserved honesty of yours." (2.3.134-5). Their dark desires are portrayed as not only sinful but almost animalistic, as they refer to her as prey and put themselves in the shoes of the predator: they "hope to pluck a dainty doe to ground" (2.3.29). This specific analogy is brought up again after Lavinia has been raped and mutilated, when her uncle Marcus explains that he found her "seeking to hide herself as doth the deer/That hath received some unrecurring wound" (3.1.91-2). Lavinia is stripped of her personhood and reduced to an injured animal, unable

to communicate with her human family and trying in vain to hide the dishonor inflicted upon her.

Lavinia's dehumanization after losing her virtue is reinforced when Marcus brings her back to her father and brother, as he presents her to Titus as a "this" who once "was [his] daughter" (3.1.64). The use of the past tense indicates that, even if she is still alive, the loss of her honor has left her as good as dead. Lucius reacts in shock and exclaims that "this object kills [him]!" (3.1.66) Like Lavinia herself expresses when she begs Tamora to "keep [her] from their worse-than-killing lust" (2.3.175), executing her would be more merciful than letting her sons rape her and keep her alive, for at least if she were killed her womanly honor would remain intact. The association of rape with the behavior of wild beasts is done the most by Lavinia herself during this scene, as she metaphorically refers to Tamora as a tiger, a raven, and a lion, and Demetrius and Chiron as her offspring. When the empress ignores her pleas and encourages her sons to carry out their assault, Lavinia completely revokes Tamora's womanhood, and her transformation into an animal is completed: "No grace, no womanhood? Ah, beastly creature." (2.3.182)

Even though the act of rape is unambiguously portrayed as inhumane, this explicit objectification is solely done to the two female characters involved one way or another in the act. Demetrius and Chiron are only identified with animals as an implicit result of their direct dehumanization of Lavinia and insofar as it relates to the moment of planning and committing the act, because rape is ultimately considered an unfortunate yet tolerable consequence of 'proper' manliness. Even Titus, the character most resentful of Tamora's sons, who plans to cook and feed them to their mother, only calls them 'inhuman traitors' once, otherwise referring to them simply as 'men' and 'villains'—for the most part, then, their value as masculine men in society is unrevoked. Meanwhile, women's societal worth depends entirely on their ability to remain chaste (Lavinia) and on their performance of

traditional feminine values (Tamora). Hence, their failure to meet these expectations reduces them to something less than human.

3.1.3. Resolution

Lavinia's rape is not a plot conflict whose development and eventual resolution in effect center on Lavinia herself; instead, the focus is placed on how it troubles her father and title character, Titus. When Marcus first encounters her mutilated self after the ravishing, he highlights the reaction her father will have upon seeing her, claiming that "such a sight will blind a father's eye" (2.4.53). The male figure 'in charge' of Lavinia must avenge her stained honor, and since her husband is dead, that male figure is Titus.

The development of Lavinia's rape plot is very similar to that of the myth of Philomela: Demetrius and Chiron, like Tereus, cut off her tongue so that she cannot speak of their crime, but they also chop off her hands so that unlike Philomela, Lavinia cannot weave (of course, though, she nevertheless manages to expose the truth by writing with a pole in her mouth). Titus himself acknowledges this simile and vows, "For worse than Philomel you used my daughter, / And worse than Procne I will be revenged." (5.3.198-9).

One might consider it fascinating to note how rape as a political weapon is never turned against Tamora, even after she used it to hurt Titus through Lavinia. Various reasonings can explain this fact, the first being the aforementioned inspiration taken from the Greek myth of Philomela: There was only one rape in the original story, and Procne's revenge concluded with the killing and cannibalistic feeding of Tereus' child to his father, which is precisely what Titus does with Tamora and her sons. However, it must be noted that in *Titus* the roles were already somewhat reversed; that is, Demetrius and Chiron (the rapists) are not the ones to eat their family member—instead, it is their mother, Tamora.

Titus' heavy resemblance to the myth remains just that—a resemblance, not a faithful retelling in which every aspect of the story remains unchanged. Thus, it would not be out of place to assume that the vengeance could have taken on different connotations, seeing as the sexes of the characters in the injurer-revenger dynamic were switched.

An alternative rationale for the absence of any discussion regarding sexual punishment for Tamora may lie in the fact that, even if the empress' intentions when encouraging her sons to rape Lavinia were political, Demetrius and Chiron were also explicitly attracted to their victim. Although nowadays we have a more nuanced perspective on the matter, in Elizabethan England lust was widely understood to be the sole root of rape—it was first and foremost a crime of passion done by lecherous men who found themselves sexually infatuated with a woman. Inflicting on Tamora the same pain she allowed her sons to inflict on Lavinia is never considered by Titus or any male member of his family on account of not feeling lust toward Tamora, and so such action is out of the question.

However, a third option might be more intriguing to engage with. Tamora's feminine honor is never jeopardized because she has none to begin with. Tamora, unlike Lavinia, is older and already had children (and consequently, sexual intercourse) with a different man when Saturninus took her as his empress. In addition, even in her marriage to him, she is far from a chaste wife, as she started an affair with Aaron the Moor. When Lavinia calls her a 'beastly creature,' she is stating the precise reason why even her lover was initially put off by her overt sexual nature: her womanhood is devoid of honor. Every man of no blood relation to Lavinia was at some point attracted to her precisely because of her purity, while the type of men Tamora attracts are either fools (Saturninus) or those as perverse as herself (Aaron). There is a dichotomy between the two main female characters of *Titus*, in which Lavinia represents the 'good' woman, whose chaste honor is

ravaged and as a result unfolds the following tragic events, and Tamora, the 'bad' woman, whose lascivious behavior parallels her sons' and renders useless any conceivable attack on her nonexistent honor.

Titus' final act of revenge does not end with the slaughter of Demetrius, Chiron, and their mother; as he eventually also murders his own wronged daughter. Lavinia expressed to Tamora that "Poor [she] was slain when Bassianus died." (2.3.171), and after her rape, her family agrees with the sentiment that when she got widowed and violated, she was metaphorically killed as well. After having slain Lavinia, Titus himself explains this fact:

> TAMORA. Why hast thou slain thine only daughter thus?
> TITUS. Not I; 'twas Chiron and Demetrius.
> They ravished her and cut away her tongue,
> And they, 'twas they, that did her all this wrong. (5.3.56-9)

Although Titus' execution of his daughter can be interpreted as an act of mercy, or otherwise justified as an action simply born out of his madness, he deliberately poses this question to Saturninus:

> TITUS. And if your Highness knew my heart, you were.—
> My lord the Emperor, resolve me this:
> Was it well done of rash Virginius
> To slay his daughter with his own right hand
> Because she was enforced, stained, and deflowered?
> SATURNINUS. It was, Andronicus.
> TITUS. Your reason, mighty lord?
> SATURNINUS. Because the girl should not survive her shame,
> And by her presence still renew his sorrows. (5.3.34-42)

In a revenge tragedy as brutal as *Titus*, no peaceful conciliation is possible, and it is equally understood by both men that the only way to cleanse the stain on Lavinia and,

by proximity, her family's honor is through death. Lavinia dies not so much because of mercy or insanity, but so that she can be liberated from the shame of having lost her virtue. Thus, Lavinia must "Die, die […] and thy shame with thee,/And with thy shame thy father's sorrows die." (5.3.46-7)

3.2. The Changeling

3.2.1. Beatrice-Joanna's Rape

The rape of Beatrice-Joanna in *The Changeling* by the character De Flores is a much different case from Lavinia's, and there have been discussions among scholars to determine if what happened to Beatrice-Joanna even *was* rape in the first place. This distinction is due to the context under which the violation occurs, as it diverges widely from 'the norm'. As Berta Cano mentions, in John Reynolds' *The Triumphs of Gods Revenge* (1621)—one of the play's original sources—Beatrice-Joanna makes the conscious decision to start her affair with De Flores to defy her jealous husband (5); yet, in Middleton and Rowley's rendition of the story, Beatrice-Joanna's capacity to freely consent is put in a tight situation. She is not forcibly seized—instead, the form of assault she experiences is one of coercion, and no direct violence is used by De Flores to make her have sex with him.

Although in our current time it is most plausible to affirm that Beatrice-Joanna could not have freely consented given the pressure she was under, and thus she *was* raped, critics in the past have argued in favor of alternative justifications for why what De Flores did to Beatrice-Joanna cannot be unquestionably categorized as such: For some, Beatrice-Joanna played herself in her scheming, and having to sleep with De Flores was the just consequence of her actions, and for others, "…her conscious loathing [of him] is closely bound up with unconscious desire" (Daalder & Moore 502).

Regardless, when De Flores asks for Beatrice-Joanna's virginity as payment after having killed her suitor for her, she profusely tries to deflect his demands until she is backed into a corner and has no other choice but to comply:

> BEATRICE. Stay, hear me once for all, I make thee master
> Of all the wealth I have in gold and jewels,
> Let me go poor unto my bed with honor,
> And I am rich in all things.
> DEFLORES. Let this silence thee,
> The wealth of all *Valencia* shall not buy my pleasure from me,
> Can you weep Fate from its determined purpose?
> So soon may weep me. (3.4.156-163)

Even under the pretense that Beatrice-Joanna is in fact subconsciously attracted to De Flores and only rejects him to preserve her honor, what she unambiguously expresses is that she does not wish to engage with him sexually. Her consent is at best dubious and at worst nonexistent; hence categorizing it as rape is appropriate.

3.2.2. Treatment by the Narrative

The discussion of whether or not Beatrice-Joanna was actually violated by De Flores is particularly relevant because the depiction of the event is quite cryptic, even if, from a presentist perspective, it can be agreed upon that the sexual encounter of the two was in fact nonconsensual. The way Beatrice-Joanna's rape is treated by the narrative and its characters seems purposefully vague, as it notably differs from what a Jacobean audience would have expected from a tragic rape plot.

A factor that causes this confusion amongst scholars is Beatrice-Joanna herself, for she is far from the traditional archetype of a victimized maiden. Cristina Malcolmson points out how her character may have been inspired by the at-the-time controversial

Countess of Somerset, Frances Carr-Howard. This woman had been involved in the murder of the Count of Somerset's advisor, who opposed his marriage to her; similarly, Beatrice-Joana, similarly, plotted and made the servant De Flores take action to end the life of her betrothed, Alonzo of Piracquo, so that she could marry Alsemero. But the striking resemblance between the two women goes even further, as Frances Howard was also made to take a virginity test, which rumor had it she had somebody else take in her place—this is likewise a plot point for Beatrice-Joanna after the assault.

Beatrice-Joanna is no Lucrece; she is not a perfectly chaste victim who did everything right and whose ravishing was a result of a moral failure of the men around her. Instead, Beatrice-Joanna is quite flawed and unladylike, and she plays an active role in her own downfall: She expresses that "danger's in [her] mind still" (2.1.90) whenever she stands close to De Flores, yet she still chooses to approach and flirt with him to convince him to do her dirty work. On top of that, the other characters, particularly her husband and her father, do not recognize her loss of virginity as the result of a rape. Alsemero reprimands Beatrice-Joanna about her relationship with De Flores, believing it to be a conscious, deliberate decision made by her:

> BEATRICE. Is there the cause ?
> ALSEMERO. Worse : your lust's devil,
> Your adultery! (5.3.50-2)

Her father, Vermandero, similarly, does not pity his daughter but is disappointed and disgusted by her as much as he is by her coercive rapist: "An Host of enemies entered my Citadel,/Could not amaze like this, *Joanna*, *Beatrice*, *Joanna*." (5.3.147-8)

Beatrice-Joanna, as a female character, is of the Lady Macbeth type, in that she manipulates men infatuated with her into murdering whoever she deems inconvenient to achieve her ambitions. Therefore, when compared with other sexual assault victims in the

English revenge tragedy model, such as Lavinia, it is not beyond belief to suggest that perhaps the public of 17th century England did not and was not expected to sympathize with her situation—at least not in its entirety.

The narrative of *The Changeling*, however, also proposes that men are not so much the fair protectors of women who know best how to preserve or otherwise avenge their wives' chastity as they are controlling despots:

> In an undercurrent of jokes and repeated images, the play extends this critique of male authority to all forms of hierarchical government. It suggests that those who rule are superior not because of their innate worth but because they possess the power to imprison and control. (Malcolmson 327)

Even if rebellious women, such as Beatrice-Joanna, are dishonorable, many of the male characters are too. The best example is the subplot of Alibius and his wife Isabella (who, in contrast to Beatrice-Joanna, is a 'virtuous' woman), whom he decides to lock up in an asylum out of fear of being cuckolded. Ultimately, this behavior is portrayed as irrational and oppressive, as it did not prevent other men from pursuing his wife sexually, and Alibius is made to learn from his mistakes as he swears to Isabella that "[he] see[s] all apparent wife, and will change now/Into a better husband, and never keep Scholars/That shall be wiser than [him]self." (5.3.213-14-15) Nevertheless, there is still a clear distinction drawn between the 'good' way a woman can oppose a controlling husband or father without breaking the patriarchal order and risking her virtue, personified by Isabella, and the 'bad' way to do so, represented by Beatrice-Joanna, as she completely shatters her own value by 'putting herself' in a position to be raped.

3.2.3. Resolution

Like Beatrice-Joanna's character, the resolution to the conflict of her lost virtue after a rape strayed from the archetypal model of *The Rape of Lucrece* that Elizabethan

English playwrights often followed. Since *The Changeling* was written near the end of the Jacobean period, the play leans closer to the formula more often seen in the theater of that era. The popularity of tragicomedy was on the rise, and in this genre, the rape plot was often settled by a 'happy' ending, in which the woman married her rapist instead of dying to erase her shame. *The Spanish Gypsy*, another play Middleton and Rowley worked on, is an example of this model: The rapist, Roderigo, atones for his sin of having ravished the young Clara by taking responsibility and marrying her. Even if *The Changeling* falls into the category of revenge tragedy, something of a similar nature occurs as a resolution to Beatrice-Joanna's assault.

Certainly, the ending of the rape plot in *The Changeling* is tragic, in that Alsemero is 'betrayed' by the woman he loved while she finds no exit to her situation other than to kill herself along with De Flores. Although the two do not officially marry at any point, they do arguably end up together, regardless. In the aftermath of Beatrice-Joanna being coerced into having sex with De Flores, she gradually develops a genuine attachment to him, and when he proposes to start a fire to disrupt Alsemero and Diaphanta's lovemaking, she verbalizes that "[she's] forced to love [him] now,/'Cause [he] provid'st so carefully for [her] honor." (5.1.48-9) Opposite to the previous comparison of Beatrice-Joanna with Lady Macbeth, the murder the former commits with her lover makes her grow closer to him. Thus, at the moment of her death, Beatrice-Joanna, rejected by her husband and by society as a whole, only has De Flores left—and she dies right by his side.

In the end, the discussion of whether Beatrice-Joanna is supposed to be a sympathetic character and if her rape really should be interpreted as such seems unimportant. *The Changeling*'s main objective appears to be to show the degeneracy and trickery of the people in a Spanish town, and a case of sexual coercion is only another way to do so. Moreover, Beatrice-Joanna's fate is no different from that of Lavinia and

Lucrece, the only distinction being that as a ‘bad’ woman, she receives a more shameful death, as her lost honor is publicly announced to every other character. For her, like for many other women victims of rape in this period, “tis time to die, when ‘tis a shame to live” (5.3.179). De Flores’ punishment, however, is lesser than that normally inflicted upon other rapists, like Demetrius and Chiron. He likewise dies, but out of his own volition, and before he stabs himself, he rejoices over the satisfaction of having robbed Beatrice-Joanna of her chastity, showing no guilt or fear of consequences during his last moments.

4. Women's *Honra* in Spanish Honor Plays

In order to contrast the portrayal of sexual assault in the English revenge tragedy with its equivalent in the Spanish honor play, the stage plays *Fuenteovejuna* (1619) by Lope de Vega and *El Alcalde de Zalamea* (1636) by Calderón de la Barca are fitting choices, as they both feature a rape plot with similar yet somewhat different quests for justice for the injured woman's *honra*.

4.1. Fuenteovejuna

4.1.1. Laurencia's Rape

The main female character of *Fuenteovejuna*, Laurencia, and her presupposed rape by the commander Fernán can, like Beatrice-Joanna's, be a topic of discussion. Contrarily, that Laurencia was kidnapped against her will by the corrupt town's commander in the middle of her wedding is an undeniable fact, and the question thus shall not be whether she actually consented or not, for that much is straightforwardly answered in the text—but whether he *did*, in fact, manage to rape her.

Among the many crimes Fernán commits against the townsfolk, the sexual abuse of women is a notable one, and his intentions to rape Laurencia are made clear, as he tries to do so more than once. The first time, when he approaches her in the forest, she is saved by her lover, Frondoso, who defends her using a crossbow. The next time, however, when the commander seizes both at their wedding, Laurencia eventually manages to escape, and the signs of physical violence are clear in her body, so much so that her own father has trouble recognizing her:

> ESTEBAN: Good God, are you
> My daughter?
> JUAN ROJO: You don't recognize
> Your own Laurencia?

LAURENCIA: I'm afraid,
I must appear a dreadful sight
For you to doubt it's I you see. (3.1717-20)[4]

She, like Lavinia, has a 'ravished' appearance; however, whether Fernán did go the whole way with it before she fled is quite ambiguous. She points at the blood from where he hit her and alludes to other forms of violence he enacted upon her, yet claims he did this because he "yearned to see [her] chastity/Surrendered to his appetites!" (3.1748-9), implying he used physical torture as a form of coercion to make her agree to have sex with him. Perhaps he did not violently take her chastity, but, instead, similarly to De Flores, tried to force her into consenting to him. Hence, Laurencia may have left with her chastity still intact, if only threatened.

Moreover, something similar happens to another female side character, Jacinta. She is likewise taken by the commander while she is defenseless, and he intimidates her, flaunting his deviant intentions. Even worse than what happened to Laurencia, because of Jacinta's defiance and insults, Fernán asks, "Why should I deprive/The troops of coveted supplies?" (2.1269-70) the grim implication that it is not only him who is going to abuse her, but the soldiers he supervises too. On top of that, in Jacinta's case, it is most likely he did succeed in fulfilling his threat, for the next we hear of her by the mayor and the magistrate is that "poor Jacinta's now the one/Who suffers his incontinence." (2.1323-4) as they grieve the loss of her maidenhood.

4.1.2. Treatment by the Narrative

Rape, as an act of evil and an abuse of power, is a common occurrence in the context of the play, as the commander takes women off from the town with relative

[4] Translation to English by G.J. Racz

frequency. His conduct is a subversion of what would be expected of a man of his ranking: as a noble in charge of the military, he is supposed to stand by the town he is in charge of protecting. Instead, he takes full advantage of his position to abuse those below him, which makes him come off as particularly vile, as there is no reason behind his actions. Unlike someone like De Flores, an ugly servant who is looked down upon by his victim and those of her social class, Fernán has no motive to resent the townsfolk other than unbridled arrogance.

In addition, because of his social standing, not only does the commander think humiliating villagers is inconsequential, but he also sees his sexual assault of the working-class women as a *favor*. When Jacinta rejects him, he asks, "You find a clod that tills the earth/More pleasing than a man of worth? (2.1254-5). He believes that by sole virtue of his *honra vertical* from birth, he deserves to enjoy any woman he pleases, and they should accept it and be grateful for his attention. Hence, when Jacinta replies by minimizing his status, comparing him to her humble father, and proclaiming the latter as more honorable, Fernán takes serious offense and augments her punishment. As William R. Blue puts it, "If he wishes to share his bed with one, so much the better for her since, for the moment at least, he shares with her his glory, his social rank, and thus his honor." (305)

As an honor play, the characters are concerned with preserving their honor above all. The commander is an unprincipled man, but he is obsessed with the honor he was bestowed since birth as a noble citizen, yet the narrative ultimately presents the *honra* that comes with being trustworthy as superior. The men of Fuenteovejuna are portrayed as loving fathers and future husbands with a desire to protect women, even if they have no direct relation to them; Mengo, namely, decides to intervene when Jacinta is being unjustly chased by Fernán's soldiers—for which he is whipped as penalty.

The women of Fuenteovejuna are just as honorable and as determined, if not more so, than the men. They stand upon their chastity and refuse to let it go for the lustful whims of a corrupt commander. They are 'good' women, as they do not lead men who are not proper suitors on, and if they are to lose their virtue inappropriately, it is only by force. They are not superficial and are not afraid to confront authority if necessary. Laurencia, as the main female character, perfectly embodies these qualities: She knows to be wary of the commander, and her fierce personality is contrasted with her determination to protect her *honra* until she is rightfully married to the man she loves. In a way, Laurencia parallels Fernán and his fixation with maintaining his *honra*, only Laurencia's honor is not of birth but of morals and intrinsically feminine. As such, when asked by Mengo, "Don't you love?" her answer is "Just my honor here" (1.434-5).

4.1.3. Resolution

At the start of the third act, after Fernán has crashed Laurencia and Frondoso's wedding and taken them prisoners, the men of Fuenteovejuna, among them Laurencia's father Esteban, discuss what they ought to do about the commander's relentless abuse toward the villagers. Juan Rojo motivates the others to attack him, telling them that "[The townsfolk] suffer this misfortune equally;/Why should [they] wait until [their] lives are lost?" (3.1708-9) This statement unintentionally shows the short-sightedness of the men throughout their discussion: They rightfully talk of Fernán's tyranny, the humiliations he has put the town through, how he and his soldiers burn their properties, and how the situation could escalate. Yet, in that moment, they do not factor in the greatest offense the commander has inflicted on another sector of the town's population: the sexual violation of the women. The misfortune of the townsfolk is hence not equal, for even if characters like Mengo are shamefully whipped, his honor and prospects of life are not destroyed in their totality as a result—however, the women's are.

Laurencia enters, distressed, demanding the men hear her voice. She starts her monologue by renouncing her blood ties with her father and reprimanding him for being a bad protector. She remarks,

> LAURENCIA. I'm not Frondoso's wife yet, so
> You cannot claim reprisal's weight
> Devolves upon a husband's lot
> When such revenge is yours to take. (3.1728-31)

Because she had not yet consummated her marriage with Frondoso when the commander seized her and threatened her chastity, Esteban is still the rightful owner of his daughter and her virtue, and it is his responsibility as her father to ensure dishonor is not brought upon her.

She continues her speech by making a predator-prey analogy, similar to that seen in *Titus*: Fernán is the "wolf to carry off the lamb" (3.1743), and her father and the other men are "coward shepherds" (3.1742). The commander's manhood is here directly revoked, as he is reduced to a feral animal with no rationality or moral compass, only guided by his most primal instincts. The moment she was captured, she saw herself as a defenseless animal, one who could have ended up as something less than human, as happened with Lavinia. But instead, Laurencia chooses to denote her humanity, to remind the men of Fuenteovejuna that she is just as capable of communicating and thirsting for justice as they are, placing herself in a debate "a woman may not have a vote" (3.1714) in. By making space for herself in a male-dominated conversation, she is ultimately rejecting the idea that she is a mere helpless animal with no agency in the protection of her honor.

At last, Laurencia puts into question the men's virility. She asks, "Have you no honor left as men?" (3.1753) and claims that she would take their weapons, since "only

womenfolk respond/To tyrants who'd leave their honor stained" (3.1775-6). She makes multiple emasculating comparisons: She calls them "spinning women," "fags," "cowardly as little girls," and "half-men" (3.1779-89). Thus, by failing at being protectors, these men, by extension, also failed at being *men*. Laurencia exposes that Fernán not only has disgraced every woman he has ravished, but he has also successfully dishonored and castrated every man in town. In a similar vein to *The Rape of Lucrece*, sexual assault becomes a communal problem, and the men of Fuenteovejuna finally decide to take action and rise up against the tyrannical commander.

Fuenteovejuna is a rare instance of a play in which women themselves take part in the pursuit of retribution, often a task solely expected of men. Scott K. Taylor, in his article "Women, Honor, and Violence in a Castilian Town, 1600-1650," notes that women defending their own honor were in fact a common occurrence in certain Spanish towns, and he uses the criminal cases of Yébenes, a small village in Toledo, as an example:

> The women here acted on their own behalf to defend their honor, employing the same rhetoric of honor, including words and the rituals of violent confrontation, that men used in their dispute. (1080)

Similarly to these real-life women, Laurencia calls for the women of Fuenteovejuna to "March on if [they] would set about/Regaining [their] lost honor!" (3.1817-8) Whereas in the second act, Laurencia and Pascuala left Jacinta alone to deal with the commander's soldiers,

> LAURENCIA. Jacinta, God preserve you, but
> If he would fancy you his slut,
> He'll surely use me as his moll.
> *(Exit Laurencia.)*
> PASCUALA. A man might help you to escape;
> I can't defend you in distress. (2.1194-8)
> *(Exit Pascuala.)*

Now, after being let down by those they deemed their protectors, the women muster up the courage to help one another take revenge on their rapist.

In the end, the entire town attacks the commander and his men, and they successfully overpower them. However, after killing Fernán, it becomes an issue of the nation, for that kind of revolt against a figure of authority ought to have consequences for the villagers. This rebellious act, which is portrayed by the narrative of Fuenteovejuna as a just retribution towards the military tyrant has often led critics to classify the play as "revolutionary" and "democratic" (Blue 296). However, this perceived cry for proletary revolution only goes so far, for in the end, the greatest authority of all, the Catholic monarchs, remains untouched and unquestioned in their absolute moral superiority. The people of Fuenteovejuna disavow Fernán's authority, chanting, "Our sole true lords/Remain the Catholic Kings!" (3.1885-6) And once they explain the abuse the commander put them and their women through, King Ferdinand declares that "though murder is most foul, we think/To grant forgiveness for this crime." (3.2444-5) Thus, the collective revolt of the town is not left as an act of social disruption, and it is given legitimacy by those of most honor, the ones thought to be representatives of God. The issue of abuse of power is presented not as an institutional one, but as the result of one specific wicked individual's corruption, and the rightful status quo is restored once he is out of the picture.

> Monarchy was "natural" for Lope but that does not mean that he could not or would not criticize acts or policies or individuals who occupied important positions and who projected certain styles of governance. (Blue 298)

Rape by a man of a higher rank of lower-class women in *Fuenteovejuna* is then an act of animalistic abuse towards all the villagers, one that must be corrected through communal punishment, in which even the ravished women themselves ought to

participate. Although the women Fernán had already abused cannot be un-raped, the future is bright for the main female character, for she reunites with her one true love and will give away her chastity to him in an honorable, consensual manner. Meanwhile, to a character like Jacinta, the possibility of marrying her abuser to remedy her situation is never considered. The commander's lustful crime does not happen only once as a slip-up, but it is a repeated occurrence he shows no remorse towards. Up until he meets his end, his arrogance is evident: "I'm speaking to you and you shout me down?/I am your rightful lord!" (3.1883-4) Hence, he is the type of rapist considered unworthy of redemption. For her part, Jacinta's prospects after her violation are left unknown, but the last thing the audience sees of her is her pouncing on one of Fernán's accomplices and recriminating him for being a "perverse procurer of [his] master's lust" (3.1913).

4.2. The Mayor of Zalamea

4.2.1. Isabel's rape

The Mayor of Zalamea features the most straightforward and unquestionable instance of rape with the character of Isabel, right after *Titus Andronicus*. She is the daughter of Pedro Crespo, the protagonist of the play and eventual mayor of the town; and similarly to *Fuenteovejuna*, the rapist, Don Álvaro, is the captain of the military, and of a considerably higher social standing. However, unlike Fernán, Don Álvaro did not have a negative reputation in the town for his misdeeds, as demonstrated by the way Crespo effusively shows his respect when he first arrives at his house to lodge:

> CRESPO. Say
> No more, for that's enough; my home and wealth
> Are at the service of our God and of
> Our King and all his captains. (1.9.37)[5]

[5] Translation to English by William E. Colford

Once the captain has settled in, Crespo asks Isabel to lock herself and her cousin Inés “up in the attic room in which [he] used/To live” (1.10.39) during his stay. This practice was common in the households of unmarried women so that the fathers could preserve their daughters’ chastity whenever a stranger visited. Gaspar Astete, in his *Tratado del govierno de la familia, y estado de las viudas y las donzellas* (1603), wrote about how maidens should stay indoors so that no man (who is not her future husband) could have access to her.

> Astete went so far as to say that a girl who lost her virginity in her father's house was guilty of adultery, because just as a wife's body belonged to her husband, before marriage a daughter's body belonged to her father. Violating one's chastity, or even just occasioning a rumor to that effect, could only bring shame on the girl’s family and her entire lineage. (Taylor 1083-4)

Regardless, this does not work as intended, as Don Álvaro and the sergeant wish above all to see her even against her father’s interest—hence, the captain convinces the soldier Rebolledo to pretend to attack him so he can go up to the attic and burst in feigning defense. Upon finding her, Don Álvaro is immediately captivated, and he declares that “not only is/[Her] beauty one of rare perfection, but/[Her] mind is also.” (1.16.48) Afterwards, he actively attempts to court her, sending soldiers to sing her songs and otherwise showing up to her house to try to see her again, but to no avail, as she remains not only uninterested but laments to herself, “How have/I sinned, oh Lord, to be subjected to/All this?” (2.8.68) Unable to wait any longer, he ends up gathering his soldiers in front of Crespo’s house, where he takes Isabel by force, dragging her far into the forest where he will satiate his lustful desires on her, while his men tie her father up “within the wood so he can`t spread the news.” (2.26.91)

4.2.2. Treatment by the Narrative

Don Álvaro's character is just as conceited regarding his high-born status as Fernán is in *Fuenteovejuna*; however, his act of rape is portrayed quite differently. At the beginning of the first act, the audience is not under the impression that he would do such a thing to Isabel. When he first hears of her beauty from the sergeant, he questions the fact, wondering, "Can she be more than just a peasant with/A pair of dirty hands and clumsy feet?" (1.3.25)—he shows outward skepticism toward the idea of finding a girl of a lower birth than him attractive. This disparity in social classes is furthermore reinforced by Crespo himself when he finds the captain in the attic with his daughter, as he seemingly tries to dissuade him from pursuing her, reminding Don Álvaro that "[his] daughter, Isabel/Is not a lady, but a peasant girl." (1.16.49)

The narrative of *The Mayor of Zalamea*, in a way, subverts expectations when Don Álvaro becomes so infatuated with Isabel that he abducts and rapes her—not because of the ravishing itself, but because of who commits it. The initial setting of the story can easily trick the audience into thinking, like Crespo did, that the captain is really a man of honor, since, as Casa and Correa explained, that *was* the expectation placed on those of noble birth, and along with the captain's well-established preference for women of his same social class, a 17th century Spanish public would have likely not suspected that Don Álvaro would want to assault Isabel.

Don Álvaro's repulsion toward peasant women makes him both better and worse than commander Fernán: On the one hand, since his attraction to Isabel is portrayed as a remarkable exception, he shows no interest in raping any other village girl and has assumedly never done so before—which can be deduced from his dismissal of Isabel's cousin Inés, whom he does not acknowledge at all after meeting both women in Crespo's house—thus, overall, he causes lesser harm. However, such an attitude makes him come

off as hypocritical or false, much unlike Fernán, who is at least upfront about his wicked intentions. Don Álvaro initially pretends to be an honorable man, privately scheming to see Isabel and later trying to legitimately woo her to hide his violent, lustful desires. His haughty beliefs are not any less prevalent than Fernán's, too, as he admits that his 'love' for Isabel is "a furious, raging, mad/Obsession" (2.2.56)—hinting that because of his high social rank and possession of more 'honor,' being rejected by a woman he deems less than him fuels his anger.

For her part, Isabel is a perfect victim: a virtuous woman who worries about protecting her own chastity. She is very cautious of the men around her, and she complains often about their unwanted attention. When Inés tells her to peek from the window at the *hidalgo* Don Mendo, who is in love with her, Isabel protests,

> ISABEL. Don't ask me to
> Appear at any window when that man
> Is in the street there, for you know, Inés,
> How much the sight of him distresses me. (1.5.32)

When her father tells her to hide in the attic, she responds that "[she] just was coming here to ask [his] leave to do that very thing" (1.10.39). She has no fixed love interest in the play, as she does not entertain any of the men who propose to her and is happy to at all times remain hidden from their sight. It is precisely her strong wish to protect her maidenhood, however, that entices these men to try to take it. Don Mendo directly lets her know that he is excited by her indifference:

> MENDO. If lovely ladies only knew how much
> More beautiful annoyance, cruelty,
> Disdain and anger make them, they would not
> Have use for a cosmetic all their lives
> Except vexation. (1.5.33)

And once in Crespo's house, the captain discloses to the sergeant that he now wishes to see Isabel "just out of sheer persistence" (1.12.42) because her father hid her away. Isabel's attractiveness being linked to her unavailability and well-preserved honor sharply contrasts with her cousin Inés, whom no one pursues, yet who is more open to seeing and talking to men, as she tells Isabel to not be so bothered by Mendo's wooing and "make light of it." (1.5.32) When Inés goes with her cousin to lock themselves in the attic, unlike Isabel, who is content to do so, she complains that "it's foolish to protect a girl/If she does not wish to protect herself." (1.10.40)

4.2.3. Resolution

When Don Álvaro forcibly penetrates into the family's house and takes away the most valuable possession (Isabel), he is violating the sanctity of the sacred home, as Casa rationalized; and when he retreats to the woods to ravish her, he is behaving akin to a savage animal, as other characters, like Demetrius and Chiron or Fernán, did. Don Álvaro himself denotes the wilderness and irrationality of his lustful actions, which he labels as "a frenzied madness, born of love." (2.23.89) Additionally, Crespo directly compares the captain to a predator and calls him and his soldiers "coward dogs" (2.25.90). Notably, in the same lines of dialogue, he also explicitly dehumanizes his daughter, referring to her as a "prize [they]'ve taken"—insinuating that the second Isabel's chastity is threatened, she, like Lavinia, is in danger of losing her personhood and becoming just an object in the eyes of her family.

More importantly, Don Álvaro's unfair abuse of power is emphasized as such: he weaponizes the authority he has over his men to make them ambush Crespo when he is alone and defenseless with only his daughter and niece, which Crespo calls out as an act of cowardice:

CRESPO. You see, you wretches, that I am without
My sword! You rogues! You traitors! Renegades! (2.23.89)

Due to this injustice, the narrative and characters of *The Mayor of Zalamea* do not blame Crespo for a perceived weakness in his defense of Isabel, as *Fuenteovejuna* does. The sole fault is placed in Don Álvaro's perversion, and, unlike Laurencia, Isabel does not give her father a motivational speech in which she blames and emasculates him for allowing Don Álvaro to seize her. Instead, she remarks how safe she felt before the captain and his accomplices arrived:

ISABEL. […] Last night I was enjoying calm repose,
Protected by my youth and your old age,
When those close-muffled villains […]
Carried me away, just as
Rapacious wolves will snatch a little lamb
Straight from its mother's breast. (3.2.97)

Crespo and his family, as opposed to Don Álvaro, who irreparably stains his own honor in his attack, are morally virtuous up until the end. Juan, from his father's teachings, has learned to "fight only with good cause, and pay respect/To women" (2.26.92), and he is the one to find his sister after the assault and fight against the captain until he has no choice but to flee. Isabel, equally as honorable, after escaping from her captor, expresses that she feels a "sense of shame" (3.1.93). She mourns her lost virtue, and she is conflicted on whether she should return home or not: if she goes back, she will bring her shame along with her and pass it on to her father, but if she stays in the woods, she will "leave the way/Wide open for the accusation that [she] was a willing victim of [her] sin" (3.1.94)—her rape has left her dishonored, and she has no way to fix that by herself.

The only logical solution Isabel can come up with for her problem is to perish, and she tells her father as much when she unties him in the forest. She asks to be choked to death, reckoning that by doing so he will clean his family's name:

> ISABEL. […] I am your daughter, but my honor's gone;
> Now you are free to save your own prestige
> By killing me, so that it may be said:
> "His honor lives because his daughter's dead." (3.2.101)

Before realizing it is she who found him, Crespo, too, explicitly pleads to be killed, for "it is not pity to allow a man/So wretched to exist." (3.2.95) Moreover, during the raid, he questions, "What difference if I live? My honor's dead!" (2.23.89) Yet he refuses to kill Isabel when she asks him to, and he instead redirects his anger at Don Álvaro alone, affirming that "[his] fury will not cease/Until [he]'s slain him." And to Isabel, he tells to "come on home, my girl." (3.3.102) By doing so, he dissipates her fears about bringing shame to the family's reputation—regardless of what happened to her, she is still his child, and like how Isabel did not blame Crespo for his failure at protecting her, he will not blame her for losing her *honra*.

However, unlike the other plays, in *The Mayor of Zalamea*, Crespo first tries to solve the issue and recover his family's honor by peacefully negotiating with Don Álvaro. He gives the captain a chance to amend his mistake, kneeling before him and pleading with him to marry Isabel. Here, the narrative of rape being a simple lapse of judgment in an otherwise good man is contemplated—after all, Don Álvaro is not known to be a repeat offender. But the captain denies Crespo's honest proposal and suggests that "for [Crespo] the best way is to keep/ It quiet" (3.8.110) Hence, with no prospect of reconciliation, all Crespo has left to do is order the farmers to "seize the captain" (3.9.11) to be executed. In the end, "honor," C. A. Jones claims, "was reputation, and to save reputation, valued

more highly than life, a bloody vengeance was the only solution." (445) And as such, a perpetrator who does not take responsibility for his crime must be subjected to the ultimate punishment of death.

Nonetheless, Robert Ter Horst points out that Crespo's act of defiance towards a high-born figure of authority is not as grand and 'revolutionary' as that of the people of *Fuenteovejuna*, since "unlike them, Pedro Crespo handles his judicial murder properly, except for little matters like jurisdiction and mode of execution." (294) It comes as no surprise, then, that even though the King in *The Mayor of Zalamea* initially questions the technicalities of Crespo's methods, he ultimately approves of his order for execution. On top of that, Crespo operates within the law even in the arrest of his son for fighting and consequently harming Don Álvaro, as he tells Don Lope that "[he] wants to punish… the disrespect/[Juan] showed in wounding his own captain." (3.18.127) Crespo's strong adherence—for the most part—to the rules of society is what differentiates him from Don Álvaro and what makes him stand out as a remarkably honorable man.

The women of *The Mayor of Zalamea* are granted less agency than those of *Fuenteovejuna*, for neither Isabel herself nor her cousin Inés fight for justice, and the former's honor can only be restored by her male relatives: her father, who goes to talk to her rapist directly and sends him to be hanged, and her brother, who first defends her and buys her time to escape, and later attempts to kill her to cleanse the stain on her virtue. Furthermore, Isabel's character conflict is resolved by means of sending her away from society to become a nun:

> CRESPO. She's entering a convent, and she has
> Already chosen: she will be the bride
> Of One who does not make distinctions in
> A person's social rank. (3.17.127)

The ending, although positive in that Isabel is not made to die, is bleaker —perhaps also more realistic, as scholars like Margaret Wilson have declared the play as a whole to be—in that unlike Laurencia, she does not happily marry her true love, and unlike Jacinta, the possibility of her staying in her hometown with her people is not, at the very least, left up in the air.

Conclusion

Although no critical consensus has been reached among scholars about the possible cause for the different preferences in theater genres between the English and Spanish audiences of the Golden Age, it is a phenomenon widely accepted by anyone familiarized with the literary work of the two nations: Whereas English playwrights like William Shakespeare or Thomas Middleton enjoyed the melodramatic and bloody nature of revenge tragedies, their contemporary Spanish counterparts—such as Lope de Vega and Calderón de la Barca—favored light-hearted comedies with only an appropriate amount of violence. These plays, from both nations, at times tackled rape plots in which a woman was severely hurt and dishonored, but the way in which such an event was displayed by the narrative varied.

In the English tradition, *Titus Andronicus* and *The Changeling* showcase two entirely different types of women: the chaste Lavinia and the perverse Beatrice-Joanna. This dichotomy affects how the other characters of the play, and presumably the public, reacted to each rape. Lavinia, as a perfect victim, garners sympathy for her situation, while Beatrice-Joanna, for her lack of morals, is ultimately blamed for her assault as much as her rapist. Yet, in the end, what these two disgraced women have in common is that the solution to their problems is to die at the hands of a male character. Their respective aggressors, contrarily, are presented very similarly as men controlled by their lascivious desires to deflower a maiden; the three of them are also of a lower social standing and thus possess less honor than the women they prey on (although Demetrius and Chiron's mother, Tamora, becomes the empress, they are still prisoners from war and not legitimate heirs to their stepfather's throne; hence, they are not as respected by the Romans as Titus and his family).

In contrast, the Spanish honor plays *Fuenteovejuna* and *The Mayor of Zalamea* present two different types of victims: the proactive one who brings about a revolution and fights for her own honor (Laurencia) and the reactive one, who simply takes the abuse and conforms to any resolution offered to her, even if it means her demise (Isabel). Both women are sympathetic characters to whom the narrative and other characters offer compassion. Death is rejected as an appropriate answer to their injury, and their lives continue after the assault. Their rapists, similarly to those of the English revenge tragedy, are equally lustful and irredeemable—yet, a critical distinction is how the men of the Spanish theater are of a higher rank than their victims, an advantage that they exploit to subjugate the less honorable women they abuse.

Fundamentally, these two very different traditions agree that rape is the worst thing that can happen to a woman, for leaving her dishonored deprives her of full personhood and leaves her with few options for the future. After the rape, it was a male relative or partner to the woman who most often became the focus of the narrative and who was deemed 'in charge' of taking revenge in the woman's place. Generally, however, Spanish playwrights showed more concern regarding social injustices and power imbalances than their English equivalents, who tended not to challenge audience expectations as much and instead simply reaffirmed the presupposed moral depravity of commoners and outsiders. This fact sounds counterintuitive, considering the English Early Modern period is agreed upon by historians to be one of increased reading and literacy (Herman 7) characterized by the presence of a prominent female ruler, while a 17th century Spain in decline revealed "its corruption in sexual immorality and religious hypocrisy" (Elliott 47)—yet, it is the seemingly more progressive England that gave harsher punishments to its fictional victims of rape and majorly chose not to display any criticisms of the noble class.

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