El caballero de Olmedo

Lope de Vega

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The cover art is El Greco’s “Caballero de la mano en el pecho,” used by special arrangement with ArteHistoria.com

FIRST EDITION

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270 Indian Road
Newark, Delaware 19711
(302) 453-8695
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www.juandelaCuesta.com

MANUFACTURED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

isbn 1-58977-020-X
# Table of Contents

Introduction ...................................................... 11

Bibliography ...................................................... 42

Questions of Language and Grammar ............................. 52

Versification ..................................................... 54

The Edition ....................................................... 60

El caballero de Olmedo

  Acto I ........................................................ 61
  Acto II ....................................................... 93
  Acto III ...................................................... 125

Spanish-English Glossary ......................................... 155
Introduction

LOPE DE VEGA (1562-1635) is the creator of the comedia nueva, the new art of writing plays in early modern Spain, in the period often called the Golden Age. This creation did not take place in a vacuum, for Lope depended heavily on a rich literary and cultural legacy and on the artistic lessons of his contemporaries and immediate predecessors. He did, however, provide a dramatic formula that marked the direction of theatrical production from the late sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. Lope lays out this method of playwriting in a treatise entitled El arte nuevo de hacer comedias en este tiempo (1609), composed in verse and in a jocular vein by an artist in top form and recognized as such. El caballero de Olmedo, written around 1620, is one of Lope's best-known plays. Drawing from a number of traditions, El caballero de Olmedo both respects and deviates a bit from the model elaborated in the Arte nuevo. It features an intriguing plot, an acknowledgment of historical and literary precedent, and a carefully crafted poetic structure.

The Renaissance, as its name suggests, represents a rebirth or rediscovery of classical antiquity. Renaissance scholars read, translated, commented on, and amplified classical theory. In the field of drama, the most significant document was Aristotle’s Poetics, a fundamental text for the development of neoclassical (or neo-Aristotelian) theory. Commentators in Italy and elsewhere placed emphasis on the three unities—of time, place, and action—building upon what was explicit (emphasis on the unity of action) and implicit (allusions to the need to be mindful of time and place) in the Poetics. Seventeenth-century theater in France, exemplified in the works of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine, demonstrates the application of neoclassical principles to drama, in a strict adherence to the three unities and to the separation of tragedy and comedy. In contrast, William Shakespeare and his colleagues in Elizabethan England, and Lope de Vega and his colleagues in Golden Age Spain, eschewed the rigors of neoclassicism by mixing the high with the low, the serious with
the comic, and by maintaining the unity of action while allowing themselves great flexibility with regard to time and place. Having achieved popular and critical success before writing the *Arte nuevo*, Lope accentuates his commitment to pleasing the audience over respecting the dictates of theory.

Lope divides the action of his plays into three acts. The first act normally includes exposition and initiation of the action, the second a series of complications, and the third a climax and dénouement. In the *Arte nuevo*, Lope advocates keeping the spectators in suspense, an objective frequently achieved by focusing on points of honor, as dictated by harsh and unyielding codes of conduct. Men must be willing to go to any length to protect their individual honor and that of their families, since a good reputation is as dear as life itself. Fathers and brothers are the guardians of unmarried women, whose honor, after their marriage, becomes the responsibility of their husbands. This is especially impressive because, in the scheme of things, appearance commonly supersedes reality, or is equated with reality. Perception surpasses essence; that is, how events are perceived bears a greater weight than what they actually are. Lope places emphasis on the rules of propriety by insisting that, through deed and discourse, the dramatis personae stay in character. Types include the leading man (*galán*), the lady (*dama*), the comic servant (*gracioso*), and the elderly gentleman (*barba*). The plays are verse dramas, of approximately 1000 lines per act, employing a variety of poetic forms to fit particular situations. Soliloquies on love, for example, may be rendered through sonnets. The *comedia*, in general, casts itself as tragicomedy, a play with tragic potential (in many cases, stemming from the threat of dishonor) but with a happy, or at least nontragic, ending. The range of topics is wide, and plays often encompass several areas: love, honor, religion, history, and theatricality itself.

On the stage of life—and, by extension, on the theatrical stage—human beings and their counterparts in drama play multiple roles. Partaking in what Lionel Abel has termed metatheater, they become figurative actors and directors, rewriting scenarios in accordance with their own aims and desires. The histrionic, or theatrical, impulse resonates strongly in the *comedia*. In Lope’s most famous play, *Fuenteovejuna*, the citizens of the town of the title take matters into their own hands by killing the official who has ruled dictatorially over them and, more egregiously, has violated a number of women. The murderous act, a
disruption of the hierarchical order, cannot easily be justified, and the Catholic Monarchs, Fernando and Isabel, call the townspeople to task. The villagers withstand torture, refusing to name the assassin and proclaiming collectively that “Fuenteovejuna did it.” When they appear at the court of the king and queen, they receive a stern rebuke but escape further punishment. Their calculated rewriting of society’s script, by killing a man (who, notwithstanding his despotic behavior, was acting within his legal limits) and by defying the officers of justice through a unified voice, depicts two metatheatrical instances placed against the background of fifteenth-century history. As they kill the corrupt official, Lope, in a brilliant touch, has them shout, “Death to tyrants! Long live the Catholic Monarchs!” He thus defends the status quo while having his protagonists rebel against it, generating the conflict and ambiguity on which drama thrives. The inhabitants of Fuenteovejuna are masters of their fate from a decidedly relative perspective.

In *La dama boba*, a comic work, the power of love transforms the intellectually challenged title figure into a resourceful and self-protective woman. Relying on the neoplatonic motif of love as teacher, Lope has his protagonist plot against her father and the suitor that he has chosen for her. Finea is one of countless female protagonists in Golden Age comedies who assert themselves in order to have a say in their futures. Resisting her father and, by implication, the patriarchal order, Finea devises an intricate scheme that wins her the husband of her choice. This metatheatrical paradigm, in which a saturnalian or carnivalesque atmosphere tends to predominate, is a staple of comedy. The play does not project society as much as invert its premises. Comedy empowers women, but only temporarily. They operate in a patently fictional space, and their happy endings signal a return to the real world, the world controlled by men. As Bruce Wardropper (“Lope’s”) and others have shown, there is irony in the fact that the marriages or proposals of marriage that define comic resolution lead to the restricted world of domesticity, where women must answer to their husbands. Women gain authority in comedy, only to lose it, through the institution of matrimony, in serious drama, which may deconstruct the joy of the comic dénouement. The wife-murder plays of the period, including *El médico de su honra*, display the shift from comedy. In these works, it is the male protagonist who becomes the metaphorical dramatist. In *El médico de su honra*, in a version by Lope and in the later and more celebrated play of
the same title by Pedro Calderón de la Barca (1600-1681), the man who fears dishonor, or the appearance of dishonor, feels justified in killing his wife. She has placed his honor in jeopardy—has made it sick—and he must find a way to cure this ailment as would a physician. As is sometimes the case with medicine, the cure becomes harsher and more devastating than the disease.

The comedy *El perro del hortelano* eludes, or elides, another social reality: class distinctions. The protagonist Teodoro is the secretary of the countess Diana, of whom he is enamored, and the attraction is mutual. She does not want to give him up, nor does she wish to compromise her position of nobility. A wily servant is the principal agent of metatheater in the play. He fabricates a missing history of his master, which converts Teodoro into the long-lost son of a rich gentleman. Diana knows that the story is false, but the appearance of truth is enough to sustain her, because it will convince the public at large. Words suffice here to establish reality, or an accepted substitute thereof. With the aid of his servant and his elderly “father,” too overwhelmed at locating his son to be concerned about credibility, Teodoro toys with truth, history, and love in order to remove the obstacles in his path. Comedy gives him the means, and metatheater gives him the end.

Inspired by an Italian novella by Matteo Bandello, Lope’s *El castigo sin venganza* explores metatheater in the realm of tragedy. After a life of pleasure seeking, the Duke of Ferrara marries Casandra, a considerably younger woman, in order to produce an heir. He pays scant attention to his wife, who becomes attracted to the duke’s illegitimate son Federico. The tensions between love and obligation are strong, as is a pervasive fatalism. The duke’s extended absence brings together Casandra and Federico, now unable to repress their desires. On his return, the duke plans to cleanse his honor in secret. He deceives Federico into killing Casandra, whose identity is concealed from him, and then has his servants kill his son in retaliation. Despite his sins of the past, his mistreatment of his wife, and his dishonesty, the duke retains his honor. His stratagem has saved him from disgrace, but he will die without an heir and with a consciousness of his crime. There is tragedy in the deaths and in the lack of poetic justice. One might debate the question of the tragic hero or heroine of the play.

Perhaps the first thing that strikes a reader (or spectator) of *El caballero de Olmedo* is Lope’s variation on tragicomedy. This is not a play
that averts tragedy to produce a happy ending but rather a play that seems to operate in the comic mode, with some serious overtones, only to move toward a tragic conclusion. The shift likely has to do with the source material, notably a popular refrain—a *seguidilla*—that appears in the play:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Que de noche le mataron} \\
\text{al caballero,} \\
\text{la gala de Medina,} \\
\text{la flor de Olmedo.}
\end{align*}
\]

The verses relate to the assassination of Don Juan de Vivero, a knight of the Order of Santiago, in 1521, as he traveled from Medina del Campo to Olmedo (in Old Castile) following a bullfight. Lope was undoubtedly familiar with the refrain and with the legend inspired by the event. He places *El caballero de Olmedo* in the fifteenth century.

The culminating moment of the play will be the murderous act, but the dramatic structure will depend on a deferral of the resolution, which constitutes a major challenge for the playwright. Much of *El caballero de Olmedo* will, perforce, be a progression toward the ending, but the goal will be to delay the climax. As part of this process, Lope looks to Fernando de Rojas’s *Celestina*, also called *La tragedia de Calisto y Melibea*, a narrative in dialogue form which appeared in 1499 and in an expanded version in 1502. Like Fabia in *El caballero de Olmedo*, and like Trotaconven-tos in the fourteenth-century *Libro de Buen Amor* of Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita, Celestina is a go-between (*alcahueta*), hired to facilitate communication, and more, between her employer and the object of his love. The complications of *El caballero de Olmedo* stem, to a large degree, from the intervention of Fabia. Interestingly, the ingenious servant Tello is aware of the parallel situation when he refers to his master and the beloved lady as Calisto and Melibea. He does not seem to bear in mind, however, the tragic ending of the *Celestina*, in which Calisto falls to his death while escaping in the dark from Melibea’s house and she responds by committing suicide.

Another facet of the intertext, or literary heritage, of *El caballero de Olmedo* is the medieval courtly love tradition, revisited in much of Renaissance and baroque poetry. The courtly lover served, idealized, and even idolized, the lady who won his heart. She symbolized moral
excellence as well as beauty. If she disdained him, as she was wont to do, in part to respect feminine protocol, he steadfastly persisted in proving the depth of his admiration. In this sense, then, love was—to use a telling oxymoron—a sweet suffering, but a painful experience nonetheless: an illness, a series of obstructions, forced separations, a figurative death. The lover must endure the agony of rejection in order to show himself worthy of requited love. He must express unqualified devotion, constantly reiterate his feelings, and make all necessary sacrifices so that he may achieve his desire. Courtly love, which originated with the troubadours of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, has a distinctive vocabulary, made more resonant in the works of the fourteenth-century Italian poet Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch), a notable influence on Spanish poetry. Lope, a superb and prolific lyric poet in his own right, has the opportunity in *El caballero de Olmedo* to build his own poetic structure around the paradigms and the lexicon of courtly love.

*EL CABALLERO DE OLMEDO*

ACT I. The play opens with a soliloquy by Don Alonso, an apostrophe to love, in which he speaks of the need for correspondence between would-be lovers. Reacting to the spirit of love emanating from the eyes of a lady whom he has seen for the first time the day before, he hopes that his strong emotions will be reciprocated. Aided by his servant Tello, he enlists the services of the go-between Fabia to enter into contact with the young lady. When Fabia asks if his master is indisposed, Tello answers that he is suffering from love. Fabia notes that she observed Don Alonso enraptured at the fair, held the preceding day, by none other than Doña Inés, the “flower of Medina,” of the highest nobility though dressed as a peasant girl. Don Alonso offers a detailed description of Doña Inés, full of admiration and rhetorical flourishes. The two caught sight of each other and “spoke” silently, with their eyes. That morning he followed her into the chapel, where, dressed in her normal attire, she and her sister Leonor attended mass. He finds her to be glorious in every respect, but it is her eyes that most draw him in, that most suggest that she welcomes his adoration. Promising the go-between a gold chain, Don Alonso asks her to deliver a letter that he has composed for Doña Inés. Trying to dissuade him, or pretending to do so in order to enflame his desire, Fabia accepts the commission. She notes in an aside that she will “embellish” the letter. At the home of their father Don Pedro, Inés and Leonor
converse on love. Inés remarks that, ironically, Don Rodrigo has courted
her for two years and that his attentions leave her cold, whereas the
gallant stranger who she scarcely knows has aroused her to love at first
sight. Leonor, who is interested in Don Rodrigo’s friend Don Fernando,
wants to defend the long-term suitor but concedes that morals cannot
control the direction of Cupid’s arrows. The servant Ana announces the
arrival of Fabia, who commences her maneuver under the guise of selling
cosmetics. Fortunately for her, Don Pedro is away. The sisters know of
her less than sterling reputation, but, curious to know why she has paid
the visit, they admit her. Fabia praises the women’s deceased mother and
mentions that she knew their father in his youth; Don Pedro seems to
have had a healthy sexual appetite that Fabia’s “girls” helped him to
satisfy. Fabia attempts to entice Inés and Leonor with a carpe diem
message: they should enjoy life while they are young and beautiful, for
before they know it they will be old and wrinkled like her. Surveying the
items in Fabia’s basket, Inés comes across a letter—in the words of the go-
between—“almost as if it were meant for you.” Fabia informs Inés that
a young gentleman has written the letter for the woman he loves, but that
he is fearful of harming her good name, even though he pursues her with
the intention of marrying her. Fabia begs Inés to answer the letter, so that
she will have something to return to her employer. Inés agrees, and
retires to her room. Don Rodrigo and Don Fernando appear, and Leonor
informs them that Fabia is there because she does their laundry. When
Inés appears with a piece of paper in her hand, she passes it off as a list
of the items to be laundered. Fabia has a close call with Don Rodrigo,
who insists (fruitlessly) on buying the paper that has been touched by
Inés. Don Rodrigo laments the scorn with which Inés treats him. He
declares that he needs for either love or death to relieve him of his pain.
When he departs, Inés calls his words “a string of foolish ideas” and
proceeds to read aloud the letter delivered by Fabia, which moves, as a
paean to the damsel’s beauty, from the slipper that adorns her foot to her
piercing eyes. Assuming that Don Alonso is the letter writer, Inés has
directed him to come to her garden that evening, where he will find the
green ribbon from her slipper, which he should wear in his hat the next
day as a sign. Fabia at first leads Don Alonso to believe that she has been
unsuccessful, only to make him more appreciative on receiving the letter
from Inés. Fabia asks Tello to accompany her in extracting the tooth of a
highwayman who has been hanged. She ridicules his timidity, while he
reminds her that he is not as adept as she in “speaking with the devil.” Later in the day, Rodrigo and Fernando return to Don Pedro’s house and find the ribbon on the grating. Considering that it might have been left by either of the sisters, they cut it in half. When Don Alonso arrives, he confronts the two men, who, after a brief skirmish, take flight, Rodrigo losing his cape. The following morning Don Rodrigo and Don Fernando pass by the house with the ribbons decorating their hats. Inés, believing that Fabia has tricked her, is furious. Leonor, on seeing Don Fernando’s ribbon, surmises that both men must be in love with her sister. Fernando meets with Don Pedro to arrange a marriage between Inés and Rodrigo. Inés berates Fabia, who in turn defends herself and realizes that Inés is indeed enamored of Don Alonso (“My enchantments have had their effect”). She assures Inés of her good fortune, for Don Alonso, the “most prudent knight in all Castile,” serves—nay, worships—her. Inés voices her concerns about the impending betrothal to Rodrigo, but Fabia advises her to leave the situation in her capable hands.

ACT II. Don Alonso opens the second act with the statement to Tello that “I think that dying is better than living without seeing [Inés].” Tello is worried that people will discover that his frequent trips to Medina are related to secret visits to Inés. Don Alonso places his passion above any danger. Tello has been seen wearing the lost cape by Don Rodrigo, whom he mocked but now fears. He tells his master the terrifying adventure of securing the highwayman’s tooth. Don Alonso’s thoughts are on Inés, whom he exalts above all others. He is her willing slave, and she has full control over him, in life and in death. Reunited with his lady, Don Alonso is despondent over Inés’s engagement to Rodrigo, but she insists that nothing can prevent her from marrying her true love. Each praises the other to the hilt. Tello notes that love has made his master more discreet and himself a poet; he recites a gloss written on verses composed by Don Alonso, verses that end with “tell her that you saw me dying for her.” Don Pedro enters, and Don Alonso and Tello hide. Don Pedro brings up the proposed marriage to Don Rodrigo, whom he describes as the best man that he could have found for his daughter. She agrees, but states that she already has a husband. She explains that, although she has been afraid to notify him of her decision, she has made plans to become a nun, a bride of Christ. Leonor will give him grandchildren, but she has chosen a different path. She requests that her father allow her to bring a devout
and “saintly” woman into the house to instruct her, as well as a singing teacher who also can instruct her in Latin. Don Pedro is shaken by the announcement, yet he will not block the path to devotion. Inés informs Don Alonso that she has invented the ploy in order to prevent her marriage to Rodrigo. Fabia will execute the role of the holy woman and Tello that of the instructor. Don Alonso sadly braces himself for his departure. In the upcoming days, he will be preparing for the Cruz de Mayo celebration. King Juan II (1406-1454) and Don Álvaro de Luna, his chief advisor, are scheduled to attend the festivities, including the bullfight in which Don Alonso will participate. Don Rodrigo continues to rue his failure at love. He is jealous of Don Alonso and attributes Inés’s scorn to his rival’s presence in Medina, and he vows to kill anyone who would frustrate his marriage plans. Don Fernando counsels him to concentrate his efforts on performing well at the festival, where the king and Inés will be witnesses. At her father’s insistence, Inés agrees to wear elegant secular clothes to the celebration. Fabia, dressed for her new role, enters and convinces Don Pedro of her own piety (“She is just the woman you need, Inés,” he opines). Tello follows, also in disguise, and professes to have taken holy orders. When Don Pedro retires, Tello reports that Don Alonso is readying himself for the bullfight. The servant delivers a letter from his master. Don Pedro enters while Inés is reading it, and she feigns that her instruction in Latin has begun. Fabia justifies Inés’s attendance at the Cruz de Mayo festivities, and Don Pedro offers rewards to the new members of the household staff. In Valladolid, the king and Don Álvaro de Luna discuss several orders of business, all related to symbolic dress. The knights of the Order of Alcántara will now have green crosses on their habits. The Moslems and Jews living in Castile will wear distinctive clothing to reveal their respective religions, as a sign for Christians to have as little to do with them as possible. And, finally, the king will bestow upon Don Alonso the habit of one of the military orders, as a means of honoring his achievements. In Olmedo, Don Alonso delivers a soliloquy to absence, his “enemy,” which he calls a “living death.” He maintains that it would have been better if absence had taken his life when he left Medina, since it has taken his soul. Tello returns from Medina with a letter from Inés, which Don Alonso reads slowly and with pauses in order to savor every word. Inés has sent a sash for Don Alonso to wear around his neck. Tello gloats over the success that he and Fabia have enjoyed as tutors to the prospective novitiate. Before they depart,
Don Alonso shares with Tello a dream that he had in the early morning hours, a dream in which a goldfinch, singing its amorous plaints, was attacked by a hawk and killed as his “wife” bore witness. The dream has depressed him deeply, and he says that he has lost hope. Tello urges him on, and the two proceed to the bullring in Medina.

ACT III. Don Rodrigo and Don Fernando listen as the crowd at the plaza cheers the triumphs of Don Alonso. Rodrigo is livid, for he has had miserable luck in the bullring, while Don Alonso has been blessed on all counts. Don Alonso, on horseback, and Tello, on foot, have conquered the bulls and the crowd, but Don Alonso has noticed the jealous glances of his rival. As he reenters the ring, he asks Tello to make a quick trip to Don Pedro’s house to leave a message with Fabia that he will speak briefly with Inés before leaving for Olmedo. He is anxious to assure his aged parents that he is well, lest they fear for his well-being. Tello brags to Fabia of his victory over the bulls and lightheartedly cites her beauty as his inspiration, and she returns the joke. In the ring, Don Rodrigo falls from his horse, and Don Alonso saves him, before Inés and the king. Don Rodrigo is humiliated by the events. He is overcome with anger and jealousy. He compares Inés viewing the spectacle to Nero watching Rome burn. Revenge is clearly on his mind. The king and his advisor praise the performance of Don Alonso. Leonor sends Tello to receive a gift for his master from Inés. She tells Don Alonso that he has endeared himself to her father. Inés repeats this point; Don Pedro is thinking of a match with Leonor, the available daughter. Fatalistic imagery and even a yearning for death pervade Don Alonso’s parting words. He endeavors to calm Inés by rationalizing his anxieties as “false illusions.” He will leave, and Tello will follow shortly thereafter. His final words to Inés speak of death: “Here my life is ended, which is the same as departing.” As Don Alonso takes to the road, a phantom figure with a black mask materializes, identifying himself as Don Alonso and disappearing quickly. Don Alonso attributes the vision to his imagination and to the sadness of leaving his beloved lady behind. Don Rodrigo, Don Fernando, and two accomplices ride in pursuit of Don Alonso. Rodrigo vows, “Today my jealousy and his life will end.” He censures his adversary for having allowed Tello and especially Fabia, a woman of ill repute and an evil enchantress, to enter Inés’s home. In the middle of his journey, Don Alonso remains concerned, but is determined to put his courage to the
test. He hears music in the distance, and a voice recites the mournful refrain announcing his death. The singer, a peasant, enters and reports that he has heard the song from Fabia. He urges Don Alonso to turn back, but Don Alonso refuses to compromise the code of conduct that befits his noble status. The peasant exits, and Don Rodrigo and his companions reach their target. Don Alonso tries to defend himself, but the men shoot him, with Rodrigo affirming that he has come to kill, not to fight a duel. The assassins flee, as Don Alonso laments not having heeded the warnings from heaven. Tello finds him and honors his master’s request to take him to Olmedo to see his parents one last time. In Medina, the king has appointed Don Pedro governor of Burgos. Celebrating his good fortune, he pleads with Inés to change her plan to enter the convent. Leonor advises her father that his choice of spouses does not suit Inés. When Leonor names her sister’s true love, Don Pedro replies that he would be most honored to have Don Alonso as a son-in-law. The king and his retinue enter, as do Rodrigo and Fernando, who ask permission to wed the sisters. Don Pedro explains that he has promised Inés to Don Alonso, the recent recipient of a military habit. Tello arrives and describes the death of the knight from Olmedo. Inés says that what she earlier had pronounced in jest is now her wish: to become a nun. The king sentences the murderers to be hanged and signals the close of “the tragic history.”

*El caballero de Olmedo* displays Lope de Vega’s skill as a poet and as a dramatist, as well as his ability to synthesize poetry and drama in innovative ways. It is a play that breaks with classical decorum by joining the comic with the tragic, in that order. Lope projects the *seguidilla* that defines the direction of the plot on two levels, the metaphorical and the literal. The synthesis consists of the literalization, or actualization, of the metaphor. The action—the unity of action—of the play can be articulated as “Don Alonso dies of love.” That is, he dies as a consequence of his love, and his death brings together conventions of tragedy, courtly love, and the Renaissance lyric. Poetic discourse characterizes Don Alonso in a triple sense. A devotee of the amorous idiom and of the practitioners of courtly love, he sets out to serve a lady. A purveyor of words, he emulates the troubadours and bards who have preceded him. A victim of fate, he plays the protagonist in the enactment of a death foretold. Love, in the form of Cupid’s arrows, favors him, and fortune shines upon him, in the clandestine rendezvous and in the bullring, and through the
patronage of the king. Don Alonso is courageous and principled; from the beginning, he intends to marry Inés, not to seduce her. He is resolutely in love, but bound at the same time by filial devotion. He is equally tied to Olmedo and Medina, and therein lies the rub. His divided loyalties precipitate the movement that results in his death, first figurative and then “real.”

Virtually every play highlights dramatic conflict, and the conflict in El caballero de Olmedo is both obvious and subtle, and, on all levels, ironic. Lope fashions a love triangle, with the violent, sullen, and self-pitying Don Rodrigo as counterpoint to Don Alonso. For Rodrigo, the two-year courtship of Doña Inés is shattered by the handsome and gifted outsider, and in a single day. Don Alonso is a weaver of baroque descriptions. His pain is heartfelt, but it is the enjoyable anguish of love and separation, and it takes the form of conventionalized, rehearsed poetic diction. Don Rodrigo initially seems out of place in this setting, but the play catches up to him, so to speak. Rodrigo’s brooding, obsessive speeches convey a darkness and pessimism that seem to be inconsistent with the comic tone, and the comic format, of the first half of the play, yet Lope begins early on to mix the allusions to death as a rhetorical flourish with premonitions and threats of death. Rodrigo is, from his first appearance on stage, a loose cannon. He has persisted in his suit of Doña Inés and has won the respect of her father. He trusts that his noble blood and his perseverance will suffice, but he mistakenly interprets Inés’s contempt as a test of his devotion. Don Alonso’s appearance destroys the illusion. She is not resisting love but resisting him. Rodrigo cannot comprehend the treatment that bespeaks his inferiority to the stranger in town, and his disbelief turns into jealousy and rage. He becomes the link to tragedy, and its principal agent. He spies on the enemy, checking his comings and goings. He seeks to improve his lot by excelling in the bullring, only to suffer defeat and, worse, to be rescued by the man he despises. There is no room in Rodrigo’s heart for gratitude; his thoughts are on vengeance alone. The manner in which he effects the revenge is revealing, for he corners the defenseless victim at night, with a group of accomplices, and kills him not with a sword but by gunshot. He shows himself not as a creditable rival but as the antithesis of Don Alonso.

Don Rodrigo deludes himself into thinking that the murder of Don Alonso is justifiable. He argues that Don Alonso has conducted his suit in secret and that he has sanctioned the machinations of Fabia, who has
brought black magic into the home of Don Pedro and his daughters. He sees Inés as having been corrupted, and her family’s honor contaminated, by Fabia’s witchcraft. An air of sacrilege informs the enterprise, since Fabia is doing the devil’s work. Rodrigo and Fernando are hardly the standard bearers of Christianity. Each alludes over and over again to fickle fortune, to the mutability of fate and to the temporal nature of success. Nevertheless, Fabia does bring an additional dimension to the proceedings. She is not merely an intermediary, a delivery woman. She puts a special touch on the documents that come into her hands. She wants to secure the dead man’s tooth for motives unknown, but said motives cannot be pure. And when she enters a Christian home in the guise of a beata, a pious woman, in order to aid in a travesty of the saintly vocation, she cannot help but defile the premises. Near the end of the play, the peasant on the road to Olmedo tells Don Alonso that he has heard from Fabia the song that foreshadows the murder. The go-between has links to otherworldly spirits. She credits her power to forces far beyond ingenuity. Called to minister to those stricken with love, Fabia has recourse to cures unavailable to most physicians. She symbolizes the proscribed, the destructive, the prohibited other in the social and spiritual domains. Moreover, she elicits the memory of Celestina, who also was rewarded with a gold chain, who also spoke of witches that extract molars, and who also exercised various callings, all unsavory. By evoking Celestina, Fabia evokes the couple whom her forerunner brought together, Calisto and Melibea, and, by extension, their tragic deaths.

Fabia twice makes her way into Don Pedro’s house, but it is Doña Inés who grants her entry. It is she who contrives the stratagem of the convent and she who asks for her father’s permission to hire the holy woman and the master of Latin. It is she who profanes the Catholic Church by speaking of God as her husband. Her metatheatrical ruses allow her to distract Don Pedro and to defer the marriage plans of Don Rodrigo. She employs the tactics of the designing women in the comic plays of the Golden Age, whose motivation is to win the marriage promise of the men of their choosing, but the context and the circumstances are different in this case. Like Don Alonso, Doña Inés opts for the periphrastic, or indirect, route with regard to problem solving. He employs Fabia rather than speaking to Inés or to Don Pedro; she feigns interest in becoming a nun and collaborates with Fabia rather than admitting her true feelings to her father. Based on the internal logic of the
play, the characters set forth obstacles where none exist. The love between Alonso and Inés is mutual. Don Pedro, along with everyone except Rodrigo and Fernando, is enthralled by the illustrious gentleman from Olmedo. From the perspective of the playwright, in contrast, the obstacles relate to another type of logic, the rhetoric of deferral.

In writing *El caballero de Olmedo*, Lope will have sought to respect the concept of unity of action, which he underscores in the *Arte nuevo*. The play will advance Don Alonso toward his death, but that death cannot occur until the end of the dramatic action. Lope establishes a point of contact between the courtly love tradition and the murder, and thus death is present as a poetic image throughout the text. From the beginning, Don Alonso’s euphoria is tempered with concern. Love inevitably brings pain, albeit an agreeable, uplifting pain. When he follows Inés into the chapel, Don Alonso compares himself to a condemned man brought to church for a final prayer before his execution. Having been rejected for two years, Don Rodrigo portrays himself as trapped between life and death, unable to find favor and continuing to suffer. In his first letter to Inés, Don Alonso praises the feet contained in the colored slippers and ponders, “If you are capable of killing people with your [exquisitely beautiful] feet, what do you leave for the [amorous] fire coming from your eyes?” When Fabia tricks Alonso into believing that Inés has been unresponsive to his pleas, he attributes his misfortune to her eyes, geared to “deceive and kill me.” When Fabia chastises Inés over the misunderstanding about the ribbon, she says of Don Alonso, “He adores you, [and] you have killed him.” On more than one occasion, Don Alonso alleges that he would prefer death to absence from Inés. The verses that he writes in her honor make a similar statement. As Don Rodrigo expresses himself figuratively, he confides in his friend that he would have to kill anyone who stood in his way in the struggle to attain Inés. Don Alonso’s account of his dream, at the end of the second act, prefigures this decisive, and uneven, challenge. By the time Rodrigo undergoes the torment in the bullring, capped by the daring rescue, Alonso’s fate has been set. The final dialogue with Inés beautifully juxtaposes the metaphorical with the literal, absence as death with the presentiment of death. Nothing seems transitory about his farewell.

The assassination of Don Alonso is replete with irony, as the man who continually invokes death meets his death. His discourse is
recharged, or turned inside out, by the dénouement. As the playwright merges the references to death, he negotiates an equally complex set of images based on eyes and vision. Love radiates from Inés’s eyes, and Alonso is instantly captured. In his mind, the reciprocal gaze signifies correspondence, a mutual attachment. Don Alonso can recall in minute detail Inés’s appearance at the fair, he can communicate with his eyes, and he can respond to her silent entreaties. The recurrence of visual imagery amplifies the ironic base of the play. The man who glorifies his lady’s eyes and the power of his own vision is, paradoxically, the victim of what may be termed an optical illusion, a blindness to the signs around him. He fails to see, or to take seriously, the omens, threats, and perils that present themselves. Don Rodrigo is anything but invisible, and his wrath and jealousy are palpable. Neither Don Alonso nor Doña Inés is sufficiently alarmed by the intensity of his passion; they elect to ignore him, which only aggravates the situation. Alonso mentions at one point that he does not believe in witchcraft or enchantment, but he seems oblivious to Fabia’s character and background. Don Pedro likewise overlooks the signs that would indicate her connection to the black arts and, more surprisingly, her connection to his past. He accepts her as a spiritual guide for his daughter and Tello as a reputable scholar. Dress plays a role in the drama. Don Alonso falls in love with Doña Inés when she is dressed as a peasant, a labradora, at the fair. (And it is a labrador who sings the fatal song on the road to Olmedo in Act III.) Tello and Fabia not only change clothes as actors in Inés’s metaplot, but the credulous Don Pedro is unable to see beneath their outer garments and their lies. Complementing the motif of reading (and misreading) signs, Lope has the king and his advisor discuss the markers that designate the identity of the knights of the military orders, as well as the Moslem and Jewish inhabitants of Castile.

Lope adds a historical component to the story, which may stand above all as a testament to the author’s talent as a dramatic poet. The verses on which he bases the play belong to the tragic mode, and the playwright unquestionably borrows from tragedy. The aura of doom, the presages of death, the allusions to Celestina, and the incorporation of the verses themselves would seem to seal Don Alonso’s fate. Before his fall, he stands at the height of all good fortune. He has made a splendid showing in the bullring, fighting boldly and successfully, and risking his life to save a colleague (and romantic rival) in need, with his lady, the
king, and the citizens of Medina as witnesses. His love is reciprocated, and his trips between the two towns have permitted him to serve Inés and to care for his parents. He does not heed the portents of danger and the threats to his safety, and therein lies his error in judgment (hamartia). Even at the end, he expects his enemy to act honorably, to fight him one on one, when the cowardly Rodrigo is intent on murder, not on a contest of prowess. Only after he has been critically wounded does Don Alonso concede that he should have given more credence to the warnings. (The historical figure of Don Álvaro de Luna, the king’s favorite, offers another example of a tragic fall.) Beyond the treatment of the protagonist, Aristotle’s concept of tragedy in the Poetics places great emphasis on catharsis, the purgation or purification of the emotions produced by tragedy: pity and fear. Catharsis is a function of audience response; spectators feel compassion for the suffering of a fellow human being and trepidation that misery just as easily could wreak havoc in their own lives.

In El caballero de Olmedo, Don Alonso doubles as a dramatic hero and a poetic construct. The spectator or reader may alternate between sympathy for his predicament and distance from his “human” side. Don Alonso simultaneously has ties with the mimetic (from mimesis, Aristotle’s term for the work of art as the imitation of aspects of reality) and with the metaliterary (literature as the external referent, literature built around and re-creating literature). Not only does the protagonist endlessly recite poetic formulas, but the play itself seems oriented toward comedy, itself a quintessential poetic mode. Much of El caballero de Olmedo follows a trajectory associated with the comic dramas in which a young woman sets her sights on a man and goes to great lengths to win him, over the objections of authoritarian men, usually her father and/or brothers. To attain him, she must be resourceful, unswerving, and audacious, thereby bringing both metatheater and tragicomedy into the picture. Inés’s invention of her calling to a higher order qualifies as metatheatrical, and the risking of her (and her family’s) honor can be deemed tragicomic, given that the potential for dishonor—a tragic fall from honor—is always a factor.

There is a tone of levity in a good portion of the dramatic events and the discourse of the play. The characterization of Fabia reflects the alternation between the forces of light and darkness; the go-between participates in the metaplots of Alonso and Inés, but she also seems to
serve other masters, possibly the devil. As with the graciosos of other plays, Tello contributes to both extremes of the tragicomic spectrum. He is a source of laughter (when he boasts of his prowess in the bullring and when he pretends to woo Fabia, for example), but has a serious mission at the end (in his discovery of the moribund Don Alonso, the completion of the journey to Olmedo, and the report to the king). The episode of the highwayman’s tooth serves to illustrate the union of comedy and tragedy. Tello plays the pusillanimous lackey to perfection, even claiming to have wet his pants. Fabia’s business at the site of the execution, on the other hand, is quite serious, and intimately related to her business on the dark side. Although comic and tragic elements interact within the dramatic continuum, Lope traces a movement from comedy to tragedy, thus reversing the normal development. In this sense, he produces in El caballero de Olmedo what might be classified as a “comi-tragedy.”

The penultimate irony of El caballero de Olmedo is that the protagonists act as if there were severe obstacles in their path when, in effect, the course of true love is relatively smooth. Don Pedro is a gentleman and a gentle man. He is not the tyrannical, inflexible guardian bent on denying a woman her right to choose a spouse. He has his daughters’ best interests at heart, and he is willing to give them a vote in shaping their domestic future. The qualifiers “penultimate” and “relatively” are crucial to the equation, because Don Rodrigo is poised from the beginning to mount an attack on the competition, and, more significantly, because the verses that disclose Don Alonso’s destiny come before the dramatic composition. A type of literary determinism guides El caballero de Olmedo, whereby tragedy is set to overtake comedy. The comic aspects of the play, even when foregrounded, are digressions or ironic analogues to the murder of the knight, immortalized, so to speak, before the fact.

Don Rodrigo kills Don Alonso and is punished by order of the king. In the murderer’s eyes, the victim is guilty of staining the honor of Don Pedro by involving the demonic Fabia in his pursuit of Inés. Don Alonso has not played fairly, and he has endangered the lady whom Rodrigo has longed for and courted for two years, while respecting the rules. The fact that he owes Don Alonso his life does not seem to matter; rather, it intensifies his resentment. Inés’s sacrilegious game—the holy woman and the Latin master are her idea—would not have been necessary, of course, had Rodrigo accepted her coldness toward him as a sign of her lack of interest. (Rodrigo’s comparison of the indifferent Inés to Nero alludes to
a passage of *Celestina.* She does not abandon him for Don Alonso; she finds her first true love. The question of poetic justice, a question of balance, is a slippery issue in this play, because the punishment seems disproportionate to the crime. At the end, justice is done, but one may dispute the contention that order is restored. Inés and Leonor have lost their suitors, and there are no promises of marriage at the conclusion. In the final analysis, justice in *El caballero de Olmedo* is, uniquely, poetic. Lope remains faithful to his source. The protagonist dies after ignoring the omens that predict his demise, and that is his way—and the playwright’s—of complying with poetry, with history, and, arguably with the forces that stand above them both.

**ANALYZING EL CABALLERO DE OLMEDO**

As you read and reflect on the play, you may wish to consider the following elements, among others: language, characterization, plot components, the use of irony, the creation of suspense, thematic issues, and questions of genre.

Pay careful attention to the language of the text. Note how Lope de Vega writes poetry, how he writes dialogue, and how he creates a particular voice, or idiolect, for each character. Identify the most prominent images and patterns of images, such as those relating to the eyes. Some characters will speak hyperbolically, using exaggerated language to emphasize a point or to express strong emotions. Others will speak deceptively. Fabia adjusts her discourse according to her interlocutor, for example. She employs different styles when she addresses Don Alonso, Tello, Inés, and Don Pedro, and yet another in her asides. In the *Arte nuevo,* Lope notes that kings should speak like kings and servants like servants, and in *El caballero de Olmedo* one has the opportunity to observe the speech of a king and of servants, and of those between them in the social hierarchy. Be conscious of the verse forms employed in the play. Distinguish the use of shorter verses, of eight or fewer syllables (*versos de arte menor*), and longer verses, of more than eight syllables (*versos de arte mayor*). Try to find the rhetorical figures embedded in the poetry; there are many. Lope opens the play with an apostrophe (*apóstrofe*) to love, as Don Alonso addresses the object of his words by name. Keep in mind that Lope is a baroque poet, and, as such, he relished the cultivation of a richly textured, highly ornate language. Don Alonso’s description of Doña Inés dressed as a peasant girl provides an example
of baroque discourse. The baroque style also employs radical contrasts. See if you can discover cases of this recourse, and remember that Lope vacillates between comedy and tragedy in the play.

Language and actions help to define characters. *El caballero de Olmedo* presents a protagonist clearly differentiated from the antagonist. Dramatic characters reveal their motivation through the dialogue, soliloquies, and asides, as well as through their conduct. In exploring characterization, one can look for ways in which characters develop, or remain static, and at ways in which the playwright sets up points of contact and contrasts among characters during the course of the play. Don Alonso is heroic and poetic from beginning to end, but we see that absence makes his heart grow fonder, and we see specific examples of his valor. Don Rodrigo is an angry young man throughout the play, but the force of his rage increases scene by scene. Fabia, for her part, is a mistress of adaptability, and her protean nature aids in defining her character. Metatheater, essentially the conversion of literary personages into metaphorical playwrights or directors, is, in general, a corollary of character development. Characterization also depends on questions of gender, on how the play mirrors or reacts against the patriarchal social order. One can analyze Inés and Leonor to judge whether they are purely love objects, one-dimensional characters, or thinking, feeling, and independent women, or whether they fall somewhere between these categories.

A major aspect of the plot would be the organization of the action or, more precisely, the unity of action. It is important to consider how Lope moves the plot forward, while at the same time deferring its resolution, and how the disparate parts become integrated into a unified whole. The progression from the figurative to the literal death informs the direction of the work and becomes a key source of its irony. As the playwright puts his work in motion, he must include some kind of exposition, so that the audience will understand the setting and the relationships among the characters. The plot, and specifically the second act, will rely on complications, misunderstandings, confusion, and mixed (or missed) signals. The plot will build to a climax, followed by a look at the consequences of this culminating event, the dénouement. One facet of the plot that relates to foreshadowing is the element of suspense. The spectator or reader responds to the omens of death. Even when one is aware of the preexisting verses, the events that anticipate the climax may
prove gripping, suspenseful. In studying the plot, you may want to take into account the function of the historical figures of King Juan II and Don Alvaro de Luna, the references to Celestina and other texts, and the implications of Fabia’s contact with the netherworld.

In El caballero de Olmedo, Lope broaches the comprehensive themes of love, honor, and jealousy. The role of women in society, the protocols of courtship, and the conventions of matrimony form part of the thematic base, as does the forging of identity, both at the personal and societal levels. Through the intervention of the king, history makes its way into the plot, and one may think about how the historical figures, and history in the broader sense, fit into the message system of the play. The same is true of Fabia and black magic. Poetry and poetic discourse transcend the linguistic level. To a degree, Don Alonso’s dependence on poetic tradition transforms poetry (and, by extension, literature) into something on the order of a co-protagonist. Lope saturates his hero in formulaic diction and in tragic precedent, an act that celebrates not only poetry but also the poet, not only the literary past but also its variations in the present. He recalls the theoretical debates of Cinquecento (sixteenth-century) Italy as he proposes a revision of the strict division between tragedy and comedy, and he alters even his own formula for tragicomedy by inverting the order of the combination, by moving from the comic to the serious. His variations on several themes help to give the play a special structure and a special significance.

Some further questions to consider:

- The language of love, specifically in the speeches of Don Alonso, unites the physical with the spiritual. How does Lope relate the two, and how does he effect the synthesis?
- Why is it important that Don Alonso emphasizes that his intentions are honorable and that he hopes to marry Doña Inés?
- In Renaissance poetry, it is common to find a woman’s beauty equated with the beauty of nature. In baroque poetry, the symmetry may be broken, to declare the woman’s beauty superior to that of nature. Does the play contain examples of this baroque convention?
- Don Alonso writes to Doña Inés on at least two occasions. Does the discourse of the letter replicate his manner of speech, or is there a notable difference?
• It is clear that Don Alonso has the heart of a poet. How can one describe the rhetoric (and the poetry) of the speeches of Doña Inés and Don Rodrigo?
• Don Alonso, Fabia, and Don Rodrigo allude to literary, legendary, historical, and mythological figures as a means of strengthening the points that they wish to make. In which sections of the play do these allusions occur, and to what purpose?
• In amorous poetry, the admirer of a lady often commits “love’s heresy” by exalting the object of his love above all else. In Celestina, Calisto proclaims, “Melibeo soy,” asserting that he is “Melibeo,” much as one would say, “I am Christian” or “I am Catholic.” How does Lope emulate Fernando de Rojas through the discourse of Don Alonso? Is there a clear-cut analogue in the play to Calisto’s statement?
• In the Poetics, Aristotle contrasts history and poetry, real events and imaginative fiction. Is there a tension in El caballero de Olmedo between the historical and the poetic? If so, how does this tension manifest itself, and what impact does it have on the interpretation of the play?
• Poetry and the poetic tradition occupy a considerable space in the play. To what extent does the poetic overlay permit Lope to explore the depths of human psychology?
• Although the play is neither a historical nor a social document, what does it reveal about Spanish society of the seventeenth century?
• To survey the impact of irony on the structure and messages of the play, keep a list of the ironic passages. From that list, which examples are obvious from the moment they are articulated and which become ironic at the end? How do the verses “Que de noche le mataron […]” affect the irony?
• In the Arte nuevo, Lope stresses that his main concern as a playwright is pleasing the public. How does El caballero de Olmedo seem to reflect this interest?
• Perspective or point of view generally relates to narrative, but characters in drama express their points of view through the dialogue. How might each of the major characters of El caballero de Olmedo describe Don Alonso and his pursuit of Doña Inés? How might Lope himself describe the hero and his undertaking?
• How would you visualize a production of the play? How could a director promote a particular point of view or reading of the text?

Each reader will approach the text (and its numerous contexts) uniquely, based on individual responses, priorities, and a process of selection. Critical studies will put forward a range of interpretive and analytical options. Determine the argument of the critic, and test the thesis, or theses, of the critical study against your reading and understanding of the play.

CRITICAL STUDIES OF EL CABALLERO DE OLMEDO

El caballero de Olmedo has been the subject of a number of critical studies, including a book-length study by William C. McCrary. Among the topics are, broadly speaking, questions of genre, characterization, structure, poetic imagery and symbolism, poetic justice and morality, history, and the relation of the text to its source materials. Forming part of the bibliography, the following abstracts of essays on El caballero de Olmedo offer a sampling of these approaches to the play. As with any work of criticism, readers can weigh the theses against their personal understanding of the text under scrutiny.

Frank P. Casa, “The Dramatic Unity of El caballero de Olmedo” (1966)

Casa notes that Lope does not rely on conflict, a staple of drama, to construct his play, since love is requited from the beginning. Rather, the playwright moves from the comic situation to death by foreshadowing the ending with increasing intensity. The allusions to Celestina initially have a comic force, but they cross the threshold of tragedy, as does the poetic language itself. The premonitions of disaster blend with the evocation of evil (in Celestina) to create an aura of fatality. The play’s cohesion, then, derives from the atmosphere of tragic inevitability.


King presents a symbolic, and religious, interpretation of the play. She challenges the reading of Don Alonso’s death by A. A. Parker (“The Spanish Drama”), who regards the ending as the result of a chain of cause
Dramatis Personæ

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Don ALONSO, caballero</th>
<th>Dona LEONOR, hermana de doña Inés</th>
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<td>Don RODRIGO</td>
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<td>Don FERNANDO</td>
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<td>Don PEDRO, padre de doña Inés y doña Leonor</td>
<td>FABIA, vieja hechicera y alcahueta</td>
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<td>El REY don Juan II</td>
<td>MENDO</td>
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<td>El CONDESTABLE don Álvaro de Luna</td>
<td>Un LABRADOR</td>
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<td>TELLO, criado de don Alonso</td>
<td>Una SOMBRA</td>
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<td>Doña INÉS, dama</td>
<td>CRIADOS</td>
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La acción tiene lugar en Medina del Campo, Olmedo y en un camino entre los dos pueblos.

ACTO PRIMERO

Sale² don ALONSO.

ALONSO: Amor,³ no te llame amor
el que no te corresponde,°
pues que no hay materia° adonde
imprima forma el favor.⁴

1 Medina del Campo and Olmedo are in the province of Valladolid, in the region known as Castilla la Vieja.
2 In theatrical stage directions, salir means to enter (salir al escenario), and, in turn, entrar or irse means to exit.
3 The opening soliloquy takes the form of an apostrophe (apóstrofe), in which Don Alonso speaks directly to love. In an apostrophe, the speaker addresses by name the object (animate or inanimate) of his or her words.
4 The idea here is that love can only be worthy of its name if the attraction is mutual. Using the Aristotelian concept that form determines matter, Don Alonso argues that love can give form to—put its imprint on (“imprima,” from imprimir)—matter when both parties share the same feelings.
Conceto (concepto) is used here in the sense of conception.

Love, in essence, is what has kept the world going throughout the ages. According to neoplatonic thought, love is the link, the vinculum mundi, that brings about continuity. The union of two wills is necessary for the conception of a "perfect" offspring.

"Espíritus vivos" (living spirits) is an example of the rhetorical figure oxymoron (oxímoron), which combines two opposite or antithetical terms into a single phrase. For example, Don Quixote is known as "a wise fool" (un loco cuerdo). The "spirits" in this context occupy an intermediary position between the body and the soul.

The eyes unite the spiritual and the physical. They produce adoration and ignite the passions in an "excessive" manner.

Mudanza denotes change, and it is often used in the sense of both changes wrought through time and changes of emotion (inconstancy or fickleness). Mudanza also refers, as in this case, to a movement of the eyes, as well as to movements in dance. Poets and playwrights avail themselves of the multiple, and interrelated, meanings of the term, which include change of mind, change of residence or position, and change of clothes.

Cupid, the god of love, is often depicted as blind or blindfolded.

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10 Cupid, the god of love, is often depicted as blind or blindfolded.
si de mí solo naciste,
pues imperfecto quedaste.\footnote{11}

Salen TELLO, criado, y FABIA.

FABIA: ¿A mí, forastero?\footnote{stranger}
TELLO: A ti.
FABIA: Debe pensar que yo soy perro de muestra.\footnote{pointer}
TELLO: No.
FABIA: ¿Tiene algún achaque?\footnote{ailment}
TELLO: Sí.
FABIA: ¿Qué enfermedad tiene?
TELLO: Amor.
FABIA: Amor, ¿de quién?
TELLO: Allí está, y él, Fabia, te informará de lo que quiere mejor.
FABIA: Dios guarde\footnote{12} tal gentileza.\footnote{courtesy}
TELLO: La propria.\footnote{in the flesh, = propia}
ALONSO: Tello, ¿es la madre?\footnote{13}
TELLO: ¡La propia.\footnote{portrait}
ALONSO: ¡Oh, Fabia! ¡Oh, retrato!\footnote{inventiveness} ¡Oh, copia de cuanto naturaleza puso en ingenio mortal! ¡Oh, peregrino\footnote{doctor} dor,
FABIA: y para enfermos de amor
TELLO: Hipócrates\footnote{14} celestial!
ALONSO: Dame a besar la mano,
FABIA: honor de las tocas,\footnote{gloria} gloria

\footnote{11} Don Alonso says that Cupid cannot claim victory unless the love that he has stirred in two people is perfect, that is, unless both parties have been pierced by the same arrows. Cupid’s golden arrows inspire love, whereas his leaden arrows produce loathing. This passage reiterates the importance of correspondencia, or reciprocated love.

\footnote{12} There is an elliptical Que with the subjunctive form: May God watch over, preserve, or protect.

\footnote{13} Don Alonso refers to Fabia as madre (an elderly lady), a respectful term in this case.

\footnote{14} Hipócrates was a physician of Greek antiquity and one of the fathers of medicine. Taking recourse to the courtly love tradition, which presents love as an illness, Don Alonso views Fabia as a doctor sent by heaven to cure him.
Don Alonso habla con Fabia con gran reverencia. A través de la metonimia (metonymy), el uso de un término en términos de lo que evoca (en lugar de su significado literal), la imagen del sombrero sugiere ropa de luto, o vestiduras de viuda, y la imagen de la habitación sugiere una religiosa encerrada en un claustro.


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El caballero de Olmedo

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Acto I

17 Don Alonso emphasizes from the start that his intentions are honorable. His aim is to marry Doña Inés, not to dishonor her. Doña Inés radiated such brilliance that those who saw her thought that it was dawn (that the sun was coming out).

18 Early in his lengthy tribute to Doña Inés’s beauty, Don Alonso employs the common poetic image of the lady’s hair as a net (red), capable of entrapping men.

Tretas are thrusts in fencing. Here, the figurative meaning is gestures.

20 The wordplay here centers on Doña Inés’s snow-white hands, which stick out from her pointed (“esquinadas”) cuffs, exposing “muñecas de papel,” “wrists as white as paper,” which ingeniously are linked to paper dolls (also muñecas de papel) sold on street corners (“esquinas”).

21
Much of the poetic imagery in Golden Age Spain echoes the brilliant sonnets and other works of the Italian Renaissance poet Francesco Petrarca (1304-1374). Petrarch, as he is known in English, describes feminine beauty in a system that includes teeth as pearls, lips and cheeks as coral, skin as alabaster, eyes as emeralds, hair as gold, and so forth. His poetry contains examples, utilized by Lope, of strands of hair as traps and of arched eyebrows that serve as bows to the arrows of the eyes.

The skirt (basquiña) evokes the Basque country and language, thus contrasting that “tongue” (lengua) with the French of the petticoat (manteo). The skirt provides a protective covering for the petticoat, whose presence, or “code,” can be kept secret.

In order to emphasize the attention that she will pay him, Don Alonso notes her rejection of other admirers. For example, he uses the simile (símil) “como pescador” to portray her dominance over prospective suitors (“peces”).
Acto I

25 The basilisk is a fabled serpent known for its deadly breath and glance.
26 Surpassing the unicorn, Doña Inés is capable of purifying even holy water. The water tempers her potentially lethal (basilisk-like glance), and she soon will look kindly upon Don Alonso.
27 In the courtly love tradition, to fall deeply in love is to die. Finding himself in the chapel, Don Alonso compares himself to a criminal about to be executed and awaiting his final confession.
28 In this statement, Don Alonso stresses that he could not keep his
No me pagó mal.° Sospecho° que bien conoció que había amor y nobleza en mí; que quien no piensa no mira, y mirar sin pensar, Fabia, es de ignorantes, y implica contradicción que en un ángel faltase° ciencia° divina.

Con este engaño,° en efeto, le dije a mi amor que escriba este papel; que si quieres ser dichosa y atrevida° hasta ponerle° en sus manos, para que mi fe consiga° esperanzas de casarme, tan en esto amor me inclina, el premio° será un esclavo con una cadena° rica, encomienda° de esas tocas, de malcasadas° envidia.°

FABIA: Yo te he escuchado.
ALONSO: Y ¿qué sientes?
FABIA: Que a gran peligro te pones.

TELLO: Escusa,° Fabia, razones,° si no es que por dicha° intentes, como diestro° cirujano,° hacer la herida mortal.

FABIA: Tello, con industria° igual pondré el papel en su mano, aunque me cueste la vida, sin interés, porque entiendas que, donde hay tan altas prendas,° sola yo fuera atrevida.

it paid off, I suspect
*contradicción*
there would lack illusion
daring
ponerlo (el papel)
will achieve
reward
(gold) chain	commission, commendation; unhappily married
women
accomplish
excuse, arguments
by chance
skillful, surgeon
skill (ingenuity, subtlety)
high stakes

29 Ciencia, in addition to science, may convey the idea of knowledge.

30 Don Alonso tells the go-between Fabia that if she delivers his letter to Doña Inés, he will reward her with a gold chain, which will brighten her drab clothing (tocos) in the way that a commendation or medal (encomienda) brightens up a military uniform. Tocas de viuda are widow’s weeds, presented here as desirable clothing for unhappily married women (mal casadas). In Celestina, Calisto promises the go-between a gold chain in exchange for her services.
Acto I

31 The dialogue passages in parentheses indicate *apartes* (*asides*), directed to the audience and, by convention, out of the range of hearing of the other characters. Asides may also may take the form of stage "whispers."

195 Muestra el papel. (Que primero lo tengo de aderezar.°) I have to get it ready

ALONSO: ¿Con qué te podré pagar la vida, el alma que espero, Fabia, de esas santas manos?

TELLO: ¿Santas?

ALONSO: Pues, ¿no se han de hacer milagros?

TELLO: De Lucifer.

FABIA: Todos los medios humanos tengo de intentar por ti, porque el darme esa cadena no es cosa que me da pena, mas confiada° nací.

TELLO: ¿Qué te dice el memorial?°

ALONSO: Ven, Fabia, ven, madre honrada, porque sepas mi posada.°

FABIA: Tello...

TELLO: Fabia...

FABIA: No hables mal; que tengo cierta morena de estremado° talle° y cara.

TELLO: Contigo me contentara si me dieras la cadena.

Vanse y salen doña INÉS y doña LEONOR.

215 INÉS: Y todos dicen, Leonor, que nace de las estrellas.

LEONOR: De manera que, sin ellas, ¿no hubiera en el mundo amor?

INÉS: Dime tÚ; si don Rodrigo ha que me sirve dos años, y su talle y sus engaños° wiles son nieve helada° icy conmigo, y en el instante que vi este galán° attractive young gentelmano
El caballero de Olmedo

225 me dijo el alma, “Éste quiero,”
y y yo lo dije, “Sea así,”
¿quién concierta y desconcierta este amor y desamor?32

LEONOR: Tira como ciego Amor,
yerra mucho, y poco acierta.
Demás, que negar no puedo,
aunque es de Fernando amigo
por quien obligada quedo
a intercederte por él,
que el forastero es galán.

INÉS: Sus ojos causan me dan
para ponerlos en él,
pués pienso que en ellos vi
el cuidado de que me dí,
para que mirase yo
con el que también le di.

LEONOR: No le miro yo de suerte
que pueda vivir sin verte.

Sale ANA, criada.

ANA: Aquí, señora, ha venido
la Fabia... o la Fabiana.
INÉS: ¿Pues quién es esa mujer?
ANA: Una que suele vender
para las mejillas grana
y para la cara nieve.

LEONOR: En casas de tanto honor
no sé yo cómo se atreve;

32 Doña Inés’s assertion that love is preordained—controlled by the stars—is influenced by neoplatonic doctrine. This factor, related to the concepts of harmony and disharmony, explains how she can disdain one steadfast suitor and fall in love at first sight with another. When Doña Inés refers to the two years that Don Rodrigo has “served” her, she introduces the theme of el servicio de amor, the show of loyalty and persistence on the part of the courtly lover, who is willing to suffer disdain and whatever trials may be required of him in order to demonstrate his devotion to a lady.
Acto I

33 Fabia eulogizes Inés’s style of walking, her elegant gait.
34 Fabia eulogizes Doña Catalina, the deceased mother of Inés and Leonor, as a model of morality and goodness. She may be alluding to St. Catherine, an early Christian martyr who also died prematurely, in defense of her faith, as she remarks that Doña Catalina aways treated her kindly.
35 Fabia laments that the young women’s mother had not yet reached her prime when death took her away.
El caballero de Olmedo

INÉS: No lloro, madre, no lloro.
FABIA: No me puedo consolar
a la muerte las mejores,
y que yo me quedo acá.
Vuestro padre, Dios le guarde,
¿está en casa?

LEONOR: Fue esta tarde
al campo.
FABIA: (Tarde vendrá.)
Si va a deciros verdades,
mozas sois, vieja soy yo...
Más de una vez me fío
don Pedro sus mocedades;
pero teniendo respeto
a la que pudre, yo hacía,
como quien se lo debía,
mi obligación. En efeto,
de diez mozas, no le daba
 cinco.

INÉS: ¡Qué virtud!
FABIA: No es poco,
que era vuestro padre un loco;
cuanto veía, tanto amaba.
Si sois de su condición,
no admiro de que no estéis
enamoradas. ¿No hacéis,
niñas, alguna oración
para casaros?

INÉS: No, Fabia.
FABIA: Padre que se duerme en esto,
muchio a si mismo se agravia.

La fruta fresca, hijas mías,

---

36 Fabia previously has had contact with the young women’s father, Don Pedro, who appears to have led an active social life in his prime. In an attempt to show the respect in which she held his wife, Fabia comments—rather ironically—that of every ten women available, she offered him only five.

37 Don Pedro’s sexual appetite was such that he fell in love with every woman that he laid his eyes on.
Acto I

Alluding to the elegance of her demeanor and attire as a young woman, Fabia asks rhetorically, “What silk [hemlines] didn’t drag along [the ground]?" Fabia’s comments evoke the spirit of the carpe diem ("seize the day") tradition which advocates living for the moment and appreciating youth and beauty, which are of short duration.

Plato (plate, dish) is used in the sense of exquisite dishes offered to a woman who had captured the attention of numerous men.

In Fabia’s description of the glories of her younger days, palmas (literally, the palms of the hands) is used in the sense of applause. The metonymy is complemented by a wordplay based on andaba (from andar, to walk, to go around) and anda (sedan chair). “Andaba en palmas” translates as “I was greeted with applause wherever I went” and “[andaba] en andas” as “I went around in sedan chairs.” The use of a verb in two clauses where its meaning differs in each represents the figure zeugma (zeugma); an example in English would be “He ran a race and out of money.”

Hopalandas refers to gowns worn by university students and clergymen.
El caballero de Olmedo

¿Qué es lo que traes aquí?

Niñerías° que vender para comer, por no hacer cosas malas.

LEONOR: Hazlo ansí, madre, y Dios te ayudará.

FABIA: Hija, mi rosario y misa:
esto cuando estoy de prisa,° que si no...

INÉS: Vuelve acá.

FABIA: ¿Qué es esto?

Papeles son de alcanfor° y solimán.°

Aquí secretos están de gran consideración para nuestra enfermedad ordinaria.°

LEONOR: Y esto, ¿qué es?

FABIA: No lo mires, aunque estés con tanta curiosidad.

INÉS: ¿Qué hay aquí?

FABIA: Polvos de dientes,° jabones de manos,° pastillas,° cosas curiosas° y provechosas.°

LEONOR: ¿Qué es, por tu vida?

FABIA: Una moza, que se quiere, niñas, casar; mas acertó a engañar° un hombre de Zaragoza.°

Hase encomendado a mí...° Soy piadosa.° por mis limosña,° porque después vivan en paz.

INÉS: ¿Qué es esto?

FABIA: Algunas oraciones.

¡Qué no me deben a mí las ánimas!°

INÉS: Un papel

340 Fabia attempts to underscore her religiosity and the power of her prayers by crying out, “How much the souls in purgatory owe me!”

345 Zaragoza (Saragossa, in English) is a province of Aragón and its capital city.
Acto I

44 In the center or “core” of the earth, and hence at the greatest remove from heaven, resides the devil, whom Fabia invokes to inflame Inés’s passion. Through metonymy, pecho (breast, chest) stands for the lady’s heart.

FABIA: Diste con él°
cual si fuera para ti.
Suétale.° No le has de ver,
bellaquilla,° curiosilla.

INÉS: Deja, madre...

FABIA: Hay en la villa
cierto galán bachiller°
que quiere bien una dama;
prométeme una cadena
porque le dé yo, con ‘pena
de° su honor, recato° y fama.°
Aunque es para casamiento,
no me atrevo. Haz una cosa
por mí, doña Inés hermosa,
que es discreto pensamiento.
Respóndeme a este papel,
y diré que me le ha dado
su dama.

INÉS: Bien lo has pensado
si pescas,° Fabia, con él
la cadena prometida.
Yo quiero hacerte este bien.

FABIA: Tantos° los cielos te den,
que un siglo alarguen tu vida.
Lee el papel.

INÉS: Allá dentro,
y te traeré respuesta.

Vase.

LEONOR: (¡Qué buena invención!)

FABIA: (Apresta,

tiero° habitador del centro,°
fuego accidental° que abrase
el pecho° de esta doncella.)°

44 Salen don RODRIGO y don FERNANDO.
El caballero de Olmedo

RODRIGO: Hasta casarme con ella, será forzoso que pase por estos inconvenientes.°

FERNANDO: Mucho ha de sufrir quien ama.

RODRIGO: Aquí tenéis vuestra dama.

FABIA: ¡Oh necios° impertinentes!

RODRIGO: Pero, ¿en lugar de la mí° aquella sombra°?

FABIA: Sería gran limosna para mí; que tengo necesidad.

LEONOR: Yo haré que os pague mi hermana.

FERNANDO: Si habéis tomado, señora, o por ventura° os agrada° algo de lo que hay aquí, si bien serán cosas bajas° la que aquí puede traer esta venerable anciana,

LEONOR: No habemos° comprado nada; que es esta buena mujer quien suele lavar en casa la ropa.

RODRIGO: ¿Qué hace don Pedro?

RODRIGO: (Si me vio por la ventana, ¿quién duda que huyó° por mí?)

RODRIGO: (Sí me vio por la ventana, ¿quiénduda que huyó° por mí?)

RODRIGO: (Sí me vio por la ventana, ¿quiénduda que huyó° por mí?)

Salga doña INÉS, con un papel en la mano.

LEONOR: Ya sale. Mira que aguarta por la cuenta de la ropa Fabia.

INÉS: Aquí la traigo, hermana.
Acto I

Tomad, y haced que ese mozo la lleve.

FABIA: ¡Dichosa el agua que ha de laver, doña Inés, las reliquias\textsuperscript{45} de la holanda\textsuperscript{o} que tales cristales\textsuperscript{o} cubre!

\textit{Finja que lee.}

Seis camisas\textsuperscript{o}, diez toallas, cuatro tablas de manteles,\textsuperscript{5} dos cosidos de almohadas,\textsuperscript{5} seis camisas\textsuperscript{o} del señor, ocho sábanas\textsuperscript{o}… mas basta; que todo vendrá más limpio que los ojos de la cara.

RODRIGO: Amiga, ¿queréis feriarme\textsuperscript{5} ese papel, y la paga fiad de mí, por tener de aquellas manos ingratas letra siquiera\textsuperscript{a} en las mías?

FABIA: ¡En verdad que negociara\textsuperscript{a} muy bien si os diera el papel! Adiós, hijas de mi alma.

\textit{Vase.}

RODRIGO: Esta memoria\textsuperscript{5} aquí había de quedar, que no llevarla.

LEONOR: Llévala y vuélvela, a efeto de saber si algo le falta.

INÉS: Mi padre ha venido ya. Vuesas mercedes\textsuperscript{46} se vayan o le visiten;\textsuperscript{47} que siente que nos hablen, aunque calla.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45} The “relics” are traces of Doña Inés’s presence.

\textsuperscript{46} Inés addresses Don Rodrigo and Don Fernando as “Your Worships,” a formal show of respect and less than fully sincere under the circumstances.

\textsuperscript{47} Inés tells the men that they may either take their leave or visit with her father.

\textsuperscript{48} Inés comments that it displeases her father when men speak with
RODRIGO: Para sufrir el desdén que me trata de esta suerte, pido al amor y a la muerte que algún remedio me den.

Al amor, porque también puede templar tu rigor con hacerme algún favor; y a la muerte, porque acabe mi vida; pero no sabe la muerte, ni quiere amor.

Entre la vida y la muerte no sé qué medio tener, pues amor no ha de querer que con tu favor acierte; y siendo fuerza quererte, quiere el amor que te pida que seas tú mi homicida. Mata, ingrata, a quien te adora; serás mi muerte, señora, pues no quieres ser mi vida.

Cuanto vive, de amor nace y se sustenta; de amor. Cuanto muere, es un rigor que nuestras vidas deshace. Si al amor no satisface mi pena, ni la hay tan fuerte con que la muerte me acierte, debo de ser inmortal, pues no me hacen bien ni mal ni la vida ni la muerte.

_Vanse los dos._

INÉS: ¡Qué de necedades juntas! No fue la tuya menor.

LEONOR: ¿Amor te obliga a escribir sin saber a quién?

INÉS: Sospecho her and her sister, even though he may not voice his concern.
que es invención que se ha hecho, para probarme a rendir,\textsuperscript{49} de parte del forastero.

500 LEONOR: Yo también lo imaginé.
INÉS: Si fue ansí, discreto fue.
Leerle unos versos quiero.

Lea.

“Yo vi la más hermosa labradora, en la famosa feria de Medina, que ha visto el sol adonde más se inclina\textsuperscript{°} desde la risa de la blanca aurora.\textsuperscript{°}
Una chinela de color, que dora\textsuperscript{°} de una coluna\textsuperscript{°} hermosa y cristalina la breve basa,\textsuperscript{°} fue la ardiente mina que vuela\textsuperscript{°} el alma a la región que adora.
Que una chinela fue vitoriosa, siendo los ojos del amor enojos,\textsuperscript{°} confesé por hazaña\textsuperscript{°} milagrosa. Pero dijele,\textsuperscript{'} dando los despojos\textsuperscript{°}:

515 ‘Si matas con los pies, Inés hermosa, ¿qué dejas para el fuego de tus ojos?’\textsuperscript{50}

LEONOR: Este galán, doña Inés, te quiere para danzar.
INÉS: Quiere en los pies comenzar, y pedir manos después.

520 LEONOR: ¿Qué respondiste?
INÉS: Que fuese esta noche por la reja\textsuperscript{°} del huerto.\textsuperscript{°}
LEONOR: ¿Quién te aconseja, o qué desatino\textsuperscript{°} es ése?

\textsuperscript{49} Inés tells Leonor that she suspects that her suitor has devised a way of luring her to succumb (“yield”) to his charms.

\textsuperscript{50} Within the series of metaphors in this sonnet, Don Alonso uses the slipper (chinela) to praise the beauty and the power of attraction of Doña Inés. The slipper forms the base of a crystalline column (her leg), and the glorious sight, moving him with the impact of an explosive (mina, also a gold mine), sends his soul upward. He ends with a paradoxical thought: if her feet can have this effect upon him, how can one imagine the force of her eyes? Note the use of enojos and despojos, which contain the word ojos.
Palos are sticks or clubs, or, as here, blows with a stick or club.

Because she wants Don Alonso to be as grateful as possible for her endeavors on his behalf, Fabia begins with a lie about her fortunes. Don Alonso despairs at having reached for the heavens, which allows Tello to characterize Fabia as a type of fallen angel sent to the underworld to lift the enamored gentleman toward heaven.

Tello speaks of the thugs responsible for the professed blows to Fabia’s back as a sacristan pounding on a lectern. The sacristan, or sexton, is the church official—often one who has taken holy orders—in charge of objects such as sacred vessels and vestments.
Romance refers to the traditional ballad and to the eight-syllable lines in which the ballads are written. The ballads, collected in romanceros, feature assonance (rhyme based on vowel sounds) in even-numbered lines. Here, romance connotes poetry or verse in general.

"...for they’re possible even in toothpicks [palillos]." Tello’s pun depends on palos (blows, sticks), whose diminutive is palillos, which means both little blows and toothpicks. Mondadientes is a synonym for palillo as toothpick. Tello says that he is not prepared to bow down to Fabia until he knows the contents of Doña Inés’s note. His statement—losing something in the translation—can be rendered as “for I still fear that there may be blows inside, since they’re possible even in toothpicks.”
ALONSO: Que no puedo pagarte ni encarecerte \( ^{56} \) to praise you
tanto bien.

TELLO: Ya de esta suerte no hay que ensillar para Olmedo. my dear horses

¿Oyen, 'señores rocines'?° Sosiéguense,\( ^{o} \) que en Medina nos quedamos. take it easy

ALONSO: La vecina noche, en los últimos fines con que va expirando el día,

pone los helados pies. \( = \text{expirando} \)

Para la reja de Inés aún importa bizarría; que podría ser que el amor

la llevase a ver tomar

la cinta. Voyme a mudar.°\( ^{56} \) I'm going to change
clothes

Vase.

TELLO: Ye a dar a mi señor, Fabia, con licencia\( ^{o} \) tuya, permission

aderezo de sereno.\( ^{56} \)

FABIA: Detente.°

TELLO: Eso fuera bueno a ser la condición suya

para vestirse sin mí.

FABIA: Pues bien le puedes dejar,

porque me has de acompañar.

TELLO: ¿A ti, Fabia?\( ^{56} \)

FABIA: A mí.\( ^{56} \)

TELLO: ¿Yo?\( ^{56} \)

FABIA: Sí;°

que importa a la brevedad de este amor.

TELLO: ¿Qué es lo que quieres?°

FABIA: Con los hombres, las mujeres
elevamos seguridad.

Una muela° he menester° tooth, I need

\( ^{56} \) Tello associates dressing his master for the evening ("dar a mi señor ... aderezo") with the sereno or night watchman: "I'm going to get him ready to perform his nighttime duties."
Acto I

57 “Have you lost your mind?” Seso translates literally as brain.
58 The meaning is double: “Whoever goes up such steps” and “Whoever proceeds according to such plans.”
que cuanto más doña Inés
con sus desdenes me mata,
tanto más me enciende el pecho,
así su nieve59 me abrasa.

¡Oh rejas, enternecidas°
de mi llanto,° quién pensara
que un ángel endurecería°
quien vuestros hierros ablanda!°60
¡Oid! ¿Qué es lo que está aquí?

FERNANDO: En ellos mismos atada
está una cinta o listón.

RODRIGO: Sin duda las almas atan
a estos hierros, por castigo
de los que su amor declaran.°

FERNANDO: Favor° fue de mi Leonor.
Tal vez por aquí me habla.

RODRIGO: Que no lo será de Inés
dice mi desconfianza;°
pero, en duda de que es suyo,
porque sus manos ingratas
 pudieron ponerle acaso,
basta que la fe me valga.
Dadme el listón.

FERNANDO: No es razón,
si acaso° Leonor pensaba
saber mi cuidado° ansí,
y no me le ve mañana.

59 Nieve (snow) is used figuratively here as "your coldness toward me."

60 Don Rodrigo foregrounds the contrast between his love for Doña Inés and her disdain for him. Paradoxically, her icy attitude serves to ignite his love ("su nieve me abrasa"). He exclaims to the iron bars, which she has touched during the day and which he visits at night, "Who would think that the one who one softens the iron of the grating would be capable of hardening [the heart of] an angel?" The speech provides examples of the figure antithesis (antítesis), the juxtaposition of words with opposing meanings, as in día and noche and the play of cold and hot, soft and hard, and love and scorn. Note that the imperfect subjunctive pensara has the force of the conditional ("who would think...?").

61 Don Rodrigo observes that just as criminals who confess their crimes are put in iron chains for all to disparage, those who declare (confess) their love tie their souls to the iron bars and thus leave themselves exposed.
RODRIGO: Un remedio se me ofrece.
FERNANDO: ¿Cómo?
RODRIGO: Partirle.°
FERNANDO: ¿A qué causa?
RODRIGO: A que las dos nos le vean,
y sabrán con esta traza° que habemos venido juntos.

Dividen el listón. Salen don ALONSO y TELLO, de noche.

FERNANDO: Gente por la calle pasa.
TELLO: Llega de presto° a la reja; mira que Fabia me aguarda
para un negocio que tiene de grandísima importancia.
ALONSO: ¿Negocio Fabia esta noche contigo?
TELLO: Es cosa muy alta.
ALONSO: ¿Cómo?
TELLO: Yo llevo escalera,
y ella...
ALONSO: ¿Qué lleva?
TELLO: Tenazas. Pincers
ALONSO: Pues, ¿qué habéis de hacer?
TELLO: Sacar una dama de su casa.°
ALONSO: Mira lo que haces, Tello; no entres adonde no salgas.
TELLO: No es nada, por vida tuya.
ALONSO: Una doncella, ¿no es nada?
TELLO: Es la muela del ladrón que ahorcaron ayer.
ALONSO: en° que acompañan° la reja dos hombres.
TELLO: ¿Si están de guarda?
ALONSO: ¡Qué buen listón!
TELLO: Ella quiso castigarte.°

° Using the verb sacar (to pull out, to extract), Tello speaks of pulling the tooth as the extraction of a lady from her house.
ALONSO: ¿No buscara, si fui atrevido, otro estilo?° way
Pues advierta° que se engaña. let her be advised

685 Mal conoce a don Alonso,
que por excelencia llaman "el caballero de Olmedo."
¡Vive Dios, que he de mostrarla
a castigar de otra suerte
a quien la sirve!

TELLO: No hagas
algún disparate.

ALONSO: Hidalgos,° Gentlemen
en las rejas de esa casa
nadie se arrima.° comes near

RODRIGO: ¿Qué es esto?
FERNANDO: Ni en el talle ni en el habla
conozco este hombre.

RODRIGO: ¿Quién es el que con tanta arrogancia
se atreve a hablar?

ALONSO: El que tiene por lengua, hidalgos, la espada.° sword

RODRIGO: Pues hallará quien castigue su locura temeraria.

TELLO: Cierra,° señor; que no son muelas que a difuntos sacan.

    Retírenlos.° They drive them off

ALONSO: No los sigas. Bueno está.
TELLO: Aquí se quedó una capa.

705 ALONSO: Cógela, y ven por aquí;
que hay luces en las ventanas.

    Vanse. Salen doña LEONOR, y doña INÉS.

INÉS: Apenas la blanca aurora,
Leonor, el pie° de marfil
puso en las flores de abril,
que pinta, esmalta° y colora,
cuando a mirar el listón
salí, de amor desvelada,° unable to sleep
Acto I

87

Doña Inés has gotten up at dawn (described poetically) to check on the status of the ribbon, which she finds missing. She mistakenly believes that Don Alonso has retrieved it.

The dialogue plays on the double meaning of cuidado. When Doña Leonor observes that the gentleman took care (“Cuidado tuvo”), her sister replies that he will not have as many preoccupations as she, given her thoughts of him. In the first case, tener cuidado is used in the sense of to be careful. In the second, the sense is to have amorous concerns (“No tendrá los [cuidados] que …”).

y con la mano turbada
di sosiego al corazón.

En fin, él no estaba allí.63

LEONOR: Cuidado tuvo el galán.
INÉS: No tendrá los que me dan sus pensamientos a mí.64

LEONOR: Tú, que fuiste el mismo hielo,

jen tan breve tiempo estás
de esa suerte!

INÉS: No sé más
de que me castiga el cielo.
O es venganza o es vitoria
de amor en mi condición.

parece que el corazón
se me abrasa en su memoria.

Un punto6 sólo no puedo
apartarla del. ¿Qué haré?

Sale don RODRIGO, con el listón en el sombrero.

RODRIGO: (Nunca, amor, imaginé

que te sujetara6 el miedo.

ánimo para vivir;

que aquí está Inés.) Al señor
don Pedro busco.

INÉS: Es error
tan de mañana acudir;

que no estará levantado.

RODRIGO: Es un negocio importante.

Doña INÉS y doña LEONOR hablan aparte.

INÉS: (No he visto tan necio amante.

63 Doña Inés has gotten up at dawn (described poetically) to check on the status of the ribbon, which she finds missing. She mistakenly believes that Don Alonso has retrieved it.

64 The dialogue plays on the double meaning of cuidado. When Doña Leonor observes that the gentleman took care (“Cuidado tuvo”), her sister replies that he will not have as many preoccupations as she, given her thoughts of him. In the first case, tener cuidado is used in the sense of to be careful. In the second, the sense is to have amorous concerns (“No tendrá los [cuidados] que …”).
LEONOR: Siempre es discreto lo amado,
y necio lo aborrecido.

740 RODRIGO: (¿Que de ninguna manera
puedo agradar una fiera°
ni dar memoria a su olvido?)°

INÉS: (¡Ay, Leonor! No sin razón
viene don Rodrigo aquí,
745 si yo misma le escribí
que fuese por el listón.

LEONOR: Fabia este engaño te ha hecho.
INÉS: Presto romperé el papel;
que quiero vengarme en él
de haber dormido en mi pecho.)

Salen don PEDRO, su padre, y don FERNANDO
con el listón en el sombrero.

FERNANDO: Hame puesto por tercero
para tratarlo° con vos.
PEDRO: Pues hablaremos los dos
en el concierto° primero.

750 FERNANDO: Aquí está; que siempre amor
es ‹reloj anticipado.°
PEDRO: Habrále Inés concertado°
con la llave° del favor.
FERNANDO: De lo contrario, se agravia.

PEDRO: Señor don Rodrigo...
RODRIGO: Aquí
vengo a que os sirváis de mí.

Hablan bajo don PEDRO y los dos galanes.
Doña INÉS y doña LEONOR hablan aparte.

INÉS: (Todo fue enredo° de Fabia.
LEONOR: ¿Cómo?
INÉS: ¿No ves que también
trae el listón don Fernando?

755 LEONOR: Si en los dos le estoy mirando,
entrambos° te quieren bien.
INÉS: Sólo falta que me pidas
Acto I

89

65 Upset that Leonor doubts her loyalty and integrity, Inés explains, “All I need is for you to be jealous of me…”

Vuestro contains the elliptical *vuestro yerno* (your son-in-law) or *vuestro familiar* (a member of your family).
Inés appeared at the fair as Venus (the goddess of love) dressed as a peasant or farmgirl.
Diez mil ducados\textsuperscript{68} de renta;\textsuperscript{69} y aunque es tan mozo, son viejos. Déjate amar y servir del más noble, del más cuerdo\textsuperscript{70} caballero de Castilla, lindo talle, lindo ingenio.\textsuperscript{71} El rey\textsuperscript{69} en Valladolid grandes mercedes\textsuperscript{68} le ha hecho, porque él solo honró las fiestas de su real casamiento. Cuchilladas\textsuperscript{72} y lanzadas\textsuperscript{73} dio en los toros como un Héctor;\textsuperscript{74} treinta precios\textsuperscript{71} dio a las damas en sortijas y torneos. Armado\textsuperscript{72} parece Aquiles\textsuperscript{73} mirando de Troya el cerco;\textsuperscript{75} con galas parece Adonis...\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{68} Ducats are valuable gold coins. As the only child of wealthy parents, Don Alonso is set to inherit a sizeable income.
\textsuperscript{69} Juan II, son of Enrique III and Catherine of Lancaster, ruled Castile from 1406 to 1454. The king married Doña María de Aragón in Medina del Campo in 1418.
\textsuperscript{70} Hector, the son of King Priam of Troy, was a hero of the Trojan War. "Sortijas y torneos" are ring and jousting competitions, in which Don Alonso has excelled.
\textsuperscript{71} In Greek mythology, Adonis was beloved by Aphrodite (Venus) and known as the most handsome of the gods. He was killed by a wild boar and later resurrected. His death was motivated by the jealousy of Artemis (Diana) and carried out by Ares (Mars), god of war.
¡Mejor fin le den los cielos!  
Vivirás bien empleada°  
en un marido discreto.

865  
¡Desdichada de la dama  
que tiene marido necio!

INÉS:  
¡Ay, madre! Vuélvame loca.  
Pero, ¡triste! ¿cómo puedo  
ser suya, si a don Rodrigo  
me da mi padre don Pedro?  
Él y don Fernando están  
tratando mi casamiento.

FABIA:  
Los dos haréis nulidad  
la sentencia de ese pleito.°

875  
INÉS:  
Está don Rodrigo allí.

FABIA:  
Eso no te cause miedo,  
pues es parte° y no juez.

INÉS:  
Leonor, ¿no me das consejo?°

LEONOR:  
¿Y estás tú para tomarle?°

880  
INÉS:  
No sé; pero no tratemos  
en público de estas cosas.

FABIA:  
Déjame a mí tu suceso.  
Don Alonso ha de ser tuyo;  
que serás dichosa, espero,

885  
con hombre que es en Castilla  
"la gala" de Medina,  
la flor de Olmedo."

FIN DEL PRIMER ACTO